Clinical Academic Research Partnerships (CARP): Guidance for Applicants

Before submitting a proposal, please ensure you have thoroughly read the guidance available. Proposals which do not include the required components, or which are not formatted according to the guidance will not be considered.

1. Who can apply?

The following paragraphs set out the eligibility criteria for Clinical Academic Research Partnerships (CARP) applicants, at individual and institutional levels and their responsibilities.

If you have previously applied to the scheme, your current application must be substantially different from the previous, unsuccessful submission. Please contact the CARP team (CARP@mrc.ukri.org) to discuss your new submission. In a covering letter accompanying your new proposal, you will need to indicate how the application has been changed and how you responded to any feedback received.

Eligibility: Applicant

This scheme is open to applicants across the UK. Applicants should be a member of NHS staff, staff contracted to the NHS or working in the care sector or public health. This includes, but is not limited to doctors, dentists, nurses, midwives, allied health professions, healthcare scientists, pharmacists, clinical psychologists, registered public health practitioners and others[1], in either primary care, secondary care, community care, public health or other organisation providing publicly funded health or care services. If your profession is not listed here and you are unsure of your eligibility, please contact the CARP team (CARP@mrc.ukri.org).

Applicants should be working at consultant-level or in other senior roles (e.g., Agenda for Change Band 7 or above). In addition to working at a senior level, individuals should be holding specialized knowledge and will have demonstratable capacity for professional independence/leadership. Applicants must hold a PhD/MD or equivalent postgraduate qualification, for example ~3 years consolidated research time, where the applicant had been the intellectual drive behind a project and obtained strong outputs from their research experience.

There are no eligibility rules based on time since applicants obtained their PhD/MD etc, however within their current posts, applicants should not be undertaking any substantive research activity. Applicants will generally have no or very limited research funding. It is expected that most

[1] https://www.nihr.ac.uk/documents/heenihr-ica-programme-eligible-professions-and-regulators/12204

applicants will have less than one programmed activity[2] (four hours per week) of research time within their current job plan (contracted duties). Applicants who have more than one research PA or have not had a significant break in research activity will need to articulate the added-value of the award, for example how this scheme will put them on a research trajectory they were not currently on and why this scheme is a more suitable option compared to other schemes they are eligible for.

Applicants without a significant break in research activity are encouraged to investigate other existing schemes, for example: MRC's Clinician Scientist Fellowship or NIHR's Advanced Fellowship.

Eligibility: Research partner(s)

The research partner(s) must have a proven track record of securing research funding and delivering high quality research. The research partner should hold funding for the duration of the planned partnership from funders such as UKRI, NIHR, or significant third sector research funders. They must also be based at an organisation eligible to hold research council funding (e.g. HEIs, NHS bodies with research capacity and eligible public sector research establishments). Further information on eligible organisations can be found on the UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) website. The research partner must hold a contract of employment with the host research organisation for the duration of the award.

A letter of support from the research partner(s) indicating their support must be included as part of the application.

Eligibility: Project

Projects are welcome across all areas of the partnering funders' (MRC and NIHR) remits and interests. Applications may range from basic discovery science to translational and applied health research, and may address research questions from disease-specific mechanistic hypotheses through to research in priority areas such as primary care, population health, public health, mental health, multimorbidity, molecular pathology and other areas as outlined in MRC's and NIHR's strategic plans. Applications proposing interdisciplinary approaches are welcomed.

The proposed project should be tailored to the interests of and expertise of the applicant and research partner and designed to provide a mutually beneficial collaboration for both parties.

Responsibilities of the host research organisation

Applicants should hold a contract of employment or an honorary contract with the host research organisation (RO) of the research partner for the duration of the award. Please note there is no requirement to relinquish your NHS (or equivalent employer) post in order to take up the award.

The RO must be eligible to hold research council funding and be Je-S registered. The RO will need to accept responsibility for administering the award, including making local arrangements where necessary to, for example, make payments to the NHS Trust to support backfill appointments.

