UK Research and Innovation

Research into inclusive ageing

Opportunity status:	Open
Funders:	**Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC)**
Funding type:	Grant
Total fund:	£9,000,000
Award range:	£500,000 - £2,000,000
Publication date:	22 February 2021
Opening date:	9 April 2021
Closing date:	8 June 2021 16:00 UK time

Last updated: 30 April 2021

Apply for funding for research into inclusive ageing.

Your project must include a principal investigator based at an eligible research organisation.

Your project must go beyond only describing inequalities and focus on both:

- improving understanding of how social and economic inequalities affect people in later life
- identifying practical ways to improve inclusivity in later life.

Your project must address how earlier life experiences affect inequalities in later life.

The project's full economic cost can be up to £2.5 million. We will fund this at 80%. We will fund a range of different project sizes.

Projects can be up to five years in duration.

Who can apply

Principal investigators must be based at a UK institution eligible for ESRC funding. That organisation will be responsible for submitting the grant application to UKRI.

Projects must be interdisciplinary and collaborative. UK co-investigators can be from across different sectors:

- business
- third sector
- government body organisations.

Our **research funding guide** contains more details on individual and institutional eligibility.

Engaging people with lived experience of issues relevant to ageing is encouraged, and costs associated with this are permitted.

Projects should be primarily social science, and primarily focussed on issues relevant to the UK, but international collaborations are permitted.

Successful projects should aim to start in June 2022.

What we're looking for

Meeting the needs of an ageing society represents one of the key challenges of the 21st century. Part of this challenge relates to pervasive inequalities that continue to shape the experience of ageing and older age. This includes, for example:

- place
- ethnic background
- gender
- income.

This complex ecosystem of needs, risks and disparities needs further interrogation if we are serious about improving social inclusion and converting interest in equality into actionable solutions.

We need to better understand inequalities faced by those in under-researched groups, and the influences throughout individuals lives that are most associated with inequalities in later life outcomes.

The ambition of the inclusive ageing initiative is to radically reimagine inclusivity in ageing. Its focus is on reducing the impact of inequalities while extending and expanding the existing parameters of ageing research.

We want to encourage new and wide-ranging perspectives across sectors and groups, funding research which ultimately has the potential to achieve transformative societal impact.

All projects should:

- take an intersectional and a lifecourse approach to examining later life inequalities, maximising the use of existing datasets where appropriate
- contribute to extending and diversifying existing evidence in the field of ageing, improving understanding of how under-researched groups experience ageing
- engage in partnerships that cross disciplines and sectors, using innovative approaches and methods
- generate tangible actions to improve inclusivity for older people, through practical interventions or meaningful policy innovations.

We want projects to take an intersectional approach, accounting for the range of factors which affect later life outcomes. However, in order to improve evidence on under-researched groups, all projects must improve understanding of ageing in relation to one or more of the following groups:

- disabled adults with lifelong physical and learning impairments (from birth or developed in early life) including those with conditions which meant limited lifespans in the past but who are now living longer
- ethnic minority adults from midlife to later life, this also includes white minority groups, such as Gypsy, Roma and Irish traveller groups
- LGBT+ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and others) adults from midlife to later life.

In addition, projects should explore one or more of the following themes:

- **contemporary ageing risks**: societal changes mean that experiences of ageing are changing compared to earlier generations. For example, more people are growing older with obesity, without children, experiencing higher levels of social isolation, with mental health conditions, or with conditions that would have limited life expectancy previously
- **place**: examining how place at local, regional, and national level impacts upon later life outcomes, including provision and access to social care. This can also include housing, the effect of geographical location (for example, rural, urban, coastal) on exclusion, or inequalities experienced in later life
- **social networks**: understanding the changing nature of social networks and the impact and function of these, inside or outside 'traditional' family structures. This can also explore new connections between individuals and communities in person and/or through online social networks
- **employment and income**: this includes exploring the later life impact of the changing nature of work, for example the gig economy, later retirement, rise in precarity in certain sectors, and multiple job transitions. Also, the impact of changes to other forms of income, and relationship to family circumstances and provision of care
- **education and skills**: considering the impact of skills and education on outcomes in later life, including access to life-long learning opportunities and learning new skills, for example digital literacy. This also includes transitions associated with under-achievement or past interruption in education.

