

Call For Proposals

Research Training Fellowships

Funding type:	Fellowship, <i>24-36 months duration</i>
Number of awards:	2-3 in 2025
Opening Date:	April 2024
Outline applications:	2 July 2024 5pm
Decision:	February 2025
Award:	March 2025

Overview

The Research Training Fellowship (RTF) scheme aims to train research leaders of the future in child health. The fellowship provides the opportunity to undertake a period of research training which will be relevant to applicants' future careers, developing their skills in research techniques and methodology in subjects relevant to Action's remit. Applications are invited from medical graduates, clinicians, bioengineers, research nurses, physiotherapists and allied health professionals who wish to develop a long-term career in academic medicine in the UK in areas relevant to child health.

As part of this year's competition, Action Medical Research and the British Paediatric Neurology Association (BPNA) are working together to offer a joint fellowship award for clinicians. The proposed research must be related to clinical neurology and/or neuroscience, including neurodisability, neurodevelopment and neurosurgery.

Fellowships should be 24-36 months in duration. **The upper limit of funding for a fellowship is £275,000.**

Applicants should complete an outline form by 2 July 2024 at 5pm. The form is available here [2025 call for Research Training Fellowships in child health \(office.com\)](https://www.actionmedicalresearch.com/2025-call-for-research-training-fellowships-in-child-health-office.com)

Background

Action Medical Research is the leading UK-wide charity dedicated to funding vital research to help sick babies, children and young people. Action funds medical research in hospitals or research institutions across the UK aimed at preventing and treating disease and disability.

Action's remit focuses on child health to include problems affecting pregnancy, childbirth, babies, children and young people. Within child health, we support a broad spectrum of research including medical engineering.

Our emphasis is on biomedical clinical research or research at the interface between clinical and basic science. We pride ourselves that our research is both innovative and of a high standard as judged by rigorous peer review.

The British Paediatric Neurology Association (BPNA) is the professional organisation for medical professionals in the UK and internationally who specialise in the care of children with neurological disorders. As a charity (1159115) they aim to promote the health and well-being of children with neurological disorders through:

- Training and education of professionals working in the field of neurosciences.
- Research into neurological disorders affecting children & young people.
- Improvement of knowledge of professionals, the public and patients and their families through scientific meetings.
- Providing support to members to facilitate the delivery of the above objectives.

Who can apply

The scheme is open to:

- medical graduates
- clinicians
- research nurses
- physiotherapists
- allied health professionals
- bioengineers

The scheme is not intended for basic biological scientists or social scientists.

Candidates are expected to have at least some experience of research following their first degree. They should have had limited research training and wish to develop a long-term career in academic medicine in the UK in areas relevant to child health.

Typically, medical graduates should not have more than 6 years' experience post MRCP (or equivalent) and have not completed their specialist training. Graduates in other health professions will normally have a Master's degree with some research component.

Postdoctoral researchers can only apply if they are bioengineers and will be receiving significant new training as part of the proposed fellowship.

Please note the Joint Award with the BPNA is only open to clinicians - specific eligibility criteria are listed in the section below.

Applicants (other than engineers) are strongly encouraged to independently register for a higher degree such as a PhD. Fellowships should be hosted in University departments, teaching hospitals or other recognised research centres within the UK.

All applicants must comply with Home Office requirements and, where appropriate, hold a valid work permit to cover the period of the Research Training Fellowship. Preference will be given to candidates resident in the UK.

Applicants and supervisors can only be named on one application per fellowship round.

Scope

The fellowship should provide an opportunity for training in research techniques and methodology in an area within Action's remit. Action's remit focuses on child health research with the objective of preventing and treating disease and disability including:

- pregnancy and childbirth in the context of the health of the child
- babies, children and young people
- biomedical clinical research or research at the interface between clinical and basic science
- medical engineering and research and development of equipment and techniques to improve diagnosis, therapy and assistive technology (including orthoses, prostheses and aids to daily living).
- conditions diagnosed and treated in the UK.

Examples of the research we fund can be found at [Research we fund | Action Medical Research](#).

Limitations and exclusions

These awards should not be viewed as project grant applications to simply extend current research as candidates will be expected to demonstrate a significant training element to their project. The awards are not studentships and we cover a salary rather than a stipend and do not cover higher education fees.

Please note that we do not provide:

- grants for very basic research with little likelihood of clinical impact within the short to medium term
- grants on social research, family relationships or socioeconomic research
- grants towards service provision or audit studies
- grants for research into complementary / alternative medicine
- grants purely for higher education courses, although Research Training Fellows are strongly encouraged to independently register for a PhD
- course fees for degrees or subsistence costs
- grants on how best to train clinical staff
- grants for medical or dental electives
- grants for work undertaken outside the UK
- any indirect costs such as administrative or other overheads imposed by the University or other Institution
- costs associated with advertising and recruitment of staff
- apprenticeship levy
- 'top up' funding for work already supported by other funding bodies
- costs to attend conferences (Action Medical Research grantholders may apply separately as the need arises during the grant)
- general appeals from other charities. Applications would normally come directly from research teams and projects need to be passed through our scientific peer review system
- applicants based in core funded units can apply but need to demonstrate added value.

