

NIHR PenARC Pre-Application Support Fund Overview and Application Guidance: Round 3

Overview of PenARC

The [National Institute for Health and Care Research Applied Research Collaboration South West Peninsula \(PenARC\)](#) is a collaboration between NHS trusts, Integrated Care Boards and local authorities across Cornwall, Devon and Somerset; both regional universities; voluntary sector organisations; and Health Innovation South West. We aim to improve lives and the quality of health and social care in South West England through applied research. We work with health and social care professionals, researchers and local communities to ensure research meets the needs of our local population.

PenARC focuses on six major, complementary research themes:

- Mental Health
- Dementia
- Public Health
- Complex Care
- Methods for Research and Improvement
- Children's Health and Maternity

In addition to these themes, local NHS priorities include:

- Urgent and Emergency Care
- Rehabilitation
- Multiple long-term conditions (including frailty)

Overview of funding scope

The NIHR PenARC Pre-Application Support Fund provides funding that individuals across the South West Peninsula can use to help prepare a larger application [for an NIHR Fellowship career development scheme](#). It is aimed at those who require additional support to submit a competitive application, where they would otherwise not have the opportunity to do so.

The provision of these funds aims to enhance clinical, practitioner and methodological academic career-building capacity across the region, particularly for those professions considered underserved in research, to have protected time to develop their academic career. Specifically, allocated time to conceptualise and write high-quality funding applications is essential to be competitive for the NIHR career development funding schemes. The scheme, therefore, directly addresses this critical bottleneck by providing these individuals dedicated time and space to draft competitive applications.

In Round 3 of this funding, we will be accepting applications from those intending to apply for an NIHR [Doctoral](#) or [Postdoctoral](#) Fellowship only. Funding will be available for a maximum of 6 months, and will need to begin no later than **Monday 1st September 2025**.

About the Pre-Application Support Fund

We recognise the need to adopt a flexible approach to meet your individual requirements. Funding can be requested for a maximum equivalent of 50% FTE for 6 months.

Awards must be completed by the end of March 2026.

In addition to the contribution of funds to buy out the necessary time to prepare a competitive NIHR [Doctoral](#) or [Postdoctoral](#) Fellowship application, the funds outlined below are also available to apply for. Please refer to appendix 1 for guidance on costings.

- Up to £2,500 to support training
- Up to £1,500 for supervisory and mentoring input
- Up to £500 for Patient and Public Involvement and Engagement (PPIE), including funds to support accessibility needs for public collaborators
- Up to £1,500 to support your personal accessibility requirements

All costs requested should be specific to preparing your application. A brief justification of how requested costs will enable this should be provided in the application form.

Awardees will become part of the PenARC community where support will continue, and regular contact will be maintained to monitor career development and the outcome of submitted applications. To complement the support offered by PenARC, additional training opportunities will be available across our regional NIHR infrastructure group for academic career development. If required, we will also help successful applicants to identify a mentor to support the development and writing their fellowship application.

Expectation

It is expected that awardees submit their NIHR career development scheme application within 6 months after the funding period has ended. To help us satisfy our reporting requirements to NIHR, open lines of communication must be maintained with PenARC to provide updates on application status and outcome.

Eligibility Criteria

These fellowships are aimed at **registered health and social care professionals** in nursing, midwifery, allied health professions (AHPs), pharmacy, social care and social work and **research methodologists employed by one of PenARC's [partner organisations](#)**. Prospective candidates must hold a contract for the duration of the award and are expected to continue with elements of their current job alongside the activities as proposed in this application.

As well as prioritising applications from professions and disciplines underrepresented in research, we also encourage and support applications from those from ethnic minority backgrounds and those who have a disability.

In advance of applying, applicants must have discussed their application with their line manager and obtained their full agreement and support to release them from their current position for the time needed to enable them to write a competitive NIHR [Doctoral](#) or [Postdoctoral](#) Fellowship career development scheme application. If successful, managers will be asked to provide written confirmation that the applicant will be released for the requested time, and in the timeframe specified.

NIHR career development programmes which are eligible for this Pre-Application fund award:

- [Doctoral Fellowship](#)
- [Postdoctoral Fellowship](#)

Please note that these are the **only** Fellowship schemes that will be considered for a PenARC Pre-Application Support award in this round. Our scheme is unable to support applications to any other Fellowship or personal award programmes, or for NIHR or other research grants.

The Pre-Application Support Fund may not be held alongside another NIHR career development award. If you have recently held an NIHR award, clear justification will be required as to why further support from the Pre-Application Support Fund is needed. Please note, the funds should not be used purely as bridging funding between the submission of an application and the start of an award for NIHR Career Development Funding. There are several schemes that already include support to prepare a further application for funding, and therefore a clear justification would be required to explain why individuals are not applying directly to those schemes.

