

Research for Patient Benefit

RfPB Under-represented disciplines and specialisms: Nurses and Midwives 2025/26

Overview

Opportunity status: Open

Type: Programme

Opening date: 19 November 2025

Closing date: 8 April 2026 at 1:00 pm

Reference ID: 2025/432

This [Research for Patient Benefit](https://www.nihr.ac.uk/research-funding/funding-programmes/research-for-patient-benefit) (<https://www.nihr.ac.uk/research-funding/funding-programmes/research-for-patient-benefit>) (RfPB) funding opportunity is part of ring-fenced funding in support of the NIHR strategy to strengthen the careers of under-represented disciplines and specialisms in health and care professions. In 2023, RfPB ran the first funding opportunity supporting these professions and £3 million was awarded across [16 projects led by nurses and midwives](https://www.nihr.ac.uk/news/nurses-and-midwives-awarded-ps3m-nihr-research-patient-benefit-programme-across-16-projects) (<https://www.nihr.ac.uk/news/nurses-and-midwives-awarded-ps3m-nihr-research-patient-benefit-programme-across-16-projects>). This is the second funding opportunity inviting applications led by nurses and midwives.

To support capacity building, **all applications to this funding opportunity must be led by a nurse or a midwife at an early stage of their research career.** For this funding opportunity, an early career researcher is a researcher who has not yet been the lead investigator for a substantial project award (>£100,000). This excludes personal awards and fellowships. The early career nurse or midwife is expected to apply as lead applicant supported by **a senior colleague fulfilling the role as joint-lead applicant.** The joint-lead mentor can have any relevant professional background as long as they are experienced researchers in a field

relevant to the proposed research. The mentor is expected to have led at least one large research project (at a value of >£100,000) to completion and have relevant experience of mentoring an early career researcher.

The RfPB programme is inviting outline applications for research proposals that concern the day-to-day practice of health service staff and that have the potential to impact the health or wellbeing of patients and users of the NHS. The funding opportunity is for proposals up to £500,000 for a period of up to three years. The [RfPB tiered](https://www.nihr.ac.uk/research-patient-benefit-programme-guidance-funding-limits) (<https://www.nihr.ac.uk/research-patient-benefit-programme-guidance-funding-limits>) approach to funding limits according to the trajectory to patient benefit also applies.

This funding opportunity launches on 19 November 2025 and applicants must submit an [**expression of interest form**](#)

(https://docs.google.com/forms/d/1MRZVJ_HvW0CkK1oKPSrtidaNLuhQsGlndK2fb4p6br0/edit) **by 2**

March 2026, ahead of submission of the outline application. The submission deadline for applications is **8 April 2026 at 1 pm**. Applications should be submitted using the online form on the [NIHR awards management system](https://awardsmanagement.nihr.ac.uk/s_Login.jsp) (https://awardsmanagement.nihr.ac.uk/s_Login.jsp).

Applicants are strongly encouraged to start completing the online form early.

Webinar

A virtual Q&A webinar for this call took place on Wednesday 3 December 2025 for potential applicants.

If you would like access to the slides or the recording please contact urdrfpb@nihr.ac.uk (<mailto:urdrfpb@nihr.ac.uk>)