The host research organisation must demonstrate appropriate support (such as access to facilities) to enable the applicant to successfully undertake the project described.

[2] Each programmed activity (PA) worked between 7am and 7pm Monday to Friday, excluding bank holidays, is a period of 4 hours.

All applications must be approved by the appropriate administrative authority on behalf of the host institution. Administrative authorities have responsibility for ensuring salaries and resources cited in the proposal are enough to undertake the proposed research.

A letter of support from the host institution indicating its support and approval must be included as part of the application.

Responsibilities of the NHS organisation (or equivalent employer)

The NHS organisation (or equivalent, such as a local authority, care organisation, Public Health England) that employs you must provide a letter of support:

- confirming that you will have protected research time and will therefore be released for the proportion of time funded by MRC and the National Institute for Health Research
- including clear and feasible plans for your time to be backfilled, especially for applicants from niche specialties where this will present challenges
- guaranteeing that you can re-enter the clinic full-time without any loss of career progression or status at the end of the award, if you choose to do so

Please note that as a condition of the award we will ask for a copy of your NHS job plan to confirm the number of research PAs.

2. Financial support available

The budget for the scheme is approx. £5,000,000, from which it is anticipated 20 awards will be made. There is no limit to the total support an application can request, but applicants should be mindful of the budget available and anticipated number of awards.

All applications should be costed based on the full economic costs (FEC) necessary to deliver the research. If a grant is awarded, the MRC/NIHR will typically fund 80 per cent of the FEC and the RO(s) must agree to find the balance of FEC from other resources. Please see the MRC webpages for further information.

Awards will be a minimum of one year and maximum of three years in duration. Each award will support between 20-50% of the applicant's basic salary to support protected research time, and costs to undertake the project. Please note that the research time may replace or add to existing clinical commitments within the individual's work plan. The latter situation is intended to apply to individuals currently working less than 100% WTE.

We do not expect salaries of research staff other than the applicant to be costed into the application (for example, co-investigators, postdocs, research fellows, research assistants etc).

Staff costs can be requested where essential for the delivery of the project. For example; to assist data collection in another country, requirement for an independent statistician, a trial coordinator for blinding participants in a trial, this is not an exhaustive list.

Further details can be found in under ***Resource Summary***.

3. How to apply

All proposals must be completed and submitted through the Je-S system by 16:00 (GMT) on 18 November 2021. The call will be available to select on Je-S from 27th August 2021.

All applications need to be submitted through the RO of the research partner who will host the applicant. They must also be based at an organisation eligible to hold research council funding. Further information on eligible organisations can be found on the UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) website.

Applications must be prepared by the clinical applicant, who in turn must be Je-S registered with a 'Research Proposals' Je-S account type. Applicants should ensure that their RO is Je-S registered well in advance of the deadline and are advised to contact their research office in advance of creating their Je-S account to ensure the account request is approved when submitted.

All applicants should consult the team responsible for proposal submissions at their RO to confirm how much time they will need to process the application and complete the submission process.

All applications must be submitted to the MRC via the Je-S system by **16:00** on the advertised closing date. Applications received after the deadline will not be considered.

Please note that when an application is submitted through Je-S it does not pass directly to the MRC, but to the UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) Grants Team who will then process the submission. Should applicants require assistance with any Je-S related matter, please contact the Je-S Helpdesk:

- Email: JeSHelp@je-s.ukri.org
- Phone: +44 (0) 1793 44 4164

4. Creating your Je-S account

All Investigators (Principal Investigators and Co-Investigators) are required to have a verified Je-S account type. New Je-S users should select 'Create Account - Terms and Conditions' to commence the create account process and gain access to the Je-S system and follow the step-by-step guidance available on the MRC's website.

