

New funding available

Pre-application support fellowship funding (round 2)

NIHR ARC East Midlands is delighted to be able to offer dedicated pre-application support fellowship awards for applied health and social care researchers including those who identify as clinical academics or who wish to develop a research focused clinical career, who need funded time to develop a NIHR career development award.

What is it for?

The purpose of this funding is to provide protected, funded time for individuals to prepare a high quality, competitive application for a NIHR career development award (from the list below):

- Predoctoral level: Pre-Doctoral Fellowship; Pre-Doctoral Clinical and Practitioner Academic Fellowship; Pre-Doctoral Local Authority Fellowship Scheme; In-Practice Fellowship.
- Doctoral Level: Doctoral Fellowship; Doctoral Clinical and Practitioner Academic Fellowship; Doctoral Local Authority Fellowship.
- Postdoctoral Level: Development and Skills Enhancement (DSE) Award; Advanced Fellowship; Advanced Clinical and Practitioner Academic Fellowship; Advanced Local Authority Fellowship; Senior Clinical and Practitioner Research Award.
- Other career development awards: Clinical Academic Research Partnerships.

More information about these awards can be found here: <https://www.nihr.ac.uk/career-development/research-career-funding-programmes>.

Applicants will be required to state which of these awards they will be pursuing at point of application to ARC EM. Awards not listed above are outside of the scope of this funding. It is a requirement of the award that an application to one of the above NIHR opportunities will have been submitted by the end of February 2026.

Who is it for?

This funding is designed specifically to offer new opportunities to individuals from traditionally underserved research areas (such as methodological researchers: medical statistics, health economics, clinical trial design, operational research, modelling, bioinformatics, qualitative research, mixed methods and epidemiology), professions (nurses, midwives and allied health care professionals), as well as individuals working in social care and local authorities, and in communities and non-dominant geographical areas, in order to help them apply for NIHR career development awards. You do not need to be HCPC registered to apply. Whilst we are particularly hoping to receive applications from these groups, you are also able to apply for these fellowships if you don't meet any of these characteristics.

In order to apply, you need to be working in the East Midlands already. This might be as a researcher, as a clinician or in health/ social care. You must want to pursue a research career of some kind.

If you are intending on applying for a doctoral level award, you must meet the entry qualifications to register for a PhD before applying for this fellowship. These are PhD programme specific, and so you will need to check with the university you wish to study at. For example, PhDs usually require a 2.1 at undergraduate degree level; some require a Masters degree.

If you are intending to apply for a postdoctoral level award, you must have submitted your thesis by the application deadline for this fellowship award (4th May 2025).

The Pre-Application Support fellowship cannot be held alongside another NIHR career development award (including those from ARC EM). If you have previously been awarded had an NIHR award, clear justification will be required as to why further support from the Pre-Application Support Fund is needed. Previous applicants to this fund are not eligible to apply again.

How much funding is there?

In the current round of funding, we will fund up to 2 individuals. Each individual can apply for up to £25,000.

What should the funding cover?

The funding should be used to pay for the time, support and development you require to enable you to submit a high quality, competitive application for a NIHR career development award.

We expect that the £25,000 award will mostly be used to buy out your time (25-40% FTE) and then probably up to £5,000 in non-pay costs. This must include PPIE (at NIHR rates: <https://www.nihr.ac.uk/payment-guidance-researchers-and-professionals>) and mentorship / supervision costs. However, these are bespoke awards – if you need to request a different split between pay / non-pay, you will be able to do so in the application form and justify the costs you have asked for.

We envisage each award lasting up to 9 months in total. It must be finished by February 2026.

Institutional overheads will not be covered, nor any costs linked to roles / people other than the applicant's time or their mentoring / coaching provision.

There is no additional funding from ARC EM beyond the allocated £25,000 per award.

The following are examples of what the non-pay element of the funding might be used for (this is not an exhaustive list):

- Visiting other research institutes both in the UK and internationally.
- Building research collaboration both in the UK and internationally.
- Funding for professional coaching.
- Attending conferences and presenting work.
- Writing up and publishing research papers (please include open access fees in your budget).
- Developing research networks.
- Training and leadership skills.

You will need to identify a suitable mentor(s) or supervisor(s), who can support you in developing your research ideas and your NIHR career development application. This should be someone senior who can guide you to develop a research network and skills needed to apply for a NIHR career development award. In the application form, you will need to explain why this person is suitable to act as your mentor. They will also need to write a statement of support telling us how they will

support you, and why their expertise makes them the best person to support you. You should budget up to £1,000 to cover the cost of this mentorship / supervision.