Key dates

3 December 2025, 2pm

Webinar

19 November 2025, 1pm

Outline application opening date

2 March 2026, 5pm

Expression of interest deadline

8 April 2026, 1pm

Outline application closing date

26 August 2026, 1pm

Full application opening date

7 October 2026, 1pm

Full application closing date

February 2027

Full application funding decision

Supporting information

In 2021, NIHR published '[Best Research for Best Health: The Next Chapter](https://www.nihr.ac.uk/best-research-best-health-next-chapter#tab-106711)' (<https://www.nihr.ac.uk/best-research-best-health-next-chapter#tab-106711>) identifying a strategic focus to strengthen the careers for research delivery staff and under-represented disciplines and specialisms. To address this, the RfPB programme has run a series of funding opportunities aimed towards [nurses and midwives](https://www.nihr.ac.uk/news/nurses-and-midwives-awarded-ps3m-nihr-research-patient-benefit-programme-across-16-projects) (<https://www.nihr.ac.uk/news/nurses-and-midwives-awarded-ps3m-nihr-research-patient-benefit-programme-across-16-projects>), [research methodologists](https://www.nihr.ac.uk/news/methodologists-awarded-ps5m-nihr-research-patient-benefit-programme-across-25-projects#:~:text=The%20NIHR%20Research%20for%20Patient%20Benefit%20(RfPB)%20Programme%20has%20funded,been%20awarded%20across%2025%20projects.) ([https://www.nihr.ac.uk/news/methodologists-awarded-ps5m-nihr-research-patient-benefit-programme-across-25-projects#:~:text=The%20NIHR%20Research%20for%20Patient%20Benefit%20\(RfPB\)%20Programme%20has%20funded,been%20awarded%20across%2025%20projects.](https://www.nihr.ac.uk/news/methodologists-awarded-ps5m-nihr-research-patient-benefit-programme-across-25-projects#:~:text=The%20NIHR%20Research%20for%20Patient%20Benefit%20(RfPB)%20Programme%20has%20funded,been%20awarded%20across%2025%20projects.)), the 14 [allied health professionals](https://www.nihr.ac.uk/news/allied-health-professionals-awarded-ps63m-nihr-research-patient-benefit-programme-across-27-projects) (<https://www.nihr.ac.uk/news/allied-health-professionals-awarded-ps63m-nihr-research-patient-benefit-programme-across-27-projects>) listed by NHS England and [other registered health and care professionals](https://www.nihr.ac.uk/rfpb-urd-orhcps-call-specification) (<https://www.nihr.ac.uk/rfpb-urd-orhcps-call-specification>). The RfPB programme encourages these professionals to continue applying to the regular RfPB funding opportunities and is now launching a second funding opportunity inviting nurses and midwives to submit applications as lead applicants. RfPB funding can help [boost the research careers](https://www.nihr.ac.uk/story/how-nihr-rfpb-funding-empowered-midwife-lead-maternal-health-research) (<https://www.nihr.ac.uk/story/how-nihr-rfpb-funding-empowered-midwife-lead-maternal-health-research>) of nurses and midwives by providing opportunities to e.g. explore new approaches, develop skills and expand networks. The funding opportunity is part of the ongoing [NIHR](#)

investment to increase research opportunities for health and care professionals

(<https://www.nihr.ac.uk/news/extra-30m-a-year-to-boost-research-careers-for-healthcare-professionals/34213>).

The RfPB programme is researcher-led and does not specify topics for research, so applications can be primary, secondary and include quantitative, qualitative and mixed methods designs. The topic of the projects funded in the previous funding opportunity supporting nurses and midwives can be found in the news story on the [website](https://www.nihr.ac.uk/news/nurses-and-midwives-awarded-ps3m-nihr-research-patient-benefit-programme-across-16-projects) (<https://www.nihr.ac.uk/news/nurses-and-midwives-awarded-ps3m-nihr-research-patient-benefit-programme-across-16-projects>).

Scope

The funding opportunity offers researchers considerable flexibility to focus on any subject area or topic provided the application is within [RfPB remit](https://www.nihr.ac.uk/explore-nihr/funding-programmes/research-for-patient-benefit.htm) (<https://www.nihr.ac.uk/explore-nihr/funding-programmes/research-for-patient-benefit.htm>). We welcome applications that focus on the research priorities identified by the relevant research communities. Please note that topics around workforce including staff retention are also in scope as long as the trajectory to patient benefit is clearly outlined.

Applications should be co-produced with service commissioners, providers and service users wherever appropriate to better ensure findings are of immediate utility in policy and practice. Applicants may wish to consult the [briefing notes for researchers - public involvement in NHS, health and social care research](https://www.nihr.ac.uk/documents/briefing-notes-for-researchers-public-involvement-in-nhs-health-and-social-care-research/27371). (<https://www.nihr.ac.uk/documents/briefing-notes-for-researchers-public-involvement-in-nhs-health-and-social-care-research/27371>)

RfPB is a response mode/researcher-led funding programme for applied health and care research. As such, the research needs to have a demonstrable impact on the health or health care of users of that service. Although the specific research topics are not specified, you are encouraged to read the programme's aims and scope statements. The potential trajectory to patient benefit is a core assessment criteria, so ensure that the patient and/or public benefit arising from the study are clearly outlined. Furthermore, assessments also consider the strength of the research design and methodologies, as well as dissemination strategies that will enhance the likelihood that the results can be rolled out across the health and care sector.

Eligibility

Requirements for applications submitted under this funding opportunity:

- Standard eligibility rules will apply as detailed in the applicant guidance.

- Lead applicants should be an early career researcher with a background in nursing or midwifery. For this funding opportunity, an early career researcher is a researcher who has not yet been the lead investigator for a substantial project award (>£100,000). This excludes personal awards and fellowships.
- The early career researcher should be supported by a senior researcher applying as the joint-lead applicant and by a strong multi-disciplinary research team. The joint-lead mentor can have any relevant professional background as long as they are experienced researchers in a field relevant to the proposed research. There is no specified academic level or degree required for the experienced senior co-lead applicant. However, the mentor is expected to have led at least one large research project (at a value of >£100,000) to completion and have relevant experience of mentoring an early career researcher.
- Host eligibility will include an NHS body or other provider of NHS services in England. Other relevant organisations and authorities are permitted as co-applicants but not necessarily host/lead organisations.