To create a proposal:

1) Login to Je-S, select 'Documents' from your account 'Home' page and then select 'Add New Document'
2) Select MRC as the Council
3) Select Standard Proposal as the document type
4) Select Research Grant as the scheme
5) Select the call: CARP Nov 2021
6) Select Create Document

5. The application

The proposal form in Je-S

The Je-S proposal form provides a summary of the whole project. Some of the sections are related to the mandatory attachments, the attachments provide the detail required for decision-making purposes.

The main sections and headings in the proposal form are set out below, along with a description of the information required in each section.

Organisation where the grant should be held

This should be the RO of the research partner (Co-I). The lead RO will be responsible for administering the grant. Further information on organisations eligible to hold research council funding can be found on the UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) website.

Your reference

Please provide a suitable reference which will serve as your identifier for the proposal. Please note that once your application is submitted through Je-S, it will be assigned a unique reference number, generated by the system, which will be the main identifier for your application from this point onwards.

Project title (150-character limit)

This should reflect the aim of the project.

Important note: We request that applicants do not include the words 'Cov-19', 'Covid-19' or 'Coronavirus' in the ***Title, Summary or Technical Summary*** sections unless the application relates to proposed research in this area.

Start date and duration

The anticipated start date should be realistic and would normally be between one month and six months after the date of the decision-making board or panel.

The duration may be a minimum of 12 months up to a maximum of 36 months, dependent on the project requirements.

Once a grant has been issued, grant holders are required to make every effort to start on the agreed date. The start of the grant may be delayed by up to 3 months from the start date shown in the offer letter, the duration of the grant remaining unchanged. The grant may lapse if it is not started within this period.

Applicants, including investigators

This should include the Principle Investigator and all Co-Investigators involved in the project.

- Applicant to be entered under the 'Principal Investigator' heading.
- Research partner(s) to be entered under the 'Co-Investigator' heading.

Objectives (4000-character limit)

What is the project aiming to achieve? The objectives of the proposed project should be listed in order of priority and should be those that the investigators would wish the MRC to use as the basis for evaluation of work upon completion of any grant awarded.

Summary (4000-character limit)*

Provide a plain English (layperson's) summary of the proposed work, explaining:

- the context of the aims and objectives of the research
- the potential applications and anticipated benefits

* This summary, including your name and institution, will be published on publicly available sites including the UK Research and Innovation's (UKRI) Gateway to Research should the project be funded. Please ensure confidential information is not included.

Important note: We request that applicants do not include the words 'Cov-19', 'Covid-19' or 'Coronavirus' in the ***Title, Summary or Technical Summary*** sections unless the application relates to proposed research in this area.

Technical summary* (2000-character limit)

Provide a more in-depth summary aimed at reviewers (academic and non-academic) who have some knowledge of the areas of research involved. This should cover the key research questions you plan to address and methods to be used.

* This summary, including your name and institution, will be published on publicly available sites including the Gateway to Research should the project be funded. Please ensure confidential information is not included.

Important note: We request that applicants do not include the words 'Cov-19', 'Covid-19' or 'Coronavirus' in the ***Title, Summary or Technical Summary*** sections unless the application relates to proposed research in this area.

Resource Summary

All applications should be costed based on the full economic costs (FEC) necessary to deliver the research. If a grant is awarded, the MRC/NIHR will typically fund 80 per cent of the FEC and the RO(s) must agree to find the balance of FEC from other resources. Please see the MRC webpages for further information.

The CARP award can be used for:

- 20-50% of the applicant's basic salary to support protected research time
- Costs to undertake the project (e.g. consumables and facility usage costs)
- Estates and Indirects.

The CARP award cannot be used for:

- Salaries* of research staff other than the applicant (for example, co-investigators, postdocs, research fellows, research assistants etc)
- Publication costs
- Patent costs and other IP costs

*Staff costs can be requested where essential for the delivery of the project. For example; to assist data collection in another country, requirement for an independent statistician, a trial coordinator for blinding participants in a trial, this is not an exhaustive list. Costs should be reasonable, fully justified and only form a small part of the request for funding.

