NIHR | School for Primary Care Research

Guidance Notes for NIHR School for Primary Care Research Primary Care Clinical Fellowships 2026

Overview

The NIHR School for Primary Care Research (SPCR) offers Primary Care Clinical Fellowships to support the development of the primary care clinical workforce into academic primary care research careers.

These fellowships are designed to support early-career primary care research clinicians (pre- or post-doctoral) who demonstrate a clear commitment to a career in academic primary care.

Eligibility

Applications are welcomed from all primary care clinicians, including:

- General Practitioners (GPs)
- Practice nurses
- Health visitors
- Dentists
- Primary care pharmacists
- Optometrists working in primary care
- Allied Health Professionals (AHPs)

Career Stage

- Early career research clinicians
- Pre-doctoral or post-doctoral

Fellowship Duration and Commitment

- Maximum duration: 24 months
- Maximum 0.6 FTE
- Start date: No later than 1 October 2026

The fellowships are intended to be flexible and supportive of clinical commitments.

Research Remit

All proposals must be compatible with the NIHR remit for personal awards: https://www.nihr.ac.uk/documents/academy-nihr-remit-for-personal-awards/21380

In line with current SPCR priorities, your proposal should align with one or more of the three strategic shifts outlined in the NHS 10-Year Health Plan

Host Institutions

Fellowships may be undertaken at any of the nine SPCR member universities: University of Bristol, University of Exeter, Keele University, University of Manchester, University of Nottingham, University of Oxford, Queen Mary University of London, University of Southampton, University College London.

Applicants do not need to be employed by an SPCR member institution at the time of application.

Every applicant, whether currently based in a member department or not, must notify the relevant department's [research manager or training lead](#) of their intention to apply. This is vital to ensure that local HR and costing procedures are followed.

SPCR Trainees Community

Successful applicants will:

- Join the SPCR Trainees Community
- Gain access to training, networking, and development opportunities

Funding and Salary Arrangements

The award provides funding for the following:

- Salary (pro rata) and employer on-costs (NI and pension). Salary is capped at £108,000 pa.
- Indirect costs/overheads at 30%
- Training and development activities aligned with the fellowship objectives
- Limited research-related costs
- *Mentor/supervisor costs are **not** covered.*

Applicants are required to discuss funding and costing arrangements with the host institution's Research Manager or costing team prior to applying.

Detailed costings **are** required at the application stage.

Important Notes

- Salary will be funded at the scale and spine point agreed at the start of the fellowship and can include annual increments; however, the cap should not be exceeded during the course of the award.
- Any promotion or salary uplift resulting from securing the fellowship will not be funded

Applicants should ensure that all proposed non-pay costs are realistic, proportionate, and clearly justified, and directly related to the fellowship. Eligible costs may include:

- Consumables
- Specialist software or data access fees
- Essential equipment
- Travel for collaboration
- Training and development activities
- Costs associated with dissemination, involvement and inclusion

This award is not intended to fund a full research project. Non-staff (non-pay) costs are capped at £20,000. *These costs will be reviewed to ensure that they are appropriate to the work proposed.*

Involvement and Inclusion

As with all NIHR-funded research, the fellowship must include high quality, meaningful involvement and inclusion of people and communities throughout the project lifecycle.

For further information on what to include in this section please refer to the Career Development section of: [Guidance for applicants on working with people and communities | NIHR](#)

Each SPCR member department has a **PPI Lead** who can support applicants. Contacts are available here: https://www.spcr.nihr.ac.uk/PPI/get-involved/ppi-contacts

The NIHR Research Design Service may also be able to support pre-application involvement activities.

Details of proposed training and development plan

Applicants should provide a clear and structured plan outlining the training and development activities they intend to undertake during the fellowship. This could include formal courses, workshops, mentoring, networking opportunities, and skill-building initiatives designed to enhance research independence, leadership, and career progression. Justification should be given for how each activity will contribute to the applicant's long-term career goals and professional growth.

In this section we also ask applicants to actively consider what training is needed from an inclusion perspective. Base your needs on your current knowledge and experience of working inclusively and developing inclusive research. You should also consider your career stage, future goals and research area.

You can find further information about what training you may want to include in NIHR guidance for career development applications: [Inclusive research funding application guidance | NIHR](#)

Selection Process

- Shortlisting - All applications are reviewed against the published selection criteria
- Scoring is undertaken by SPCR training leads and public contributors.
- Interview invitations are extended to the highest-scoring applicants.

Please note, reviewers will be scoring your application according to the following criteria:

PERSON
Interest in pursuing academic primary care research in the UK
Excellent written communication skills
Ability and motivation to pursue an independent research project
Evidence of ability to work as part of a team
Ambition to collaborate and be part of the SPCR community
PROPOSAL
Relevance of proposal to primary care and SPCR
Relevance of proposal to the 10 Year Health Plan or Policy/Knowledge Mobilisation
Clarity of aims
PPI - involvement of patients/service users, carers and/or the public in developing this proposal and active involvement throughout the proposed project
Appropriate methodology
Feasibility and likelihood of completion in available time
Fit between proposed project and proposed supervisory team interests and expertise
Likelihood of being able to secure a further personal award or research funding at end of this fellowship

Interview Process

- Interviews will be conducted online via MS Teams
- Interview panel: up to 5 members (academics and public contributors)

Format: Short applicant presentation and panel questions

How to Apply

Applicants are required to contact the relevant SPCR university to discuss hosting arrangements and costings. Contact details are available here: https://www.spcr.nihr.ac.uk/career-development/funding/faq-fellowships/members-information.

Applications must be submitted via the Good Grants online system.

Timeline:

Stage	Date
Application window opens	12 January 2026
Application deadline	1:00 pm, 2 March 2026
Interview invitations issued	10 April 2026
Interviews (online)	22–23 April 2026
Fellowship start date	No later than 1 October 2026

Support for Applicants

Each SPCR member department has a Training Lead who can help you develop your proposal and connect you with relevant expertise.

We strongly encourage applicants to speak with:

- a potential supervisor at their preferred SPCR host department
- the local PPI lead
- relevant stakeholders

Contact

For queries about eligibility or the application process, please contact the SPCR Team: spcr@keele.ac.uk