Funding

The funding opportunity is for applications up to £500,000 (100% direct costs for NHS and 80% full Economic Cost (fEC) for HEI) for a period of up to three years.

RfPB operates a [tiered funding system](https://www.nihr.ac.uk/research-patient-benefit-programme-guidance-funding-limits) (<https://www.nihr.ac.uk/research-patient-benefit-programme-guidance-funding-limits>), which reflects the likelihood of achieving patient benefit. Each application will need to provide a robust case for value for money.

RfPB guidance for outline applications

While many aspects of the application form will look familiar to those who have applied to the NIHR through the research management system, there are many differences too.

Please read our [domestic outline application guidance](https://www.nihr.ac.uk/research-funding/application-support/guidance/domestic-programmes-outline-application-guidance) (<https://www.nihr.ac.uk/research-funding/application-support/guidance/domestic-programmes-outline-application-guidance>) to help you complete all aspects of your application. You must read this alongside the information below, which details specific application requirements and guidance for this funding opportunity. You can also refer to the FAQs.

Contracting organisation

Please note that for RfPB, applications must be made through an NHS body or other provider of NHS services in England. 'NHS body' means: (a) the Board; (b) a Clinical Commissioning Group; (c) a Special Health Authority; (d) an NHS trust; and (e) an NHS foundation trust. 'NHS provider' includes: Community interest companies. If the application is successful, the NHS body or other provider of NHS services in England will act as the contracting organisation, meaning that it will be the recipient of the funds, and will ultimately be responsible for the delivery of the research.

If you have any queries, please contact urdrfpb@nichr.ac.uk (mailto:urdrfpb@nichr.ac.uk) before submitting your application.

Duration (months)

The maximum duration of an RfPB-funded project is 36 months

Total cost to NIHR

The programme has an upper limit of £500,000 for research costs requested from the NIHR and all applications must fall within this limit. **We will not accept applications that have asked for funding which exceeds the funding cap per project.**

Value-for-money is considered at both the outline and full application stages and applicants should read the [Guidance on funding limits](https://www.nichr.ac.uk/research-patient-benefit-programme-guidance-funding-limits) (https://www.nichr.ac.uk/research-patient-benefit-programme-guidance-funding-limits) page to ensure the work planned in their application aligns with what is expected of an RfPB application at a particular level of funding.

Broadly, these it may be helpful for applicants if they work within three cost tiers for their research:

- up to £500,000 for research that might have fairly immediate patient benefit (such as a randomised controlled clinical trial),
- up to £300,000 for research in preparation for full trials, including feasibility studies and pilots depending on the extent of uncertainties,
- up to £200,000 for more upstream research, such as observational studies or proof of concept studies, that will generate results that may be useful for more downstream investigations or might carry a higher risk of failing to achieve patient benefit.

These are not fixed cost limits but indicative ranges. Costs will be accepted if they are well justified and demonstrate value for money in terms of the potential for realising patient

benefit.

Lead applicant and research team

RfPB grants must be administered by an NHS body or other provider of NHS services in England and the lead applicant must have an appropriate relationship with the lead body submitting the application to ensure proper governance and accountability. This means that the lead applicant (if they are not already employed by the NHS body or other provider of NHS services) will need to arrange an honorary contract with that organisation. However, it is not necessary for the honorary contract to be in place when the application is submitted, as long as the lead body is able to confirm that it intends to provide an honorary contract if the application is successful.

For this specific funding opportunity, the lead applicant should be a nurse or midwife at an early stage of their research careers, with a more senior colleague fulfilling the role of mentor and joint lead applicant. For a joint-lead applicant, ensure there is a clear description in the 'Proposed role' section of how they will provide mentorship and guidance for the early career researcher fulfilling the role of lead applicant. Please summarise the proposed joint lead applicant's relevant expertise and track record in applied health research, in terms of skills and experience, previous publications, grant funding and impact on health service provision.

Please note that RfPB allows a maximum of 11 members on a research team (either one lead applicant and 10 co-applicants or 2 joint-lead applicants and 9 co-applicants).

Research plan

Do not upload a research plan that is more than 5 pages. If research plans are submitted that are longer than 5 pages, these will be rejected. Research plans should be written in Arial size 12 font and no smaller, use unadjusted margins from the template and show page numbers within the document footer. If invited to submit a full application, this will have a 15 page limit.