We are aware that in some circumstances this funding will not be enough to cover all expenses and additional costs incurred as well as salary support. In these circumstances it is the responsibility of your employer to manage the amount that can be spent to mitigate any financial risk incurred. There will be no additional funds available from NIHR ARC East Midlands.

Payment:

A condition of the award is that the total amount of funding awarded to you, if successful, must be accepted and invoiced for by your employing organisation. They will be responsible for managing the funds in collaboration with yourself.

Format of the fellowship

This is a bespoke award. The format will be dependent on your own developmental needs and what you need in order to be able to submit a high quality, competitive NIHR career development award. In your application form, you will need to tell us how you will use this funded time.

The fellowship must finish by February 2026. At this point, you must have submitted your NIHR application for a career development award.

As part of the award, ARC EM will provide you with (at no additional cost):

- Skills workshops on application writing skills, cultural competency, effective community engagement, and equality impact assessment.
- Facilitated writing days.
- Peer support through online facilitated action learning sets.
- Expert lived experience / buddy system with ARC senior investigators / leaders and NIHR career development award holders from within our ARC community and established ARC Faculty.
- Access to a resource bank, which includes: previous successful applications, letters of support templates, costings, training links and signposts of who to approach for what.
- Professional coaching taster session.
- PPIE Clinic (generic) and access to specialist methodological research PPIE skills.
- Peer review – the opportunity to present your project proposal (application) to the ARC Partners Board (to examine utility for later adoption and spread) and to the ARC Scientific Committee (for independent scientific peer review).
- Mock interview panel(s) - including senior ARC leaders, NIHR RSS service and PPIE - with inclusion of ex / present NIHR panel members.
- Supplementary to mentorship, awardees will also be offered dedicated time with our Academic Career Development Lead to understand the bespoke needs of individuals for readiness / barriers to submitting, that may require additional support over and above those a mentor can offer.

Delivery:

As a condition of funding, successful applicants will be required to deliver:

- 1) Quarterly progress reports for monitoring and progression.
- 2) Training needs assessment & plan of action.

- 3) Participation in action learning sets and PPIE clinics.
- 4) Draft proposal and presentations to ARC boards/committees.
- 5) Revised draft application submitted in advance of mock interview panel.
- 6) Presentation / participation in mock interview panel.
- 7) Submission of NIHR application for career development award by February 2026.

Successful applicants will also, as a condition of funding, have a non-time limited obligation to inform ARC of the following metrics:

- 1) Submission of NIHR funding application(s) as chief investigator and co-applicant.
- 2) Award of NIHR funding as chief investigator and co-applicant.
- 3) Submission / award of other funding applications (non NIHR) as chief investigator and co-applicant.
- 4) Other progression data submitted to the ARC (such as personal fellowships and project funding).
- 5) Career development achievements (promotions, esteem factors) as in/direct result of this funding.
- 6) Building capacity in others (mentoring, supervision, journal clubs, skills sharing).
- 7) Other (i.e implementation of research / improvements into practice).

Application process:

You will need to complete a short application form, but our main assessment method will be a 5-minute recorded PowerPoint presentation that tells us about you and your proposed research idea or vision. This needs to clearly tell us why what you want to research is important (the problem), what you will do (the research), and what difference (and when) it will make to patient's lives (directly or indirectly). Tell us about why we should invest in you! How will this award help you to achieve a bigger NIHR Career Development Award? This will then be watched and scored by our selection panel.

In the application form, you will need to tell us who your subject specific mentor (academic) is, and attach their statement of support, plus a statement of support from your employing organisation. We will need evidence confirming your release from your current role for the days / hours equivalent time you have requested support for. Unless you have a part time job, this application development work should not be accomplished in your own time, but for the funds to be used to 'buy-out' your time at work.

We will ask you to complete a finance section, explaining how you are going to use the £25K allocated to the award.

Shortlisted applicants will be invited for an informal interview on 21st May 2025, where you will be asked to tell us why you should be selected for funding and how this funding would assist in your career development. We will also ask you about your PPIE plans and how you will manage inclusivity in your future research plans.

Applications should be emailed to: ARC-EM-Training@nottingham.ac.uk

Deadline for funding: 23.59pm on 4th May 2025. Applications arriving in the inbox after this date/time will not be accepted.

Interview date 21st May 2025. Interviews will be held online, using Teams.

The application form can be found here: <https://arc-em.nihr.ac.uk/news/apply-now-pre-application-support-fellowships-advance-your-research-career>

Point of contact:

To discuss these awards further, please contact our Academic Career Development / Training Lead, Dr Emma Rowley: Emma.Rowley@nottingham.ac.uk, noting Emma is not available between 3rd – 22nd April 2025.