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STIRLING



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Lothian Clinical Academic Pathways Partnership

# Clinical Academic Research Gateway Awards



NHS Lothian  
Charity

## First Steps into Research Award

**Full Details, Terms and Conditions**  
**2 February 2024**

### **1. Introduction**

NHS Lothian is committed to clinical academic careers for Nursing, Midwifery, Allied Health Professions, Psychology, Pharmacy Professions and Healthcare Sciences (NMAHPPS). With financial support from NHS Lothian Charity funded research training awards at various career development levels are now available for NHS Lothian employees. These awards will help employees to develop their research knowledge and skills to progress to the next stage of a clinical academic pathway if they choose.

These awards will serve to promote research capacity and capability by building a sustainable caucus of NMAHPPS within NHS Lothian developing research skills and knowledge alongside their developing clinical skills and knowledge. Ultimately it will sustain a higher volume of quality applied healthcare research amongst these professions in the Board area.

### **2. Details of the First Steps into Research Awards**

First Steps into Research awards are aimed primarily at early career graduate NMAHPPS, usually employed at Band 5 or 6 currently (although more experienced employees are not excluded), who have a strong interest in research but without the necessary knowledge and experience to apply for funded clinical academic research training pathways at Master's degree level and above. These awards will provide 'real life' engagement with an established research team and supervision/mentorship focused on the individual's current learning needs and future career.

Recipients of an award will have a structured research experience of up to the equivalent of 12 whole days over a maximum of a 12 month period. Recipients will be embedded within an established research team in higher education and/or the NHS to participate in a specified set of research activities available from a broad range of possibilities and which are suitable to their level of knowledge and experience. Supervision will be provided by an experienced member of the host research team who will often be a university academic. Mentorship will also be provided by an appropriate NHS Lothian professional research lead.

Applicants will be required to state their preferred host research team but there will be opportunity on the application form to indicate an interest in other teams and their

research work. Matching successful applicants to host teams will occur after the offer of award. Awards will be conditional on suitable hosting arrangements being successfully negotiated.

An inventory of research teams who are keen to host recipients of one of these awards has been collated to assist applicants. Research experiences that might be possible within each research team will be specified in this inventory. Applicants are free to negotiate a placement with a research team outwith this inventory but such arrangements must ensure that suitable experiences and supervision will be provided in keeping with the purpose of the First Steps into Research awards.

### **3. Type of funding available**

NHS Lothian will provide funds to successful applicants' employing service equal to the cost (including employment on-costs) of the time away from normal duties for the purposes of the First Steps into Research placement, where relevant.<sup>1</sup> This salary funding will be capped at £3,500, which has been based on the salary costs for Agenda for Change Bands 5 and 6 for a period of 12 days.

An additional maximum of £500 is available under the terms of these awards which recipients can use towards a recognised research development opportunity; this could be a Master's level research module, attendance at a research conference, introductory research methods course and similar.

### **4. Process of awarding funding**

Awards will be made following a competitive application process open to all registered Nurses, Midwives, Allied Health Professionals,<sup>2</sup> Psychologists, Pharmacy Professions<sup>3</sup>, and Healthcare Scientists employed by NHS Lothian. Staff on fixed term contracts can apply only for awards whose duration would not extend beyond the last day of their contract. Individuals with NHS Lothian honorary contract status only are not eligible for an award.

Applicants are required to complete and return an application form.

Interviews will form part of the selection process. The Awards Panel will comprise NHS Lothian and partner university representatives of the Lothian Clinical Academic Pathways Partnership.

### **5. Terms and conditions of awards**

Award recipients' existing employment terms and conditions with NHS Lothian will be unaffected by receipt of this award.

#### **5.1 Contract of Agreement**

On receipt of the offer of an award a successful applicant will be required to sign a Contract of Agreement to confirm in writing that they accept the offer of award on the

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<sup>1</sup> Part-time employees may choose to carry out their First Steps into Research placement in their own time. In these circumstances study leave will not be necessary and the employing service manager will not be required to sign off the application nor the Contract of Agreement for successful applicants, and no funding for salary will be provided.

<sup>2</sup> The eligible AHP Professions are Physiotherapy, Occupational Therapy, Speech & Language Therapy, Dietetics, Podiatry, Radiography, Prosthetics, Orthotics, Orthoptics, and Arts Therapies.

<sup>3</sup> Pharmacists and pharmacy technicians

basis of the specified terms and conditions. The Contract of Agreement will detail the following:

### **5.1.1 Agreed learning aims and research tasks to be experienced**

The agreed learning aims and research tasks to be experienced during the period of the award will be detailed in the Contract of Agreement. These will reflect those described in the applicant's successful application for an award except in those circumstances where funding is awarded by the Awards Panel on condition of amendments to the learning aims and research tasks to be experienced as described in the application.

### **5.1.2 Duration of awards**

The Contract of Agreement will stipulate the start and end dates of the period of award. The period of award will be a maximum of 12 months except in those circumstances described in 5.1.6.1-5.1.6.7.

### **5.1.3 Study leave arrangements**

The study leave time away from usual NHS Lothian post(s) duties needed to pursue the First Steps into Research placement will need to have been agreed between the applicant and their service manager(s) prior to application, where relevant<sup>1</sup>. Service managers will be required to confirm their agreement to these arrangements on the application form and details of the study leave agreed will be documented in the Contract of Agreement for successful applicants, where relevant<sup>1</sup>.

