**Small Project Grants**

**Eligibility criteria and application guidance**

**Overview of the NIHR Exeter BRC**

The National Institute for Health and Care Research Biomedical Research Centre for Exeter (NIHR Exeter BRC) is a collaboration between University of Exeter (UoE), The Royal Devon University Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust, Royal Cornwall Hospital Trust, Devon Partnership Trust, Cornwall Partnership Trust, Somerset NHS Foundation Trust and, \*St George’s University Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust (\*for Clinical Mycology related research only).

The aim of NIHR Exeter BRC is to improve health outcomes for patients and the public by translating scientific breakthroughs into potential new treatments, diagnostics and medical technologies. The NIHR Exeter BRC creates an environment for world-leading researchers to thrive and contribute significantly to the local and national economy. Further details of the NIHR Exeter BRC can be found [here](https://sites.exeter.ac.uk/exeterbrc/).

The NIHR Exeter BRC focuses on five major research themes:

* **Neurodegeneration**: We find and test new, better drugs that prevent and treat major brain conditions in older adults such as dementia and Parkinson’s disease.
* **Rehabilitation**: We use exciting new approaches to help older people to recover from illness or manage their long-term conditions like dementia and arthritis. This includes using technology to improve movement, maintain brain health and prevent falls.
* **Diabetes**: We improve the way diabetes is diagnosed and treated, and explore how to help those most at risk of developing the disease.
* **Genetics and Genomics**: We unlock the power of genetics, using it to improve diagnosis of rare illnesses in children and rare cancers, and to create treatments for common diseases that can be tailored to different people based on their unique genetic profile.
* **Clinical Mycology**: We seek better treatments to prevent and manage fungal infections that are common in the UK and understand better how fungi become resistant to drug treatments.

**In addition, we are building capacity in emerging themes of research including respiratory medicine, psychiatry/mental health and surgery.**

**About the Small Project Grants**

The NIHR Exeter BRC welcomes applications to its call for Small Project Grant Awards.

The aim of this call is to provide pump-priming funding to support members of the NIHR Exeter BRC community to develop research in one or more of our themes or emerging themes. These grants are designed to fund pilot projects, proof-of-concept work, or de-risking studies with the expectation that this will strengthen onward external funding applications.

We are offering individual Small Project Grants of up to £25,000, although we strongly encourage requests for smaller awards of £10K or less.

**[1] For projects with ethics or data access approval already secured/not required.**

Projects with approval in place or where approval not being needed at the time of application, can be requested during the period from 4th April 2025 – 31st March 2026, noting that you do not need to request funds for the full duration. All funding must be spent by 31st March 2026.

**[2] For projects requiring ethical or data access/information governance approval: *conditional funding.***

Projects for which approval is required can apply, but funding awards are conditional on ethical or data access/information governance approvals being in place (refer to guidance in Appendix 1). Funds can be requested during the period 1st April 2026 – 31st March 2027. Once approval has been obtained, it is possible that projects will be able to start prior to 1st April 2026, with approval from the BRC COO and Director. All project spend must be completed by 31st March 2027.

We welcome interdisciplinary projects that cut across two or more of our research themes and also our emerging themes outlined above. It must be stated in the application, however, which of the themes the Small Project Grant primarily aligns with. Applications must have the support of a relevant theme lead prior to submission. Applications which involve several themes, and which are multi-disciplinary are encouraged.

If a project already has financial support, applicants should clearly demonstrate how the NIHR BRC Small Project Grant will add value, with justification provided in the application form.

Please note that it is an essential requirement that all publications, scientific presentations, informal communications and press releases resulting from work supported by the NIHR Exeter BRC formally acknowledge the BRC. Full details of how to acknowledge the BRC can be found [here](https://sites.google.com/nihr.ac.uk/exeterbrcsupportportal/home).

**Eligibility**

The lead applicant must be employed by the University of Exeter and/or one of our NHS Partner Trusts, hold a contract of employment for the full duration of the award and be a member of the NIHR Exeter BRC.

\*We define NIHR Exeter BRC members as individuals whose research aligns with our aims and objectives.

Postgraduate students may be named as co-applicants; however, they are not eligible to act as the lead. Individuals from other institutions, companies or equivalent can be named as co-applicants. You can list up to two co-applicants.

Funding exclusions include:

* Animal work of any description
* Investigator time
* Recruitment of new staff members
* Computer or laptop costs, including any hardware
* Equipment costing greater than 20% of the total amount requested
* University overheads
* Purchase must be in line with University policy