Joint award with British Paediatric Neurology Association

For the Action Medical Research and the British Paediatric Neurology Association (BPNA) joint fellowship award the proposed research must be related to clinical neurology and/or neuroscience, including neurodisability, neurodevelopment and neurosurgery.

Fellowship applicants for this award are expected to be pre-doctoral trainee clinicians and will either already hold a UK or Irish specialist training post in Paediatric Neurology, or be planning to apply for a specialist training post in Paediatric Neurology or Neurodisability after completion of a PhD, applicants can

include paediatric neurosurgeons. Fellowship applicants could become members of the BPNA for the duration of the fellowship if they are not one at the moment.

Both the proposed application and fellowship applicant must meet the BPNA charitable aims. Applications for this joint award will be considered in open competition as part of the RTF2025 round which is open to applications across conditions affecting pregnancy, babies, children and young people.

To help support applicants before submitting their outlines, prospective Research Training Fellows for the joint call are strongly encouraged to complete a pre-outline BPNA questionnaire [Action-Medical-Research-BPNA-Fellowship-Pre-Outline-questionnaire-2025.pdf](#) and send this to the BPNA at katerina.roumelioti@bpna.org.uk (cc applications@action.org.uk).

The pre-outline questionnaire should be submitted as soon as possible and at least three weeks before the outline deadline to allow enough time for any feedback.

What we expect in proposals

Applicants should demonstrate that they have the necessary ability, enthusiasm and commitment to follow through any training. We recommend applicants consider how their application meets the assessment criteria below.

Supervisors should have discussed the basis of the application with the applicant thoroughly to ensure that a sensible programme of training is pursued and to advise on additional experience which may be needed.

Applicants should provide evidence that they will be given guidance/training in appropriate research techniques and methodology (which may include experimental design, statistics, computing, writing scientific papers/grant applications). The plan should be ambitious but realistic for the time and skill level.

Applicants should be provided with an adequate and specific work area for both research and writing and given an opportunity for oral presentations of their work, and the encouragement to join journal clubs etc. as available.

In the full application, fellowship activities should be summarised in the form of a timetable drawn up in conjunction with the supervisor.

Please note, these awards should not be viewed as project grant applications to simply extend current research as candidates will be expected to demonstrate a significant training element to their project.

Funding and resources available

Fellowships should be 24-36 months in duration. Action does not fund one-year fellowships.

The upper limit for a fellowship is £275,000.

Fellowship funding can be used to cover the direct costs of the research including the fellow's salary and research consumables.

Research costs: We only support the directly incurred costs of research and do not pay indirect or directly allocated costs such as shared equipment and resources based on estimates, administrative or other overheads (including any depreciation or maintenance costs) or percentages of salaries for those already employed in permanent/long term positions such as supervisor time.

Salary costs: Costs can include a salary for the Research Training Fellow. The starting salary will be dependent on qualifications and experience. Please state salary scales known at the time of application and include an additional sum to cover estimates of future nationally agreed pay awards to cover cost of

living increases only. Please include employer's costs, pension and national insurance and London weighting where appropriate but not the apprenticeship levy. No other salaries should be included.

Consumables: You can include research expenses such as consumables directly incurred by the project which must be fully justified. VAT on consumables should not be included.

Equipment: including computers, cannot be considered in Research Training Fellowship applications. The host laboratory or unit selected, should have the equipment and facilities required for the proposed research and must be available to the candidate.

Travel, patient and public involvement and publication costs: Costs of travel may be included in an application provided they form a necessary and integral part of the research proposed but not an allowance for attendance at meetings and conferences. Patient and public involvement (PPI) costs can be applied for up to a maximum of £1,000 per grant. Publication costs are limited to £3,000 per grant.

We do not cover higher education fees.

It is anticipated that Action will fund 2-3 fellowships. Please note that competition for these awards is intense.

How to apply

Stage 1: Outline application

Discuss the basis of the application with your proposed supervisor thoroughly to ensure that a sensible programme of training is pursued and to advise on additional experience which may be needed.

Complete the outline form by the deadline **2 July 2024 5pm**. The form is available here [2025 call for Research Training Fellowships in child health \(office.com\)](#). Candidates applying for the joint award with BPNA should complete the pre-outline questionnaire and send this to the BPNA at least three weeks before the outline deadline (more details above).

It is expected that the application form is completed by the Research Training Fellowship applicant and NOT their supervisor.