Please note that the sections of the Research Plan mentioned here have RfPB-specific requirements or considerations for applicants to follow. The section headings must be retained from the template, but you do not need to create extra sub-headings for the information provided below. These are only guidelines on what information is expected from the programme in those sections.

For the remaining sections of the Research Plan not mentioned, please follow the information provided in the standard [domestic outline application guidance](https://www.nihr.ac.uk/research-funding/application-support/guidance/domestic-programmes-outline-application-guidance) (<https://www.nihr.ac.uk/research-funding/application-support/guidance/domestic-programmes-outline-application-guidance>).

As a guide, we would recommend that no more than 2 pages are allocated to detailing the background and rationale of the proposed work (including the aims and objectives). Around 2

pages should then be allocated to the methodology section detailing the project design and timeline/milestones. The remaining considerations within the methodology section detailing the work done in partnership with those affected by your research, inclusive research considerations and knowledge mobilisation, etc. can be detailed in the extra page or so.

Background and rationale

Please remember to provide a clear explanation of the health problem to be addressed, the impact on patients/service users, carers, practitioners as well as health and care services, and how this research would fill a demonstrable evidence gap, addressing patient/service user and carer needs and DHSC priorities (at national or local levels).

Explain how your proposed research is within the remit of the RfPB programme and how it addresses the key aim of the programme to produce research findings that will have practical application for the benefit of patients, service users, carers, the public or populations, and the NHS or social care sector in the relatively near future. Your application should also demonstrate its likely trajectory to patient benefit and the anticipated timescale of this.

Applicants are reminded that the application will be reviewed by assessors who may not have a detailed understanding of the particular clinical, public health or social care area that your application relates to. It is vitally important that you clearly tell the story of why this research is important, and how it will make a stepped change to practice and/or outcomes. The committee is looking for novel approaches. Research which, in the committee's view, represents only an incremental development on current practice, or is unlikely to have general application / uptake is unlikely to be supported. Research which improves efficiency and effectiveness (rather than increasing workload in an already stretched NHS) is welcomed.

It is essential that you clearly identify the health and care need that your research aims to address. Please outline the anticipated value or contribution the study will provide.

Briefly describe:

1. the importance of the proposed research and its relevance to the priorities and needs of the NHS (including a statement of the significance of the research area, e.g. burden of disease). If you are responding to a themed call or highlight notice, please explain how your proposed research addresses the key themes of the call or notice.
2. the anticipated outputs, outcomes and impact of the proposed research on the health of patients/service users, carers and/or the public, highlighting the trajectory to patient benefit and quantifying the potential benefits, where possible

3. the anticipated timescale for the benefits resulting from the proposed research to be realised.

Explain why this research is needed now, both in terms of time and relevance. We will only fund primary research where the proposed research is informed by a review of the existing evidence.

Briefly describe:

1. the need for research in this area, drawing particularly from systematic reviews (including NHS context and relevant literature), and the rationale for the particular lines of research you plan to pursue.
2. past and current research that justifies the proposed research and shows that it will add distinct value to what is already known, or in progress
3. work undertaken previously by the research team which has led to the proposed programme (e.g. describe any pilot or feasibility data).

Timetable

Briefly detail the timetable for the proposed research, including key milestones and deliverables.

Inclusive research

The NIHR is committed to embedding Research Inclusion in all work that it funds. To ensure awardees are able to conduct effective research inclusive activities within their work, the Research for Patient Benefit programme will consider awards that exceed the usual tier limit by up to £10,000. This additional funding must be ringfenced for activities that address research inclusion within the proposed work and should be detailed in the grant costings.

Knowledge mobilisation, dissemination and impact

An effective knowledge mobilisation plan is essential to ensure that there is a clear trajectory to patient benefit from your proposed research. This should go beyond the traditional approach of academic dissemination as an output to a clear strategy on how findings will be realistically implemented into practice. In a good knowledge mobilisation plan, applicants should consider:

- Identify the professionals who will be responsible for using the research findings and implementing possible change.

- Active strategies to identify barriers or facilitators to the planned implementation or roll out.
- The best method through which relevant professionals will be helped to change practice.
- If findings are planned to be adopted into clinical or good practice guidelines, then who will do this and how it will be done with consideration to how those specific documents are updated.
- National audits to monitor change

While it won't be possible to detail this fully at the outline stage, applicants should be able to demonstrate that a robust knowledge mobilisation strategy has been considered.