**Project costing**

**Lead applicants employed by the University of Exete**r must complete a standalone budget on Worktribe to ensure an accurate costing of your project as possible (refer to guidance on [SharePoint](https://universityofexeteruk.sharepoint.com/sites/RIME/SitePages/Costing-with-Standalone-Budget.aspx?xsdata=MDV8MDJ8Uy5MLkdvdWxkQGV4ZXRlci5hYy51a3wzMmU3MjRhMmI4ZTE0MzhiNmQ4YzA4ZGQzOWY3OGNmOXw5MTJhNWQ3N2ZiOTg0ZWVlYWYzMjEzMzRkOGYwNGE1M3wwfDB8NjM4NzMwNDU3NTUyODkzNjU5fFVua25vd258VFdGcGJHWnNiM2Q4ZXlKRmJYQjBlVTFoY0draU9uUnlkV1VzSWxZaU9pSXdMakF1TURBd01DSXNJbEFpT2lKWGFXNHpNaUlzSWtGT0lqb2lUV0ZwYkNJc0lsZFVJam95ZlE9PXwwfHx8&sdata=OHFBMGsydVV6c29tK3hZK1Fsd1Zaa0pURUp4eHhTNis0WFlrc2laWDRIYz0%3d&clickparams=eyAiWC1BcHBOYW1lIiA6ICJNaWNyb3NvZnQgT3V0bG9vayIsICJYLUFwcFZlcnNpb24iIDogIjE2LjAuMTgyMjcuMjAyMjIiLCAiT1MiIDogIldpbmRvd3MiIH0%3D)) and enable an efficient project set-up if awarded. Please select the ‘NIHR’ as your funder and ‘Grant (100% direct costs & DA staffing. No overheads’ as the appropriate ‘Scheme.’ Please add BRC Administration and Reporting Manager Claire Rosslee (C.Rosslee@exeter.ac.uk) as an editor.

We ask that you outline the total funds requested in your application and provide a breakdown of costs within the NIHR financial year. NIHR Exeter BRC has very stringent in-year spending requirements and, therefore, it is essential that investigators spend according to the expenditure profile detailed in the application. Significant underspend may result in funding being withdrawn.

**For non-University of Exeter based lead applicants**, please complete the template provided in the application form.

All applicants can cost the time of an existing UoE or partner NHS Trust staff member to support the delivery of the project if applicable. Staff costs via casual claims is also supported.

A range of infrastructure and facilities are accessible to support your research and can be costed onto your grant. Further details can be found in appendix 2.

When costing PPIE activities, we ask that you use the [NIHR payment guidance.](https://www.nihr.ac.uk/payment-guidance-researchers-and-professionals)

Should you have any questions surrounding costings, particularly with respect to staffing, please contact your Research Development Manager (HLS-ResearchCluster@exeter.ac.uk) or NHS Trust equivalent.

**Selection process**

Each Small Project Grant application will be evaluated by a theme-based selection panel, with input from Public Collaborators. Following review, outcomes will be disseminated to the lead applicant via email.

Assessment Criteria:

* Translational research impact with clear relevance to practice in alignment with theme objectives
* Scientific excellence
* Potential to leverage external funding and opportunities, such as commercial sector collaborations
* Alignment with NIHR Exeter BRC research priorities
* Strength and expertise of the research team
* Realistic budget and timeline, demonstrating value for money
* Approach to Patient and Public Involvement and Engagement (PPIE), with a focus on inclusivity and meaningful integration

**Timeline**

Application window: 29th January – 9th March 2025

Selection window: 10th –28th March 2025

Outcomes disseminated: 31st March – 4th April 2025

Award start: From 4th April 2025

**How to apply**

Applicants are welcome to discuss their application with the relevant theme lead(s) (contact information outlined below) who can provide guidance on whether the proposed research area aligns with theme strategic aims and objectives.

We will be accepting applications up until **5pm Sunday 9th March 2025**. For general enquires about the application process, and to submit your application, please contact NIHRExeterBRC@exeter.ac.uk.

**Theme lead contact details:**

**Rehabilitation:**

Professor Sallie Lamb: S.E.Lamb@exeter.ac.uk

Professor Helen Dawes: H.Dawes@exeter.ac.uk

**Neurodegeneration:**

Professor Clive Ballard: C.ballard@exeter.ac.uk

Professor Jon Mill: j.mill@exter.ac.uk

**Diabetes:**

Professor Andrew Hattersley: a.t.hattersley@exeter.ac.uk

Professor Ines Barroso: ines.barroso@exeter.ac.uk

**Clinical Mycology:**

Professor Adilia Warris: a.warris@exeter.ac.uk

Professor Gordon Brown: gordon.brown@exeter.ac.uk

**Genetics and Genomics:**

Professor Emma Baple: E.Baple@exeter.ac.uk

Professor Caroline Wright: Caroline.Wright@exeter.ac.uk

**Emerging themes:**

Professor Sallie Lamb: S.E.Lamb@exeter.ac.uk

Professor Adilia Warris: a.warris@exeter.ac.uk

**Our Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion Commitment**

The NIHR Exeter Biomedical Research Centre (BRC) and Clinical Research Facility (CRF) strongly adhere to Equality, Diversity and Inclusivity (EDI) principles. They share a fundamental objective to empower better health outcomes for all patients and the public by translating scientific breakthroughs into potential new treatments, diagnostics and medical technologies.

We are committed to ensuring that the consideration of EDI is second nature to all members of our experimental medicine and translational research community, fostering a fully inclusive environment where everyone feels supported, valued, and is provided the opportunity to reach their full potential.

