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Health and Care Research Wales Integrated Funding Scheme

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BACKGROUND

What is the new scheme replacing?

Health and Care Research Wales has, since its inception in 2015, offered two separate and predominantly researcher-led project funding schemes:

- Research Funding Scheme (RFS) - consisting of health research grants and social care research grants
- Research for Patient and Public Benefit (RfPPB) Wales.

These have now been re-organised and re-branded under a new Integrated Funding Scheme.

Why were the old schemes reorganised?

The *Health and Care Research Wales Plan 2022-2025* included the need to review the existing schemes in order to maximise the use of our research funding and the likely impact of the research we fund. As a result, we undertook the following:

- Reviewed and streamlined existing funding schemes to improve the efficiency of processes and increase the frequency of funding calls and opportunities across our remit, while ensuring areas where capacity building is crucial (like social care) are protected and supported.
- Added a commissioned arm to the new arrangements which will link to priority setting processes and ensure that research funded addresses important and urgent research needs of the Welsh Government and the health and social care system in Wales.

What has changed under the new scheme?

The scheme now offers a single point of entry for all applicants. The new Integrated Funding Scheme consists of two new researcher-led arms and a focused arm.

The researcher-led arms are now organised by research type, rather than sector, focussing on:

- Translational and clinical research
- Health and social care services and public health research

The researcher-led call will have one application point a year, launching in September. An arm for focused research calls, as part of the Integrated Funding Scheme, will have one application point a year, launching in spring.

How much funding is available?

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A funding pot of approximately £1.95m is available for the researcher-led call for use across both Arm 1 and Arm 2. Health and Care Research Wales expects to fund around eight to ten projects in the researcher-led call. £750k is available for the focused call. Health and Care Research Wales expects to fund between three to six projects, depending on the cost and quality of proposals received.

Within the overall funding pot, there is no limit on the upper or lower sizes of awards, though applicants should be mindful of the total pot available and the expectations of Health and Care Research Wales regarding the number of projects it is likely to fund.

New integrated funding scheme	Call frequency	Application process	Award start dates
Researcher-led arm 1: Translational and clinical research	Annual launching in Autumn	Two stage	Grant award start points in October
Researcher-led arm 2: Health & social care services and public health research	As above	As above	As above
Focused call	Annual launching in Spring	As above	Grant award start points in April

What is the wider funding context of these changes?

The intention was to reset our project-based funding opportunities in the context of a high-quality funding scheme organised by research type (rather than by 'sector'). Our aim is to improve the quality of our funding calls and the frequency of funding opportunities.

Along with our counterparts in Scotland and Northern Ireland, Health and Care Research Wales has entered into an agreement with DHSC (England) that opens access to certain NIHR research funding programmes in return for an annual financial contribution. This represents an enormous opportunity for researchers in Wales, and it has therefore become increasingly important that the remit of our funding schemes support, rather than reduce, the likelihood of applications being submitted to NIHR for their funding programmes.

See Cross-funder and partner schemes at

<https://healthandcareresearchwales.org/researchers/funding-schemes>

ELIGIBILITY

Can non-Wales based sites be included in research projects?

There is no restriction on the location of the sites included in the study design. However, as this is a Welsh scheme, applicants should include a strong justification for site choice, explaining why it is necessary to include sites from outside Wales and the value this adds to the research.

Can non-Wales based co-applicants be included in the research team?

There is no restriction on the co-applicants' organisation or institution. However, as this is a Welsh scheme, applicants should include a justification for including non-Wales based co-applicants, explaining their specific role in the project and the value this adds to the research. Note: Lead Applicant and joint Lead Applicant should be employed by the organisation or institution based in Wales or have an honorary contract. Where the Lead Applicant is an Early Career Researcher (ECR), we expect the Primary Co-applicant to come from the same institution unless there is a strong rationale, connected to academic expertise and the development of the ECR, why this is not the case.

What is the “equivalent track record of research experience at the time of applying”?

A researcher's track record indicates achievement, experience and research skills to demonstrate the researcher's capacity to carry out a proposed study. The commissioning Panel needs to be reassured that the Lead Applicant can lead the research and would expect the Lead Applicant to show previous experience leading/delivering a research project. Applications from early-stage career researchers must have Primary Co-applicant support from a senior researcher.

APPLICATION ASSESSMENT

How will applications be assessed?

Many of the general principles and processes stay the same for the researcher-led calls under the new scheme. The application process remains a two-stage process. Stage one applications are assessed by a Panel and focus on the need for the research and the importance of the research question. The proposed methodology will also be taken into consideration at this point, unlike in previous schemes. Detail of the stage one assessment criteria will be provided at call launch.

As before, stage two applications will undergo academic and public peer review and scientific assessment by a Funding Board. The composition of new Panels and Funding Boards will reflect the type of research applications that will be received under each arm of the scheme, as well as sectoral considerations like social care research representation.

The selection criteria for Stage 1 and Stage 2 can be found on our webpage for [Arm 1](#) and [Arm 2](#).

What are the project length and funding limits?

Within the overall remit and eligibility of the scheme, applications of various size and cost are welcome, lasting up to a maximum of 24 months. .

A funding pot of approximately £1.95m is available for the researcher-led call for use across both Arm 1 and Arm 2. Health and Care Research Wales expects to fund around eight to ten projects in the researcher-led call. £750k is available for the focused call. Health and Care Research Wales expects to fund between three to six projects, depending on cost and quality of proposals received.

Within the overall funding pot, there is no limit on the upper or lower sizes of awards, though applicants should be mindful of the total pot available and the expectations of Health and Care Research Wales regarding the number of projects it is likely to fund.

When should projects funded under the scheme start?

As previously, projects funded in September calls are expected to start on 01 October the following year. Projects funded through March / April calls are expected to begin on 01 April the following year.

COMPLETING AN APPLICATION

How do I apply?

Applications are completed through our Research Wales Research Management System, which can be accessed via the 'Apply' button on the [Arm 1](#) and [Arm 2](#) webpages when a call is open.

I am applying to the Integrated Funding Scheme - how do my colleagues get access to the application/system?

Joint Lead Applicant and co-applicants must register on the [Research Wales Research Management System](#) before the Lead Applicant can add them to an application. Anyone added to the application will be able to view and edit it. However, please note that only the Lead Applicant can submit an application.

I have started an application, but I am not going to be the Lead Applicant. Can a different Lead Applicant be added instead?

The person who starts an application is automatically assigned the role of Lead Applicant. This cannot be changed. The Lead Applicant would need to start a fresh application.

FURTHER HELP AND INFORMATION

If your question has not been answered by our Guidance for Applicants, webpages or FAQs, you can contact the team on 020 7019 0200 or email projectgrants@researchwales.info Calls and emails are monitored 9am – 5pm, Monday to Friday, excluding bank holidays.

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