For further information on effective knowledge mobilisation strategies, please read the NIHR [guidance on this topic](https://www.nihr.ac.uk/research-funding/application-support/planning-knowledge-mobilisation) (<https://www.nihr.ac.uk/research-funding/application-support/planning-knowledge-mobilisation>).

For pilot or feasibility studies, clear progression criteria to the substantive study should be provided, including identification of the potential funder of the substantive study. Time should also be allocated to the development of the protocol for the substantive study should the proposed pilot or feasibility study be successful.

For further information on applying for feasibility studies, we recommend that you refer to the [Guidance on applying for feasibility studies](https://www.nihr.ac.uk/guidance-applying-feasibility-studies) (<https://www.nihr.ac.uk/guidance-applying-feasibility-studies>) page.

Uploads

Mandatory

One single-side A4 page, listing references used throughout your proposal.

Non-mandatory

If required, an additional supporting (single side of A4) document can be submitted with your application form (e.g., a flow diagram illustrating the study design and the flow of participants, gantt chart, diagrams, pictures etc.). If submitting a flow diagram, applicants should also describe complex interventions and controls as accurately and fully as possible within their diagram. The PDF file should be submitted in the 'flexible upload' slot in your application form.

While there are options for multiple types of non-mandatory uploads at the outline application stage, **only one non-mandatory upload will be accepted**. If more than one non-mandatory document is uploaded, then the extra files will be disregarded by a Committee in their

assessment of the application. In light of this restriction, documents such as letters of support can be referenced within the outline application with the expectation that the evidence will be provided at the full application stage, should it be invited.

RfPB guidance for full applications

While many aspects of the application form will look familiar to those who have applied to the NIHR through the research management system, there are many differences too.

Please read our [domestic full application guidance](https://www.nihr.ac.uk/research-funding/application-support/guidance/domestic-programmes-full-application-guidance) (<https://www.nihr.ac.uk/research-funding/application-support/guidance/domestic-programmes-full-application-guidance>) to help you complete all aspects of your application. You must read this alongside the information below, which details specific application requirements and guidance for this funding opportunity. You can also refer to the FAQs.

Summary information - contracting Organisation

Please note that for RfPB, applications must be made through an NHS body or other provider of NHS services in England. 'NHS body' means: (a) the Board; (b) an integrated care system; (c) a Special Health Authority; (d) an NHS trust; and (e) an NHS foundation trust. 'NHS provider' includes: Community interest companies. If the application is successful, the NHS body or other provider of NHS services in England will act as the contracting organisation, meaning that it will be the recipient of the funds, and will ultimately be responsible for the delivery of the research.

If you have any queries, please contact urdrfpb@nihr.ac.uk (<mailto:urdrfpb@nihr.ac.uk>) before submitting your application.

Summary information - research duration

The maximum duration of an RfPB-funded project is 36 months

Applicants invited to submit a full application should refer to the information relating to commencement dates in their outline stage feedback letter.

Summary information - requested amount to NIHR

The programme has an upper limit of £500,000 for research costs requested from the NIHR and all applications must fall within this limit. In addition to this, a further £10,000 beyond the tier limit can be requested provided it is devoted solely to support inclusive research practices.

We will not accept applications that have asked for funding which exceeds the funding cap per project.

Value-for-money is considered at both the outline and full application stages and applicants should read the [Guidance on funding limits](https://www.nihr.ac.uk/research-patient-benefit-programme-guidance-funding-limits) (<https://www.nihr.ac.uk/research-patient-benefit-programme-guidance-funding-limits>) page to ensure the work planned in their application aligns with what is expected of an RfPB application at a particular level of funding.

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For this specific funding opportunity, the lead applicant should be a nurse or midwife at an early stage of their research career, with a more senior colleague fulfilling the role of mentor and joint lead applicant. For a joint lead applicant, ensure there is a clear description in the 'Proposed role' section of how they will provide mentorship and guidance for the early career researcher fulfilling the role of Lead Applicant. Please summarise the proposed joint lead applicant's relevant expertise and track record in applied health research, in terms of skills and experience, previous publications, grant funding and impact on health service provision.

Please note that RfPB allows a maximum of 11 members on a research team (either one lead applicant and 10 co-applicants or 2 joint-lead applicants and 9 co-applicants).

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For the remaining sections of the Research Plan not mentioned, please follow the information provided in the [standard domestic full application guidance](https://www.nihr.ac.uk/domestic-programmes-funding-guidance-full-applications) (<https://www.nihr.ac.uk/domestic-programmes-funding-guidance-full-applications>).

Research plan – background and rationale

Please remember to provide a clear explanation of the health problem to be addressed, the impact on patients/service users, carers, practitioners as well as health and care services, and how this research would fill a demonstrable evidence gap, addressing patient/service user and carer needs and DHSC priorities (at national or local levels).