Applicants should refer to the Resources section of the MRC Guidance for Applicants for details on how to assign costs. It is anticipated that the applicant's salary will be the main cost of an award, with a small amount of additional costs requested.

Other Support

Support on current projects from other sources. Applicants must declare any relevant financial support which has been awarded or applied for. This should include any funding that has been obtained or requested for any aspect of the project currently being applied for, by either the applicant or research partner.

Related Proposals

Please specify if the current proposal is related to a previous proposal to the MRC or NIHR (e.g. resubmission to the CARP scheme)

Project Partners

This does not relate to your research partner.

MRC encourages and supports collaborative research projects and team approaches, especially between academic and industry researchers. Collaborators based in different organisations to the investigators or in industry can be formally recognised in applications as named project partners.

A project partner provides a substantial intellectual contribution to the project, and their organisation may also provide resources either in-kind or financially, project partners are not expected to request MRC funding to participate.

The contribution and involvement of project partners should be acknowledged in the project partner section of the application form and described in detail in the case for support, where the whole team and their skills/expertise and responsibilities should be set out for the benefit of assessors.

Each project partner must provide a letter of support.

Applications including industry collaborators should follow the MRC Industrial Collaboration Agreement (MICA) guidance.

Technical and ethical considerations

Please complete each of these sections with the required information by ticking the appropriate boxes.

6. Supporting attachments in Je-S

All applications require a completed proposal form accompanied by a number of mandatory attachments. Attachments must conform to the following requirements:

- completed in sans-serif typeface (Arial or equivalent, not Arial Narrow) and font size of 11pt, excluding text on diagrams and the use of mathematical symbols;
- A minimum of single line spacing and standard character spacing must be used;
- Margins must not be less than 2cm;
- PDF documents with numbered pages and logical file names so that information can be found easily.

Failure to provide required components or information may mean that your proposal will be delayed and/or returned, or its assessment prejudiced.

Applications will be checked soon after the closing date. Any component(s) of an application which do not meet these rules will be returned for amendment before being validated for peer review. A late response in amending returned elements of the application will result in the application being withdrawn from the round.

When uploading PDF documents, please ensure they are given a logical file name and description so that information can be found easily. Also ensure that all pages of each document are numbered.

Mandatory attachments	**Conditions**
Case for support	A maximum of four sides of A4 (including references)
Justification of resources	A maximum of two sides of A4
Data management plan	A maximum of three sides of A4
CVs	CVs for the Applicant and Research Partner(s) must be included. A maximum of two sides of A4 per person. Applicants must use the template provided.
Publications	A maximum of one side of A4 per Applicant and Research Partner(s). The publications list should highlight relevant and recent publications. The MRC welcomes the inclusion of preprints in publication lists.
Letters of support	Any number of supporting letters are permitted. However, applicants should note that the total number submitted should be commensurate with the length of the proposal. For each letter, a maximum of two sides of A4 or equivalent on headed paper or sent by email **We recommend a maximum of four letters**.

Additional attachments	**Conditions**
Covering letter	A maximum of two pages using a sans-serif typeface (Arial or equivalent) and font size of 11pt.
MICA form	For more information see MRC Industry Collaboration Agreement (MICA)
Heads of terms	For more information see MRC Industry Collaboration Agreement (MICA)
Schedule of Events Cost Attribution Template (SoECAT)	Upload as 'letter of support' For more information see Excess Treatment Costs of Studies Involving Human Participants

Additional attachments	Conditions
Additional questions on the use of animals overseas	A maximum of two pages see Use of animals overseas

Case for support

This should be a self-contained description of the proposed work with relevant background and should not depend on additional information.

Please note justification of resources is not required in the case for support. This is a separate document which should be attached to each Je-S application.

Section 1: Background to the research area

An introduction providing the aims and objectives of the proposed research. A summary of the current state of knowledge.

Section 2: Project Plan

The detailed research questions to be addressed.