Our strategy purposefully shares overarching EDI visions with those of the NIHR, UoE and NHS Trust partners to allow for collaborative working to reach our mutual goals. Whilst all applicants will be judged on merit alone, we particularly welcome applications from groups currently underserved within our working community.

**Appendix 1. Ethics approval**

If the research outlined in your application form requires ethical or data access/information governance approval, please utilise the resources listed below for support.

If the University of Exeter will be the primary sponsor of your research project, please contact Suzy Wignall (Senior Clinical Research Governance Manager) at S.Wignall@exeter.ac.uk for further guidance. Additional details can be found on the Universities Research Ethics, Governance and Compliance [webpages](https://www.exeter.ac.uk/departments/cgr/researchethics/) and [SharePoint](https://universityofexeteruk.sharepoint.com/sites/HealthandSocialCareResearchGovernance?e=1%3a47f7eca0fbc6455bbd09c234960a2252&xsdata=MDV8MDJ8Uy5MLkdvdWxkQGV4ZXRlci5hYy51a3w5M2NkOGY5YzU4ZDE0ZGYxOWQ0YzA4ZGQzOTY3NzRiYnw5MTJhNWQ3N2ZiOTg0ZWVlYWYzMjEzMzRkOGYwNGE1M3wwfDB8NjM4NzI5ODM4NjcyNDczNDcwfFVua25vd258VFdGcGJHWnNiM2Q4ZXlKRmJYQjBlVTFoY0draU9uUnlkV1VzSWxZaU9pSXdMakF1TURBd01DSXNJbEFpT2lKWGFXNHpNaUlzSWtGT0lqb2lUV0ZwYkNJc0lsZFVJam95ZlE9PXwwfHx8&sdata=NVBYbU1uKzhGVUxsYWNKTm1YRzFMZnlmZE5veFBkNkdhV2hFcDN2bGlkST0%3d&clickparams=eyAiWC1BcHBOYW1lIiA6ICJNaWNyb3NvZnQgT3V0bG9vayIsICJYLUFwcFZlcnNpb24iIDogIjE2LjAuMTgyMjcuMjAyMjIiLCAiT1MiIDogIldpbmRvd3MiIH0%3d&SafelinksUrl=https%3a%2f%2funiversityofexeteruk.sharepoint.com%2fsites%2fHealthandSocialCareResearchGovernance).

Suzy will be running two Clinical Research Governance training sessions in February should you wish to learn more about the required processes/procedures and ask any questions you may have:

* Wednesday 12th February at 11am – 12:30pm – book your place [here](https://www.eventbrite.com/e/introduction-to-clinical-research-governance-tickets-1224916180269?aff=oddtdtcreator).
* Wednesday 26th February at 10am – 11:30am- - book your place [here](https://www.eventbrite.com/e/introduction-to-clinical-research-governance-tickets-1224981425419?aff=oddtdtcreator).

If an NHS Trust Partner will be the primary sponsor of your research project, please get in touch with the appropriate team for further support and guidance.

For information on how to prepare and submit an application for Health Research Authority (HRA) approval please refer to the [IRAS website](https://www.myresearchproject.org.uk/help/hlphraapproval.aspx). Please note that even if HRA approval has been granted, you are still required to gain approval from the local sponsor (University or Trust).

**Appendix 2. Infrastructure and facilities**

The BRC supports a range of infrastructures and facilities across the faculty and we encourage you to consider them in your application. These include:

* Research Software Engineers – contact rse-group@exeter.ac.uk
* Statistics/Data Management – contact Chrissie Walker at C.J.Walker@exeter.ac.uk
* Bioinformatics support within the neurodegeneration theme – please complete [this webform](https://forms.office.com/pages/responsepage.aspx?id=d10qkZj77k6vMhM02PBKU_Tm1L61lMZHkUoD1JJULCxUN1RZMFkxSDJLTlpPT0IzM0ZMSzhTUTJEWi4u&route=shorturl)
* Commercial and IP – contact Matt Anderson at M.W.Anderson@exeter.ac.uk
* [Mireille Gillings Neuroimaging Centre](https://www.exeter.ac.uk/research/facilities/mgnc/) - contact is Dr Lisa Cashmore at L.A.Cashmore@exeter.ac.uk.
* [VSimulator](https://www.exeter.ac.uk/research/facilities/vsimulators/) – contact Katy Manning at K.L.Manning@exeter.ac.uk.
* [NIHR Exeter Clinical Research Facility](https://exetercrfnihr.org/) - contact crf@exeter.ac.uk.
* [Exeter Sequencing Facility](https://www.exeter.ac.uk/research/facilities/sequencing/) - contact quotations-sequencing@exeter.ac.uk.

**Appendix 3. Research Delivery Network Portfolio**

Project adoption to the Research Delivery Network portfolio:

* If you are intending to have your project adopted by the Research Delivery Network portfolio, please note that an external project review by at least three reviewers will be required – this is the responsibility of the lead applicant to organise, and they should be aware that this could incur a delay. Further details on this can be found here.
* Please contact Maxine Hough in the first instance at Maxine.hough@nhs.net.