Explain how your proposed research fits within the remit of the RfPB programme and how it addresses the key aim of the programme to support research which is concerned with the day-to-day practice of health service staff, and which has the potential to have an impact on the health or wellbeing of patients/carers and service users of the NHS and/or social care services. Your application should also demonstrate its likely trajectory to patient benefit and the anticipated timescale of this.

Remember that the application will be reviewed by assessors who may not have a detailed understanding of the particular clinical area that your application relates to. It is vitally important that you clearly tell the story of why this research is important, and how it will make a step change to practice and/or outcomes. Research which improves efficiency and effectiveness (rather than increasing workload in an already stretched NHS) is welcomed.

Research plan – methodology/plan

The research plan for a feasibility study should also contain a brief outline of the substantive trial, along with a list of the key 'uncertain' parameters that are needed to design the trial.

Please refer to the [Guidance on Applying for Feasibility Studies](https://www.nihr.ac.uk/guidance-applying-feasibility-studies) (<https://www.nihr.ac.uk/guidance-applying-feasibility-studies>) for more information.

For full trials, collaboration with a Clinical Trials Unit is recommended where appropriate. A list of units with experience working with RfPB can be found by using the [UKCRC CTU Network Resource Finder](https://ukcrc-ctu.org.uk/find-a-ctu/) (<https://ukcrc-ctu.org.uk/find-a-ctu/>) and choosing RfPB in the 'Experience of Applying to Funding Bodies' search field.

Research plan – inclusive research

The NIHR is committed to embedding Research Inclusion in all work that it funds. To ensure awardees are able to conduct effective research inclusive activities within their work, the Research for Patient Benefit programme will consider awards that exceed the usual tier limit by up to £10,000. This additional funding must be ringfenced for activities that address research inclusion within the proposed work and should be detailed in the grant costings.

Research plan – knowledge mobilisation, dissemination and impact

An effective knowledge mobilisation plan is essential to ensure that there is a clear trajectory to patient benefit from your proposed research. This should go beyond the traditional approach of academic dissemination as an output to a clear strategy on how findings will be realistically implemented into practice. In a good knowledge mobilisation plan, applicants should consider:

- Identify the professionals who will be responsible for using the research findings and implementing possible change.
- Active strategies to identify barriers or facilitators to the planned implementation or roll out.
- The best method through which relevant professionals will be helped to change practice.
- If findings are planned to be adopted into clinical or good practice guidelines, then who will do this and how it will be done with consideration to how those specific documents are updated.
- National audits to monitor change

While it won't be possible to detail this fully at the outline stage, applicants should be able to demonstrate that a robust knowledge mobilisation strategy has been considered.

For further information on effective knowledge mobilisation strategies, please read the NIHR [guidance on this topic](https://www.nihr.ac.uk/research-funding/application-support/planning-knowledge-mobilisation) (<https://www.nihr.ac.uk/research-funding/application-support/planning-knowledge-mobilisation>).

It is expected that when feasibility studies are proposed, clear progression criteria to the substantive trial will be provided, including identification of the potential funder of the substantive trial. Please refer to the [Guidance on Applying for Feasibility Studies](https://www.nihr.ac.uk/documents/guidance-on-applying-for-feasibility-studies/20474) (<https://www.nihr.ac.uk/documents/guidance-on-applying-for-feasibility-studies/20474>) for more information.

Uploads

Mandatory

- A list of references cited in the application (maximum 3 pages A4)
- Please attach a Gantt chart indicating a schedule for the completion of work, including the timing of key milestones and deliverables.
- A completed Funder Export from the online Schedule of Events Cost Attribution Tool (SoECAT) or if this is not applicable an explanation added to the Justification of Costs section.
- If involving a CTU, a letter of support should also be included.

Non-mandatory

The following file(s) are considered non-mandatory to submission; please number your files and attach

Supporting documentation, including protocols, questionnaires, logic models, flow diagrams, pictures, charts, letters of support (including letters to confirm support for funding NHS Support and Treatment costs), papers in press etc. No more than five separate files are permitted (this includes the SoECAT form and the Gantt Chart uploaded earlier in the form). All supporting documentation must be uploaded with a clear and concise filename description, preceded by a numbered 'Appendix' reference. Please ensure documents of the following type are uploaded: .doc, .docx, .xlsx and .pdf.

Who is considered an early career researcher and does this preclude anyone that has had previous NIHR funding? How much experience do you expect the CI to have? How much research experience does the ECR lead have to have had? Can they be a completely novel researcher supported by someone more experienced? Does the project have to be joint led, can it be led by the

early career researcher midwife/nurse with support from a wider team, as required?

