

# Postdoctoral Fellowship Guidance for Applicants 2020-21

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**This document is intended to assist the completion of the Stroke Association Postdoctoral Fellowship Application Form. The guidance is intended to be used in conjunction with the Conditions of Award.**

If you have any questions, please email [research@stroke.org.uk](mailto:research@stroke.org.uk) and we will get back to you as soon as we can.

## **Purpose of the award**

The Stroke Association's research strategy aims to increase the UK funding base and capacity for stroke research across the full stroke care pathway.

These Fellowships are aimed at developing the stroke research leaders of the future. Postdoctoral Fellowships are intended to provide the necessary skills and training for the development of an independent career in stroke research.

The Postdoctoral Fellowship will allow a fellow to hold research funds in their own name, and to undertake an independent research project under the supervision of an established member of the stroke research community. It is a condition of award that the fellow seeks to obtain further research funds during the tenure of the award in order to consolidate and advance their career.

## **Remit of the award**

The Stroke Association supports Fellows who plan to conduct stroke research into clinical and applied health, including social care research. This includes research that is conducted to answer specific questions relating to day-to-day practice in health services or community settings, and which has the potential to have an impact on the health or well-being of people affected by stroke. A clear trajectory to patient benefit is essential.

We welcome applications from [Allied Health Professionals](#) and nurses, psychologists, pharmacists, and other applied researchers including but not limited to: implementation scientists, health economists, digital health and computer scientists.

The Stroke Association will not fund basic or pre-clinical research through its wholly-funded Postgraduate and Postdoctoral Fellowship schemes. This does not apply to our joint Clinical Fellowship programmes with the Medical Research Council (MRC) or Association of British Neurologists (ABN), which are open to research across the whole pathway.

### **Joint funding**

We welcome applications where funding from other sources has been secured to part-fund a Fellowship, such as from research charities, universities or government bodies. We would expect that the Fellowship award from the Stroke Association contribute at least 50% of the funding towards the Fellowship. Please get in touch with the Stroke Association research team in the first instance, and before submitting your application, to discuss eligibility, the most appropriate way to budget for the Fellowship costs and how to acknowledge the funding that is already secured.

### **Deadline for applications**

The closing date for applications is **5pm 15 January 2021**.

**Interview date:** 27 April 2021

The Research Department will send out invitation letters for interview. Please hold the interview dates in your diary from now on until we confirm if you have been shortlisted. You will receive a letter confirming this approximately two weeks before the interview date.

Awards will be made in May 2021.

### **Award amount and duration**

The maximum funding amount that can be applied for is £215,000 over a period of 3 to 5 years. Fellowships may be taken up on a part-time, pro-rata basis but the minimum working hours would be equivalent to 0.6 WTE. I.e: Applicants cannot apply for the full amount if they want to work part time over 3 years only. If they would like to do this, the cost of the award will be reduced accordingly.

### **Eligibility**

Your proposed project must be based at a University/ NHS trust/ Statutory Social Care Organisation/ Research Institution within Great Britain or Northern Ireland.

You are not eligible to apply to this funding scheme if you currently hold a permanent contract with your university. For example, if you are in a permanent Research Associate role, you are not eligible for this scheme but are eligible to apply as the Lead Applicant to our Project Grant scheme.

Fellows must have one lead supervisor who bears overall responsibility for the training and the research project. Additional supervisors are recommended.

Applicants must include a named mentor and a support letter from the mentor in the application form. You will be asked to justify the appropriateness of your choice of mentor. (Mentoring is a widely used development tool that can have a beneficial impact on effectiveness, confidence and career advancement. We have found that researchers who

have a mentor have a greater clarity of purpose and productivity, have increased sector knowledge, and are better prepared to reach their career aspirations.)

You will be asked to give details of whether you have involved your local Research Design Service (RDS) or Clinical Trials Unit (CTU) in the development of the research proposal, including details of any discussions you have had with the RDS/CTU, improvements to the proposal as a result of the advice offered and their ongoing involvement in the project.

Please note: involvement of a CTU is **mandatory** for clinical trial applications.

For clinical trial applications, you will need to outline the supervisor's track record in running clinical studies and the expected role of your supervisor in ensuring the study will recruit to target and stay on track within your expected timescales.