Please note that it is your responsibility to ensure you are eligible for the NIHR career development scheme to which you intend to apply: a successful Pre-Application Support Fund application does not guarantee this. Please ensure your project proposal is within the [NIHR Remit for Personal Awards](#). If you have any questions about the remit of your proposal, please contact the programme team responsible for the NIHR Career Development Scheme you plan to apply to by emailing academy-awards@nihr.ac.uk.

Selection process

All applications will undergo an initial screen for eligibility and compatibility with the [NIHR remit for personal awards](#) for the relevant schemes listed in this competition.

Following this, applications will be reviewed by a PenARC Selection Committee, and outcomes disseminated to applicants. If you are not successful, you will receive written feedback.

Assessment criteria:

- A clear explanation as to why additional support is required to submit an application and why now is the right time for this support.
- An outline of how the funds will be used to enhance an application for an NIHR career development scheme.
- The likelihood that the requested support will enable you to prepare a competitive application for NIHR career development funding and that this will further develop your career in research within the NIHR's remit.
- Appropriateness of the proposed support and mentorship and the provision of a strong research environment.
- Alignment with PenARC themes and/or local NHS priorities

Timeline

- Application window: Monday 19th May 2025 to Monday 16th June 2025 at 12:00 noon
- Outcome of application: anticipated to be by Friday 4th July 2025
- Award start: by Monday 1st September 2025 latest
- Award completion: before Tuesday 31st March 2026

Our commitment to Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

We adhere to Equality, Diversity and Inclusivity (EDI) principles. These principles share a fundamental objective to empower better health outcomes for all patients and the public by translating scientific breakthroughs into potential new treatments, diagnostics and medical technologies.

We are committed to ensuring that the consideration of EDI is second nature to all members of our research community, fostering a fully inclusive environment where everyone feels supported, valued, and is provided the opportunity to reach their full potential.

Whilst all applicants will be judged on merit alone, we particularly welcome applications from groups currently underserved within our working community. To understand in which communities we may need to better promote future rounds of the scheme to, or provide additional support to apply, we will ask applicants to complete an anonymous EDI questionnaire.

We will endeavour to make adjustments to remove barriers in the application process. If you have any support, access or communication needs throughout the application process, please contact PenARC@exeter.ac.uk. If successful, we will also work with you to identify adjustments to carry out the award.

How to apply

We will be accepting applications up until **midday on Monday 16th June 2025**. We expect funding decisions to be communicated to all applicants by Friday 4th July 2025. For general enquires about the application process, and to submit your application, please contact PenARC@exeter.ac.uk stating “Pre-Application Support Fund Application” in the subject line.

For enquires about your application, please contact Professor Vicki Goodwin, PenARC Academic Career Development Lead: v.goodwin@exeter.ac.uk

Appendix 1

Salary costs

Funding can be requested for a maximum equivalent of 50% FTE for 6 months. This could be a reduced FTE over a longer period noting that the award must be completed by **31st March 2026**.

This will be a contribution to the salary of the applicant to buy out the necessary time to prepare and submit a competitive application for an eligible NIHR career development scheme. Please clearly state the length of time and full time equivalent (FTE) that will be used to prepare an application, the proposed salary point and scale at the start of the award, and your preferred start date (which must be on or before 1st September 2025). Include employers' pension and National Insurance contributions. You will need to discuss this with your finance department to ensure accuracy.

Training and Development

Training and development costs up to £2,500 may be requested, providing access to necessary training resources will benefit the planned Fellowship application.

This includes travel and subsistence related to training and development. Conference costs, including related travel, accommodation and subsistence, may also be requested here.

Please note that approximate costings are acceptable here and it is not a requirement to have identified a specific training course. Example: "Training course in qualitative research methods in Exeter – approximate cost £500".

Supervision and Mentorship

Supervisory and mentorship input costs of up to £1,500 may be requested.

For example, this could include a contribution to supervisory support to provide expertise on the planned application, or further costs associated with gaining necessary mentor/supervisory support. Application development support costs include travel and subsistence related to mentorship and supervisory support.

This funding may be used freely to facilitate the time spent with mentors or supervisors. It may cover various expenses related to mentorship such as travel expenses, meeting costs, mentor fees and professional development events.

Please name all supervisors/mentors identified, including their current workplace and role they will play in this capacity.

Patient and Public Involvement and Engagement (PPIE)

PPIE input costs of up to £500 may be requested. Costings can be approximate. You may find these [resources](#) helpful when developing your PPIE budget.

Accessibility

Accessibility costs of up to £1,500 may be requested.

This fund is to remove barriers that you would otherwise face in preparing an application for an NIHR career development scheme. Examples of requests:

- Costs relating to caring responsibilities beyond usual care costs for activities undertaken through the award.
- Additional support for applicants with a disability to enable attendance at training courses or events related to their planned application.

Support can be requested for caring responsibilities that arise because of activities undertaken during the award, in addition to your normally incurred care costs. This may include attendance at conferences or training courses that are directly related to the project. You cannot claim childcare costs associated with your normal working patterns.