For this funding opportunity we consider any researcher who has not yet been the chief investigator for a substantial award (£100,000+) to be an early career researcher. There is no requirement for an ECR to hold a higher academic degree (i.e. Master degree or PhD), however we would expect that the ECR will have some prior relevant research experience which will demonstrate their potential to lead a project. A recent laureate of a fellowship/ PhD studentship would still be considered an early career researcher. We are keen to encourage fresh ideas from new researchers and as appropriate applications are welcomed from those with limited research experience, ECR must be supported by a senior colleague who would be fulfilling the role of mentor and Joint Lead Applicant and an experienced, strong and multi-disciplinary team. We expect to see a justification for the choice of mentor and a summary of their relevant expertise and track record in applied health research (skills and experience, previous publications, grant funding and impact on health service provision). In addition, it is expected that there is a strong, experienced multidisciplinary team participating in the application and supporting the delivery of the project.

Is someone still regarded as an ECR if they have been awarded a fellowship rather than a research grant of more than £100,000?

A recent laureate of a fellowship/ PhD studentship would still be considered an early career researcher, even if it exceeds £100,000.

Do I need a PhD to apply?

There is no requirement for an early career researcher (ECR) to hold a higher academic degree (i.e. Master degree or PhD) but we would expect the ECR to have some prior research experience to demonstrate the potential to lead a project.

Do you have to have a joint lead? Can the senior lead/co-lead have a Professional Doctorate qualification rather than PhD?

To support capacity building we require that all applications to this call must be led by a nurse or a midwife at an early stage of their research career. They are expected to apply as the lead applicant together with a senior colleague fulfilling the role as joint-lead applicant and acting as a mentor for the ECR. The joint-lead mentor can have any relevant professional background (and no specified level of expertise or academic level or degree is required) as long as they are experienced researchers in a field relevant to the proposed research. The mentor is expected to have led at least one large research project (at a value of >£100,000) to completion and have

relevant experience of mentoring an early career researcher. Applications not fulfilling this requirement will not be considered.

Is this award suitable for early career researchers and can you apply if you have not yet submitted PhD but will do within the next 12 months?

There is no formal requirement for an ECR to hold a PhD and so eligible candidates with background in nursery or midwifery with some research experience could be eligible to apply to this funding opportunity.

Can the research be used to support an ECR applicant to undertake a PhD during the award? Can funding for doctoral studentships be included in the application? Can a part of the funding go towards my PhD course fees? Can a PI include costings for a PhD or part of a PhD for one of the members of the research team that the PI and co-PIs would supervise as part of the research study?

A formal academic degree is not an eligibility requirement for this funding opportunity. Please see responses to questions above for further details. Doctoral studentship wouldn't be eligible under this funding opportunity as the NIHR does not fund PhD studentships through its research programmes. It is possible, however, for a researcher employed to work on an NIHR funded research project to register for a PhD based on the funded project, although RfPB would not reimburse fees.

Do I have to be a fully clinical nurse to take part? Is any preference given to nurses in clinical practice vs HEIs?

The selection criteria does not specify a preference for a particular background. The selection Committee would assess the relevance of the background in connection to the proposed project.

Is the call open to nurses working outside of the NHS?

The selection criteria does not specify the setting in which the research would have to be conducted, however, please note the requirement for the applications to be made through a NHS body or other NHS service provider which would act as the Contractor should the application be successful.

Can a researcher be co-applicant in multiple applications, for example can one researcher be the lead applicant on their own proposal and then a co-

applicant on other 1-2 applications?

Yes, this would be allowed, however researchers would have to consider if they were able to deliver multiple research projects if they would all get funded.

Can applicants to the funding opportunity be from different HEIs? How do joint applications look in terms of NHS / HEI proposals for a joint submission?

As long as the host organisation is an NHS provider (please see below in the main body of this document), the joint lead applicant can be from one or more HEIs. Please note that we would pay 100% direct costs for NHS and 80% full Economic Cost (fEC) for HEI.

Can two NHS trusts and one local authority be involved as organisations?

Can the project be joint with another organisation i.e NHS and prison?

Applications must be made through an NHS body or other provider of NHS services in England. If the application is successful, the NHS body or other provider of NHS services in England will act as the contracting organisation, meaning that it will be the recipient of the funds, and will ultimately be responsible for the delivery of the research. Other NHS body/NHS service providers, local authorities, HEIs, charities or commercial companies can be party to an application as co-applicants or collaborating partners.

How will the composition of the team be assessed with regard to underrepresented professions?