Applicants should have submitted their **PhD thesis** prior to the deadline for applications for a Postdoctoral Fellowship. All applicants will need to have been **awarded their PhD** before beginning their Postdoctoral Fellowship, should they be successful after interview.

Postdoctoral Fellowships are open to those who have undertaken **up to** maximum 6 years active research subsequent to obtaining their PhD qualification, excluding career breaks and other periods of leave such as sickness and maternity.

Example scenarios:

If you have already obtained your PhD and have undertaken **more than** 6 years of active research subsequent to obtaining your PhD qualification, you are not eligible to apply to this scheme. You may wish to consider the Stroke Association lectureship/reader scheme.

Physicians and similar medical professionals are not eligible to apply for a Postdoctoral Fellowship; they may wish to consider the Stroke Association lectureship/reader scheme.

Please contact the Research Team if you are unsure of, or have any queries regarding, your eligibility for this award.

N.B If applicable, we must have a copy of your ethical approval before you can take up the award.

### **Patient and Public Involvement**

We expect that all applicants will have involved people affected by stroke in the planning and development stages of their funding application, and will continue to do so should their application be successful. This involvement should be meaningful, and people affected by stroke should have a real opportunity to contribute to your research.

In the application you will be asked how you have involved public and/or patients in this research and/or the application, how you will involve public and/or patients in this research

going forward, what the impacts and benefits will be for them (short and/or longer term) and how you plan to disseminate this work to them.

We are able to offer you advice or answer questions you may have about involvement. If you would like to us to contact people affected by stroke to gain feedback on your proposal we can help, however please beware that we will not support any request made to us less than eight weeks prior to the application deadline.

You can find out more about how we can help you to involve people affected by stroke in your work [here](#).

### **Resubmission policy**

Our resubmission policy permits you to resubmit previously unsuccessful applications to this call once. Should you choose to resubmit your unsuccessful application, we would ask that you take on board the comments of the reviewers and incorporate any suggestions accordingly.

If you are unsure whether you can resubmit an application, please contact the Research team at [research@stroke.org.uk](mailto:research@stroke.org.uk) with the month and year you applied and the reference number of your application which can be found on your rejection letter.

### **Proposed research project**

The proposed research project statement on page 5 of the application form should not exceed 2500 words. Please provide your references separately. Please include a Gantt chart/timeline as a file upload.

Your proposal statement should incorporate all of the following points, although not necessarily in the order listed below:

- Hypotheses, aims and objectives– where appropriate please consider the [NIHR definitions for feasibility and pilot studies](#) when describing your proposed project
- Background to the project
- Preliminary data
- Detailed plan of investigation, including proposed methodology
- If recruiting participants: a sample size calculation, recruitment plan, statistical expertise (which may be costed)
- Plans to integrate PhDs and other research training posts into this work programme and their potential roles
- Potential problems and contingency plans
- Dissemination plans
- Value of this programme to stroke research

You will also be asked to provide:

- An outline of the trajectory of your research into the clinic, following the conclusion of the fellowship
- Annual milestones which will be used to monitor progress of the award

- Proposed programme of training
- Future plans for attracting further funding
- Supporting statement from the fellowship candidate
  - Why you wish to undertake a Postdoctoral Fellowship,
  - Future careers aspirations (what you hope to do in the future and what you plan to do with your research career).

Please see page 5 of the application form for more guidance.

We also ask you to outline details of managing **Intellectual Property** if any arise during the project, and your intention to partner with digital enterprises if your project involves the development or evaluation of **digital technology** that is intended for commercial/routine clinical use. We strongly recommend that any project using data adheres to the principles set out in the [Department of Health & Social Care conduct for data-driven health and care technology](#) code of conduct.

### **Details of support requested**

In the main budget table of the application form we would like you to include all the funding you are requesting from the Stroke Association. You will also be required to fully justify all the funding you are requesting.

Please note that if your application is successful, the funding provided will be the figure that you have requested (unless this is queried by the panel). After the Award Acceptance form is signed, the amount awarded will not be increased if there are errors in your calculations so please ensure that the total amount requested is correct.

If you have financial support from other sources, the nature and tenure of the support should be disclosed in either the project proposal section of the application form, or in the justification textbox underneath the budget table.

