

Research awards and arrangements relating to the COVID-19 pandemic

10 March 2021

In March 2020 the Covid-19 pandemic brought about an unprecedented level of disruption to research in the UK. At this time we asked all of our award holders to keep us informed about any disruption to their projects and explore alternatives such as remote working, video conference meetings, furlough and re-ordering parts of their studies.

In May 2020 we surveyed our current award holders about the disruption the pandemic had caused for them and their Stroke Association funded research. We heard from over 80% of our currently funded researchers, and found that:

- 74% of award holders had to pause their projects as they were unable to continue work on their research.
- Two thirds of our award holders felt that they would require adaptations to their studies in order to continue.
- 18% of researchers were redeployed to additional or less predictable clinical work.

Our researchers described a variety of issues presented by the pandemic, including difficulty recruiting participants or involving people affected by stroke, limited access to resources and infrastructure, increased childcare/caring responsibilities, staff placed on furlough, and difficulties working remotely, as well as mental health impacts and longer-term concerns around funding uncertainty.

No cost and costed extensions

The majority of the projects that were paused have now restarted and researchers have adapted their projects to enable them to continue. However, we appreciate that the ongoing disruption caused by the pandemic will have set progress back and may make completing the research within the timeline set out in the original application unfeasible.

In our May 2020 survey, the majority of our award holders reported that they would be able to complete their research with no impact to the original budget or by using underspends and adjustments to the original budget. However, some researchers felt that they would require a budget uplift in order to complete their research.

In most cases no cost extensions will be granted and we continue to consider requests for extensions on a case-by-case basis. Where the Stroke Association is jointly funding research, approval will need to be gained from both funders. Any award holders requiring no-cost or costed extensions should contact research@stroke.org.uk to discuss this as soon as possible. In either case, we will ask you to provide details on the length of the required extension and the reasons for this, and updated project timelines and budgets.