### **5.1.4 Payment mechanisms**

The agreed level of salary funding will be transferred internally from a cost centre administered in NHS Lothian's Research & Development Office to the successful applicant's employing service at commencement of the First Steps into Research placement, where relevant<sup>1</sup>. Award recipients will have no role or responsibilities with regard to this process. Purchases of course and conference registrations and similar from the additional maximum £500 funding which is available will be administered from this cost centre directly with providers/vendors as per standard NHS Lothian procedures for course/conference bookings.

### **5.1.5 Reporting mechanisms**

Recipients of an award will be required to provide a Progress Report at the end of their First Steps into Research placement. The Progress Report will cover:

- Research tasks experienced
- Objectives achieved in relation to those specified at commencement.
- Occurrences of research supervision and mentorship
- Reflections on the First Steps into Research placement experience
- Ambitions regarding further research training and possible next steps
- Any issues encountered.

The Progress Report will need to be countersigned by the recipient's research supervisor.

### **5.1.6 Termination and suspension of awards**

All awards will automatically terminate at the end of the award period (see section 5.1.2) except in certain circumstances described in sections 5.1.6.1-5.1.6.7.

In circumstances where the award is terminated prematurely (see sections 5.1.6.1-5.1.6.3) the following will apply:

- A Progress Report may be requested (as per the specifications in section 5.1.5).
- Repatriation of funding provided to the employing service will occur as appropriate, and commensurate with the amount of unused study leave time as a result of award termination.
- Recipients will have a right of appeal against a decision to terminate the award.

It is the responsibility of the recipient of an award to inform the NHS Lothian professional research lead acting as their mentor during the award period of any of the circumstances described in sections 5.1.6.1-5.1.6.7 below at the earliest opportunity:

#### **5.1.6.1 Recipient leaves NHS Lothian employment**

Where the recipient of an award leaves the employment of NHS Lothian for any reason the award will be terminated on the last day of employment with NHS Lothian. In this circumstance the conditions described in 5.1.6 will apply.

#### **5.1.6.2 Recipient obtains alternative employment within NHS Lothian**

Where the recipient of an award leaves the employment of the service with whom a period of study leave was agreed under the terms of the Contract of Agreement, in order to take employment within a different NHS Lothian service, the award will be suspended pending amendment of the Contract of Agreement.

If it is not possible to amend the Contract of Agreement to the satisfaction of all the necessary signatories (particularly the recipient's new service manager) the award will be terminated on the last day of employment by the original service. In this circumstance the conditions described in 5.1.6 will apply.

#### **5.1.6.3 Premature termination of award**

Where the recipient of an award gives notice of wishing to terminate their award, or their award is terminated for any other reason, the award will be terminated on the last day of the terminated placement. In this circumstance the conditions described in 5.1.6 will apply.

#### **5.1.6.4 Changes in recipient's contracted hours of employment**

Where the recipient of an award seeks a change in their contracted hours of employment with NHS Lothian there may be occasion to amend the Contract of Agreement or suspend or terminate the award. Discussion will be required between the recipient of the award, their service manager, the NHS Lothian professional research lead acting as the recipient's mentor, and the research supervisor to determine if there are grounds for amending the Contract of Agreement or suspending or terminating the award. If the award is terminated then the conditions described in 5.1.6 will apply.

#### **5.1.6.5 Maternity/paternity/parental leave**

Where the recipient of an award takes maternity, paternity, or parental leave and

seeks the suspension of their award for a definite period covering all or part of this leave then the award may be suspended for the period in question and the Contract of Agreement amended accordingly. The capping limit for the duration of awards (see section 5.1.2) may in such circumstances be extended by a period equal to the period of suspension of the award agreed by all signatories to the Contract of Agreement.

Where the recipient of an award chooses not to return to work with NHS Lothian after a period of maternity leave the terms and conditions described in section 5.1.6.1 will apply.

#### **5.1.6.6 Sickness absence**

The awards are unaffected by any periods of short term sickness absence of recipients from their NHS Lothian employment.

Where recipients of awards experience a period of long term sickness absence (as defined by NHS Lothian HR policy) from their NHS Lothian employment and request the suspension of their award for a definite period covering all or part of this leave then the award may be suspended for the period in question and the Contract of Agreement amended accordingly. The capping limit for the duration of awards (see section 5.1.2) may in such circumstances be extended by a period equal to the period of suspension of the award agreed by all signatories to the Contract of Agreement.

The award will, subject to discussions with Occupational Health and HR and any relevant changes in employment, be reinstated on return to work and resumption of study.

If the recipient of an award is not able to return to work following a period of long term sickness absence the award will be terminated. The requirement to submit a Progress Report will be waived in such circumstances.

#### **5.1.6.7 Recipient seeks a suspension of study for other reasons**

Where the recipient of an award gives notice of wishing to suspend their study for a fixed period, for reasons other than those described in sections 5.1.6.5 and 5.1.6.6, the signatories to the Contract of Agreement will enter discussions to determine whether the award should be suspended for the equivalent period of time. If the award is suspended in this way the Contract of Agreement will be amended accordingly.

Requests by recipients of an award to suspend their First Steps into Research placement indefinitely, for reasons other than those described in sections 5.1.6.5 and 5.1.6.6 will be regarded as requests to terminate the award and the conditions described in section 5.1.6 will apply.

#### **5.1.7 Required signatories**

The Contract of Agreement relating to an award will be an agreement between the recipient of the award and NHS Lothian. The Contract of Agreement will be signed by an appropriate NHS Lothian representative of Lothian's Clinical Academic Pathways Partnership (who will normally be the award recipient's mentor) on behalf of the Board. The Contract of Agreement will be countersigned by the research supervisor. It will also be countersigned by the recipient's service manager in those instances where the placement requires study leave from normal duties<sup>1</sup>.

Copies of the written agreements will be retained by all parties.