Support may be sought for the following items:

- Salary of the fellow, in line with the host institution's policy. Please account for inflation in the costings in the application form.
- Equipment to be used exclusively in the research project.
- Consumables that are specific to the research project should be itemised and costed individually over the duration of the award.
- Travel expenses which are integral to the project, for example, when patients have to be visited in their homes.
- There is no maximum limit for imaging costs. However you will have to justify your request and ensure that costings are in line with institutional and national practices.
- Dissemination costs: Open Access publishing costs, conference attendance fees.
- [UK Stroke Forum](#) (UKSF) registration, travel and accommodation fees. We expect all fellows to attend the UKSF each year.

- Patient and Public Involvement: you should ensure you budget for all involvement activities you plan to hold as part of this research; such as as venue hire, catering and travel expenses. We recommend using [INVOLVE's involvement cost calculator](#) to help put together an appropriate budget for PPI.

Where the study takes places within the NHS, we ask you to outline any associated NHS costs in the supplementary spreadsheet on the budget page and not in the main budget table:

From October 2018 the way we capture different costs associated with clinical studies has changed. We are a partnership funder of the NIHR, who have developed the new process to address the continued frustration about the complexity and variation in processes for commissioners and providers agreeing excess treatment costs (ETCs).

Researchers are required to complete the **Schedule of Events Cost Attribution Tool (SoECAT)** at the point of submission of their application. This is designed to capture the different costs associated with clinical research and attribute them according to whether they are research costs, service support costs, treatment costs, and excess treatment costs/treatment cost savings. The SoECAT will be used by funders and the HRA, and is intended to standardise the way in which the different costs categories will be calculated and attributed.

The impact of this work will:

- Enable the 15 NIHR Local Clinical Research Networks (LCRNs) to help manage the excess treatment costs process on behalf of their local Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCGs) and in collaboration with NHS England Specialised Commissioning. This single point of access for all proposals for which excess treatment costs may be applicable is designed to make the process much simpler for researchers to navigate.
- Establish a more rapid, standardised and consistent process for the management of excess treatment costs to avoid delays during study set up and to maximise patient recruitment.
- Set a threshold under which excess treatment costs will need to be absorbed by non-primary care providers participating in studies.

### ***Defining ETC values for each study***

To underpin the new arrangements, a cost attribution tool has been created in partnership with charity funders and research sponsors. This tool provides a standardised approach for attributing the costs of health and social care research and development (AcoRD) across England. As part of their funding applications, researchers will be required to complete this new tool, known as a Schedule of Events Cost Attribution Tool (SoECAT) for clinical research, which has been developed from the current [HRA Schedule of Events](#). This tool is

designed to capture the different costs associated with clinical research and attribute them accordingly.

[The tool can be found here.](#)

[Supporting guidance for researchers, study teams and sponsors to complete the SoECAT can be found here.](#)

***Non-commercial research sponsors have a responsibility to ensure the study is appropriately costed and attributed***

Attribution support is available for investigators, study teams and their R&D offices through AcoRD specialists in the NIHR Local Clinical Research Network. Find out more about how to access this support via the [Study Support Service](#).

Under the new arrangements, sign off via the tool is required to confirm the study attribution complies with the Department of Health and Social Care [AcoRD guidance](#). This early attribution support will underpin the excess treatment cost management process by providing formal sign off, supporting the role of the research sponsor and lead R&D office or Clinical Trial Unit. Completion of the Schedule of Events Cost Attribution Template will be required for studies eligible for the NIHR portfolio and the support this provides, which will include access to excess treatment cost payments under the new arrangements. This ETC value, alongside recruitment activity in the NIHR Central Portfolio Management System, will then be utilised to inform the payments to NHS providers.

A [routemap](#) is available to provide a high level overview for researchers and research sponsors accessing ETCs from 1 October 2018.

**Application checklist**

- Fellows must have one lead supervisor who bears overall responsibility for the training and the research project. Additional supervisors are recommended.
- You are required to submit your application online, via our award management system, before the deadline (5pm 15 January 2021): <https://strokeassociation.flexigrant.com>
- We will not accept paper/Word/PDF copies of the application form.
- Letter of support: Your application requires a letter of support from the **Head of Department** at the host HEI.
- Letter of support: Your application requires a letter of support from your **proposed supervisor(s)**, (signed by all of the supervisors).
- Online signatures: The **Lead supervisor**, the **Head of Department** and the **Finance/Research Administration Officer** from the HEI must provide their

approval of your application in order to allow you to submit the application. This is done by you inviting them into your application form via the 'Participants' tab in the system and them typing their details into the corresponding declaration page. This acts as their signature. If your application is funded, wet copies of their signatures will be required.