For this funding opportunity, all applications must be led by a nurse or a midwife. We would expect the lead and joint-lead applicants to be supported by a strong, experienced multidisciplinary team. Their background and areas of expertise would be assessed against the skills required for the delivery of the specific proposal.

Will applications submitted to the funding opportunity be considered by a regional committee?

A special selection Committee will be assembled for this funding opportunity and it will consider applications submitted from all English regions. The Committee will draw from the expertise of current RfPB regional Committee members and other experts relevant to the call. The Committee membership will be published on the NIHR website when the information becomes available.

What details are needed for the expression of interest (EOI) form?

Follow standard research summary format. EoIs should be top level and provide a short summary of the proposed research, the underlying objectives and methods and identify lead and key partners. It should be no longer than 500 words.

Is there a selection process following submission of EOI, or is it purely for notification purposes?

Information required is for administrative purposes only and will not be part of the assessment. EoIs should be top level and provide a short summary of the proposed research, the underlying objectives and methods and identify lead and key partners.

Can you still apply to the funding opportunity if you have not submitted an EOI?

No, an EoI submission is required for the outline application submission to be accepted. Applicants should not wait for a response from the NIHR after submitting the EOI form but proceed to finalise work on outline application form on the award management system and submit by the deadline.

Key differences from usual RfPB call

Applications should be led by an early career nurse and/or midwife supported by an experienced senior mentor applying as the joint-lead applicant.

Would the funding also cover international collaborations? Is the funding suitable for a project that has supervision from non UK universities?

International collaborators or co-applicants are eligible for this funding call as long as patient benefit of the project is brought to patients in England and there is a strong justification provided for their involvement in the study.

Would a research focus on the healthcare workforce fit the remit of the RfPB call?

Topics related to workforce and staff retention would also be in scope for this call as long as there is trajectory to patient benefit clearly outlined.

Does the funding cover salary (full or part-time) for the lead applicant?

NIHR funding will cover salary for the time committed to the project, i.e. for research activity. The pay and time devoted for clinical work needs to be negotiated with the trust.

Application process

Find out how to apply for this funding opportunity and what you need to do to get your application ready.

Please read all the information and guidance carefully before submitting your application.

How to apply

When you are ready to apply, log in to our application system to apply. This funding opportunity is on our awards management system and you will need to create a new account if you do not have one already.

The closing date is **08 April 2026 at 1 pm. Applications received after 1 pm on the closing date will not be considered.**

If your outline application is shortlisted you will be invited to submit a full application.

Please read the following guidance before submitting an application:

- [Domestic outline application guidance](https://www.nihr.ac.uk/research-funding/application-support/guidance/domestic-programmes-outline-application-guidance) (<https://www.nihr.ac.uk/research-funding/application-support/guidance/domestic-programmes-outline-application-guidance>)
- [Frequently asked questions](#)
- all the information highlighted in the 'Application guidance' tab of this funding opportunity

(/media/24286/download/)

domestic-outline-application-form-template.docx

DOCX |

Last updated: 3 December 2025

[Download document \(27.2 KB\)](#)

Research inclusion and reasonable adjustments

At NIHR we are committed to [creating a diverse and inclusive culture](https://www.nihr.ac.uk/about-us/who-we-are/research-inclusion) (<https://www.nihr.ac.uk/about-us/who-we-are/research-inclusion>). We encourage applications from people from all backgrounds and communities bringing diverse skills and experiences. If you need any reasonable adjustments throughout the application process, please contact the programme team via the information in the 'Contact details' tab.

Research Support Service

Do you have a research idea but not sure how to turn it into a funding application? The NIHR [Research Support Service \(RSS\)](https://www.nihr.ac.uk/support-and-services/research-support-service) (<https://www.nihr.ac.uk/support-and-services/research-support-service>) supports researchers in England to apply for funding. It can help you develop and deliver clinical and applied health, social care and public health research post award.

Contact Details

- For help with your application contact rfpb@nihr.ac.uk (<mailto:rfpb@nihr.ac.uk>)
- For more information about the funding Programme, visit the [RfPB Page](/research-funding/funding-programmes/research-for-patient-benefit) (</research-funding/funding-programmes/research-for-patient-benefit>)
- Got a research idea and not sure how to turn it into a funding application? The NIHR Research Support Service (RSS) supports researchers in England to apply for funding, and to develop and deliver clinical and applied health, social care and public health research post award. [Find out how the RSS can help you](https://www.nihr.ac.uk/explore-nihr/support/research-support-service/) (<https://www.nihr.ac.uk/explore-nihr/support/research-support-service/>).