The study designs and methods for analysis to be used, providing a clear rationale for your choice, including references to relevant literature. Chosen methods should be appropriate to the research questions. Applicants should explain any innovation in methods or highlight their intention to develop new methods.

The envisaged timescale for delivering the aspects of the project.

Section 3: Added value of the partnership and future directions

The added value of your proposed collaboration to both parties during the award. This should include how this will award will enable a step-change in your research career, support your career aspirations and may also include how you intend to continue engagement with research beyond the CARP award.

Reproducibility and statistical design annex (maximum of one side of A4)

It is strongly advised that a one-page annex to the Case for Support is included, in addition to the page limits in Table 1, to provide additional information specifically relating to the statistical analyses, methodology and experimental design aspects of the proposal (beyond that contained in the main case for support). Please note that you should not duplicate information presented elsewhere in the application. Further information is provided in the MRC Guidance for Applicants

Research disruption caused by COVID-19 pandemic (maximum of one side of A4)

The purpose of this annex is to provide additional information, of relevance to the application and the research case, when needed to explain specific disruptions to previous or current research caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. Although up to one page is allowed a short summary is preferred. You should not describe general disruptions that all researchers will have experienced or

duplicate information presented elsewhere in the application. Although we expect all researchers to have been affected this annex is NOT a requirement.

This information may be provided as a clearly marked annex at the end of the main case for support, entitled 'COVID-19 Research Disruption Annex' and should not be added as a separate attachment. Further information is provided in the MRC Guidance for Applicants

Justification of resources (maximum of two sides of A4)

Please provide a statement justifying the resources requested to undertake the proposed research. The role of the JoR is to aid reviewers when assessing proposals so that they can make an informed judgment on whether the resources requested are appropriate for the research posed. The justification should explain why the resources requested are appropriate, considering the nature and complexity of the research proposal, as well as detailing how the proposal will complement existing research funding held by the research partner.

Applicants should refer to the section on Justification of Resources in the MRC Guidance for Applicants for further details on how to cost their proposal, and to the scheme's webpage for the aims of the scheme and level of funding available.

Data management plan (maximum of three sides of A4)

The data management plan should be used as an opportunity to describe how the data (inputs to research and results of that research) are going to be managed - starting from planning for research and through the lifecycle of the grant. Applicants must consider issues of data protection, data security and ethics. Further guidance is available in the MRC Guidance for Applicants. A template for producing your data management plan is also available in the guidance.

CVs (maximum of two sides of A4 per person)

CVs for the Applicant and Research Partner(s) must be included.

The applicant should use the CV template provided. Applicants should ensure their current job plan is explained in their CV, or can upload this as an attachment in addition to their CV.

The CV for the research partner(s) should include qualifications, academic and professional posts held, and a record of research supported by funding bodies.

CVs should only include information relevant to the application. Unnecessary personal data (e.g. home address, date of birth, personal phone numbers and emails) should not be included.

You can use the CV to explain any breaks in employment or publication record, for example as a result of a career break or parental leave. You may also use it to highlight how the COVID-19 pandemic has specifically affected the individuals involved in the application. We will assume all researchers have experienced general disruption.

Publications (maximum of one side of A4 per person)

A list of the most relevant and recent publications by the Applicant and Research Partner(s) should be included.

Letters of Support and Cover Letter (maximum of two sides of A4 per letter)

Detailed and personalised letters of support are essential for a competitive proposal. Any number of supporting letters are permitted. However, applicants should note that the total number submitted should be commensurate with the length of the proposal. We recommend a maximum of four supporting letters.