Late applications will not be considered. Please ensure you are aware of and comply with any internal institutional deadlines that may be in place.

Please contact Action for further guidance on completing your application at applications@action.org.uk. Your host organisation will also be able to provide advice and support on completing your application.

Stage 2: Full proposal

Applicants selected to submit a full proposal will be informed in early September and sent links to the full application form.

How we will assess your application

Assessment process

Outline proposals will be subject to internal checks at Action to ensure fit to remit of the call. Applicants will be notified if their proposal has been rejected at this stage.

Outlines will be reviewed by our Scientific Advisory Panel and those that best match the aim of the fellowship and Action's remit will be invited to submit a full application.

Full applications will be externally peer reviewed and shortlisted by our Scientific Advisory Panel. Shortlisted candidates will be invited for interview. The final selection will be made on the advice of the interviewing panel drawn from the relevant scientific and medical advisers.

In the event of this funding opportunity being substantially oversubscribed, Action reserves the right to modify or extend the assessment process.

Assessment criteria

Proposals submitted to this funding opportunity will be considered using the following criteria.

Suitability of the applicant for the fellowship:

- Track record and achievements to date.
- Expertise and skill set.
- Current research standing.
- Research outputs.
- Does the applicant have adequate research experience to undertake this work?
- Is the applicant at the appropriate career stage for this fellowship?
- Has the applicant played a significant role in the design of the project?

Potential for the future:

- Does their experience to date and career goals indicate the applicant is committed to a career in research/academic medicine in areas relevant Action's remit?
- Is there evidence of leadership potential?

The value of the proposed training

- Will the fellowship support their long term scientific, clinical and career goals?
- Will there be opportunities for training and career development and development of leadership potential.

The suitability of the host research centre and research group:

- Scientific impact in the field
- Level of commitment from supervisors and host institution

The importance of the problem which this work seeks to overcome:

- Clinical relevance
- Is it close to clinical application?
- The likelihood of scientific and/or medical advances in the short and long term relevant to relieving disease/disability burden and/or improving quality of life of children.

The scientific merits of the project:

- Strength of medical or scientific case including summary of previous research work that has been conducted in this area
- Level of innovation and whether this is likely to lead to significant new understanding
- Are the aims and objectives understandable and unambiguous, hypotheses are clearly defined.

The feasibility of the project:

- Is the plan ambitious but realistic for the time and skill level?
- Has a clearly written and transparent methodology been provided?
- Has preliminary data been provided?

- Has the applicant clearly set out and justified the following (these will be considered in detail at the full application stage):
 - Measures for avoidance of bias (e.g. blinding, randomisation)
 - Number of experimental and control groups and sample size per group
 - Is it clear how the number of study subjects required for the project will be recruited?
 - How the sample size was calculated, showing power calculations and including justification of effect size
 - Overview of the planned statistical analyses in relation to the primary outcomes to be assessed
 - Frequency of measurements/interventions to be used
 - Circumstances in which power calculations are not appropriate to determine sample size
- Have diversity and inclusion been considered in the study population? If not, is there a clear justification?
- Has the applicant considered any risks or difficulties associated with the project and has a risk mitigation plan?
- Is the plan to involve patients or members of the public appropriate to the planned research (more involvement being expected where the research is nearer to clinical application)?
- Is the support fully justified? Are there sufficient resources in place to support the fellowship?
- If the application involves the use of animals or animal tissue, is this (and the species proposed) justified in terms of the likely outcomes of the research and conforms to guidelines?
- Is the proposed research ethically acceptable?
- Are there any ethical issues that need separate consideration?

Success rates

We received 22 outline applications for the 2024 RTF scheme, 14 were invited to submit a full application. Three awards were offered following interviews.

We received 11 outline applications for the 2023 RTF scheme, 7 were invited to submit a full application. Two awards were made following the interviews.

We received 18 outline applications for the 2022 RTF scheme, 10 were invited to submit a full application. Three awards were made following the interviews.

Award conditions

Grants are awarded under the terms of Action's grant agreement.

Fellowships must be taken up within one year of the award.

We recommend that awardees arrange to have a mentor. The mentor should be someone different to their supervisors, be able to offer a different perspective and help with personal and professional development.

Reporting Requirements

If you are successful in securing funding, you will need to provide yearly reports endorsed by your supervisor. Research Training Fellows are treated as all grantholders within the Charity and are expected to speak on their work at fundraising events or scientific meetings if required.

Key Dates

Applications open: April 2024

Outline application deadline: 2 July 2024 5pm

Full applications invited: Early September 2024

Full application deadline: 22 October 2024

Interviews: Late February/early March 2025.

Awards: March 2025

Contact details

For help and advice on costings and writing your proposal please contact your research office in the first instance, allowing sufficient time for your organisation's submission process.

Questions regarding the grant round should be directed to Action Medical Research by contacting applications@action.org.uk