Applicants are encouraged to draw on evidence from existing data investments where feasible and appropriate. Projects can take steps to improve representativeness of datasets as part of their research process, although dataset enhancement or production should not be the primary aim of projects.

This initiative aims to drive forward inclusivity and change, so projects should therefore offer a research environment that supports inclusivity. Engaging people with lived experience of issues being researched at all stages of the project is also strongly encouraged.

We encourage the use of innovative leadership and management approaches to enable and facilitate leadership development and capacity building. We encourage the participation of early career researchers within applications and where appropriate, as co-investigators.

It is likely ESRC will undertake activity to co-ordinate awards, however this is dependent on the final portfolio of grants awarded. As a minimum, successful projects will be expected to participate in joint grant holder events and activities, including those that are part of the **UKRI healthy ageing** initiative.

Ineligible costs and activity

The following will not be supported:

- research that duplicates or overlaps with other planned or ongoing research
- proposals that are deemed to be less than 50% social science
- PhD studentships
- proposals that focus solely on the impact of COVID-19
- proposals whose primary aim is to produce or enhance datasets.

How to apply

Applications will be made through Joint Electronic Submission system (Je-S).

You must apply using Je-S. To be able to do this your host organisation must be registered for Je-S, and you must hold a Je-S account. If you are unsure about this, you should contact your research organisation's research office for further guidance.

Read the Je-S guidance attachment for in-depth information about the application process.

How we will assess your application

The opportunity process will be in two stages:

1. Outline stage
2. Full application stage

Outlines will be reviewed via a specially convened panel, with expertise across different disciplines relevant to ageing. The panel will also include non-academic experts.

All projects will be informed on outcomes for their submissions in September 2021.

Shortlisted applicants will then be invited to make a full proposal to the scheme via Je-S with a submission date of December 2021.

Projects will be informed of outcomes by April 2022 and should aim to begin June 2022.

Guidance on making a full submission will be provided to shortlisted applicants.

Applications will be evaluated against the following criteria:

- academic excellence – proposals should demonstrate an innovative research agenda and potential to generate new knowledge, leading to new insights on under-researched groups
- fit to the scope of the opportunity – including taking a lifecourse approach; diversifying evidence in ageing research; using intersectional approaches; fit to one or more of the themes outlined
- interdisciplinary approach – does the project truly involve a range of research disciplines that are appropriate to the research questions posed?
- collaborative approach – are an appropriate range of stakeholders across sectors involved in meaningful ways? Are plans to engage people with lived experience, where used, embedded, and well thought through?
- research environment – what steps have been taken to ensure the project provides an inclusive environment? Have capacity building and professional development opportunities been considered across the team?
- practical outcomes and impact – does the project have practical outcomes and/or policy impact? Does the proposed research promise to make a substantive difference to older people and aim to improve inclusivity and reduce inequalities
- timeliness
- value for money.

We may make a strategic decision on the proposals to support, within proposals rated highly against the above criteria. Funded grants will be considered as part of a portfolio of awards.

Contact details

Please send all queries to: **esrcinclusiveageing@esrc.ukri.org**.

Additional info

Supporting documents

- **Je-S guidance (PDF, 197KB)**
- **equality, diversity and inclusion statement (PDF, 284KB)**

- **frequently asked questions (PDF, 119KB)**

Webinar

A webinar outlining the aims and objectives of the opportunity and some frequently asked questions was held on 23 April, 2021. Please see the links below to access the recording and the slides:

- **Webinar recording (YouTube)**
- **Webinar slides (PDF, 1.8MB)**

Timeline

9 April 2021
Opening date

8 June 2021 16:00
Closing date

September 2021
Assessment panel meeting

December 2021
Funding decision

June 2022
Grant start date