Applicants should attach letters of support from:

1. **Research partner(s)** confirming their commitment to the appropriate training and support for the proposed research project;
2. **Head of Department of the research partner(s) (e.g. where the applicant will be hosted)** indicating approval and confirming appropriate support (such as access to facilities) to enable the applicant to successfully undertake the project described.
3. **Senior member of the NHS Organisation (or equivalent) employing the applicant** confirming their commitment to appropriately backfill the proportion of time that will be dedicate to research, ensuring the applicant's research time is robustly protected, and a commitment to ensuring that the awardee can re-enter the clinic full-time without any loss of career progression status at the end of the award. Letters of support should include clear and feasible plans for the applicant's time to be backfilled, especially for applicants from niche specialties where this will present challenges. The letter should be written by someone with authority to make these commitments.
4. **Project Partners or collaborators** (not your research partner) if contributions from other partners or collaborators are critical to the delivery of the proposal, a letter of support outlining the contribution they will make and confirming their willingness to support the project should be included. Further guidance is available in the MRC Guidance for Applicants. Applications including industry collaborators should follow the MRC Industrial collaboration award (MICA) guidance.

Further guidance about the content of these letters is available in the MRC Guidance for Applicants. Applicants may also choose to submit a cover letter with their proposal.

Schedule of Events Cost Attribution Template (SoECAT)

If your application includes NHS Costs (NHS Excess Treatment, NHS Support or Research Costs) a Schedule of Events Cost Attribution Template (SoECAT) to calculate the likely NHS costs associated with the study needs to be completed.

A SoECAT must be completed if:

- The proposed study is intended for the NIHR CRN portfolio, the route through which support, and Excess Treatment Costs are provided in England. This may include studies that will take place in a social care or public health setting.
- The research requires HRA and HCRW Approval in England and/or Wales, and/or studies requiring NHS/HSC Management Permission in Northern Ireland and/or Scotland.
- The research will use NHS resources

For further information please see section '3.5.1 NHS costs' of the MRC guidance for applicants. More information including the SoECAT template can also be found on the NIHR website.

If you are unsure whether your application requires a SoECAT please contact your Local Clinical Research Network (LCRN) AcoRD specialist.

Please note that Je-S does not allow the upload of MS Excel files, therefore please convert the relevant pages to a PDF and upload it to the application as a 'Letter of Support'. Please detail the file's description as 'Schedule of Events Cost Attribution Tool'.

7. Useful Contacts

Je-S helpdesk

Please note that when an application is submitted through Je-S it does not pass directly to the MRC, but to the UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) Grants Team who will then process the submission. Should applicants require assistance with any Je-S related matter, please contact the Je-S Helpdesk:

- JeSHelp@je-s.ukri.org
- +44 (0) 1793 44 4164
- Staffed Monday to Thursday 8.30am to 5pm and Fridays 8.30am to 4.30pm (excluding bank holidays and other holidays)

When reporting problems by e-mail or telephone, please supply the following information:

- Your name, organisation and user id
- The date and time
- The part of the form or system you were working on when the problem occurred
- The nature of the problem

Research funding policy and delivery

For general MRC policy and eligibility questions please contact our Research Funding Policy and Delivery (RFPD) team: ResearchFundingPolicyandDelivery@mrc.ukri.org

Research organisation

This should be the RO of the Research Partner (Co-I). The lead RO will be responsible for administering the grant. All applicants should consult the team responsible for proposal submissions at their RO to confirm how much time they will need to finalise the application and complete the submission process.

NHS Organisation (or equivalent employer)

Applicants should liaise with their employer to confirm the proposed backfill arrangements and letter of support. Please note we will ask to see a copy of the applicant's job plan as a condition of the award.

Clinical Research Network (CRN)

If your application includes NHS Costs you will need to complete a Schedule of Events Cost Attribution Template (SoECAT) which will involve contacting a Local Clinical Research Network

(LCRN) AcoRD specialist. Early engagement with the LCRN AcoRD specialist in the application process is recommended.

Clinical Academic Research Partnerships (CARP) Team

For questions specific to CARP: CARP@mrc.ukri.org

If your email relates to your suitability as a candidate, please attach a copy of your CV to the email enquiry. If your email relates to the suitability of your project, please attach a one-page summary of your proposed research.