- At the time of application, you do not require approval from the **Research Sponsor**, however if you are successful, wet copies of their signature will be required.

Awards that we fund require a Research Sponsor if the research is linked to the NHS. To identify who would be suitable to act as the Research Sponsor, we advise you talk to your supervisor(s) and your institution's Research Office. The Research Office will know whether or not you need a sponsor (and are often the sponsor in many cases). For more information about this, please take a look at: <http://www.hra.nhs.uk/resources/before-you-apply/roles-and-responsibilities/sponsor/>

It is suggested that the Research Sponsor could be 'the employer of the chief investigator, the educational institution (e.g. for student research), or the care organisation where the research is to take place'. Please email [research@stroke.org.uk](mailto:research@stroke.org.uk) if you require further guidance.

- You are not required to have the necessary ethical approval at the time of application. If successful, ethical approval for your study will have to be gained before you can begin your award. You are required to send us a copy of the ethical approval when it is gained.

## **Adjudication**

During the adjudication of Postdoctoral Fellowships and the selection of fellows, the interview panel will score the application based on:

- The PERSON – the background, career aspirations and potential of the candidate to become a stroke research leader in the future (40%)
- The SUPERVISION that will be received by the candidate (15%)
- The INSTITUTION the candidate will be based at (15%)
- The proposed TRAINING programme the candidate would undertake if awarded the Fellowship (15%)
- The PROJECT that will be carried out during the Fellowship (15%)

The purpose of the proposed research project must be directly related to stroke. It must be clear how the research could ultimately be translated into clinical practice and, therefore, provide benefit to stroke patients. Details of the proposed research

project, future plans and aspirations for further research and funding must also be provided.

Postdoctoral Fellowships are awarded on the recommendation of a panel made up of members of the Stroke Association's Research Awards Pool using the system of expert peer review and a candidate interview.

Postdoctoral Fellowships are awarded annually in March, with a closing date in November. Applications are invited by means of advertisements in the medical press and the Stroke Association website ([www.stroke.org.uk](http://www.stroke.org.uk)).

### **What happens to your application?**

Your application will be reviewed by external expert peer reviewers and adjudicated by an adjudication panel made up of members of the Stroke Association's Research Awards Pool.

Peer review scores are used to rank applications and shortlist for interview with agreement from the Chair of the Adjudication Panel. If an application is shortlisted, the proposed candidate is invited to attend an interview. The Research Department will send out invitation letters for interview. Please hold the interview date in your diary from now on until we confirm if you have been shortlisted. You will receive a letter confirming this approximately two weeks before the interview date. If you have not been shortlisted for interview, you will be informed at the end of January.

The interview usually lasts for around 50 minutes. The candidate will be invited to give a short (8 minute) presentation to the panel outlining their research proposal and its outcomes, as well as their background, career aspirations, and the benefits that the Fellowship would bring to them personally. The candidate will then be interviewed by a panel made up of up to four members of the Research Awards Pool and invited experts (if applicable) and members of the Research Team from the Stroke Association. The panel will be particularly interested in:

- The fellow's career to date
- The fellow's career aspirations
- The fellow's research experience
- The research proposal outlined in the fellow's application
- What benefit the Fellowship would bring to the fellow

The panel will also explore the proposed research project, and will ask questions on any part of the application or detail of the proposed project. Presentation skills of the applicant will also be assessed.

Following the interview, the panel will discuss the merits of each of the candidates, and will make a recommendation to the Stroke Association Council of Trustees on the applicant(s) who should receive a Fellowship. Successful fellows will be informed in writing.

Unsuccessful applicants will also receive a letter containing feedback from their interview and anonymised external peer reviewer comments.

Successful applicants will be required to provide an accurate start date upon accepting the award. We advise candidates to begin the award within 6 months of receiving the offer letter, but the start can be delayed if requested at the discretion of the Stroke Association.