**RCN Foundation call for applications for the RCN Foundation Postdoctoral Bridging Research Fellowship**

The RCN Foundation is launching a call for the RCN Foundation Postdoctoral Bridging Fellowship.

The Fellowship will support a postdoctoral nurse or midwife researcher to undertake a nurse/midwife led research study, and which would bridge the period between completing your Doctorate and the transition into a research/clinical academic research career.

**Introduction**

The RCN Foundation is an independent charity (1134606 – England and Wales, SC043663 – Scotland) and a company limited by guarantee (7026001). It was set up in 2010 and aims to support and strengthen nursing to improve the health and well-being of the public. The Foundation delivers its purpose by:

* Supporting individual members of the nursing team (nurses, midwives and health care support workers) by providing grants for hardship and education purposes
* Investing in the nursing profession to improve patient care by funding research and practice development projects in our priority areas
* Championing nursing by raising the profile of the profession and public understanding of its contribution to improving the nation’s health

Our grants are open to any current or former nurse, midwife, nursing associate or health care support worker, and they do not need to be a member of the RCN to receive support from the Foundation.

**Background**

The RCN Foundation has identified through a scoping analysis that research career pathways within nursing and midwifery are not well understood or easily accessible. The review found the research infrastructure for nursing and midwifery is not comparable to other healthcare professions, with undergraduate programmes focusing on utilising research in practice, rather than designing and undertaking studies in practice.

There is a significant gap in research funding to develop research careers across nursing and midwifery, especially in the postdoctoral space. Many nurses and midwives who have completed Doctorates, return to their former roles, rather than pursue an academic or clinical research career. This is attributed to barriers in the infrastructure to support nursing and midwifery researchers, such as contractual issues when working across education and provider settings, and a need for better communication between clinical research and service delivery to embed research into practice (Whitehouse et al, 2022). Whilst there are some opportunities available for nursing and midwifery led research, the foundations for wider research activity and a research career remain under construction.

This is attributed to the lack of a career framework which develops clinical academic careers across nursing and midwifery, in particular the lack of postdoctoral bridging programmes available to the professions.

To start to address this, the RCN Foundation is launching a postdoctoral bridging programme which will support early career nursing/midwifery researchers, to make the transition from a practice-based nurse, midwife or lecturer to early career researcher, as part of a programme for postdoctoral nursing and midwifery early career researchers.

### Call for applications

The RCN Foundation is seeking to award a £15,000 grant to early career nurse/midwife researcher who has completed their doctorate within the previous 24 months. The grant will provide funding for 12 months of protected time on a day-release basis. The applicant will need to provide evidence that they are working with a supporting University, who will provide the researcher with the supervisory support and infrastructure required to progress in the research space.

The postdoctoral research fellow will undertake a programme of research which would bridge the period between completing their Doctorate and moving into a nursing/midwifery research/clinical academic research career.

The postdoctoral research fellow and their supervisor will attend regular virtual meetings with the Foundation. The research fellow will be required to submit quarterly interim reporting through the fellowship on progress against agreed Key Performance Indicators, and a final report presenting the outputs and outcomes of the fellowship. A payment schedule will map to the reporting deadlines.

**Application**

To apply for this funding call, please submit a proposal to: [grants@rcnfoundation.org.uk](mailto:grants@rcnfoundation.org.uk)

The proposal should address the following headings:

Section A: Application details

The application should demonstrate:

* Excellent written and verbal communication skills
* Experience of providing written reports and presenting findings to both nursing professionals and non–specialists
* Understanding the equality, diversity and inclusion principles across the UK
* How the research undertaken through the Fellowship will include underserved groups and those who do not easily engage with research, but who remain key stakeholders
* How the impact of external pressures will be mitigated and managed across the term of the Fellowship

**Section B: Fellowship Plan**

Please introduce the aim and objective(s) for the activity to be undertaken through the 12-month fellowship, identifying the gap in the evidence base you will be addressing. Set out the research design you will be adopting to address the gap in the evidence. You should also set out how this relates to the Doctoral level study you have recently completed.

Safeguarding

Please include any safeguarding policies from the supporting university and any safeguards which will be in place to support the fellow and any research participants they will be working with.

Timescales and Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)

Please present the timescales of the fellowship in a Gantt chart. This should include the key phases, deadlines and milestones of the project, as well as any other relevant information.

In your application document, please use the following table format to outline the proposed KPIs and timelines.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)**  *e.g. x number of participants recruited; x number of research sites recruited; ethics approval secured* | **Date**  *Please provide the date by which each KPI is expected to be achieved* |
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**Impact**

Outputs, outcomes and impact assessment and evaluation

Please describe what the expected outputs and outcomes of the fellowship will be. Please explain how the short, medium, and long-term impact of the research findings will be captured and reported and how recommendations will be demonstrated and measured.

**Dissemination**

Please outline a proposed dissemination plan, identifying the key activities, and the audiences at whom the outcomes will be targeted. Please include details of the communications which will be required to support the dissemination.

**Equality, diversity and inclusion**

Consideration needs to be given to the principles of equality, diversity and inclusion within the proposal. Please provide information on how the fellowship will address and incorporate these principles.

**Environmental Sustainability**

Please set out how the proposal for the fellowships meets your organisation’s environmental sustainability policy.

**Risks**

Please set out any risks and mitigations relating to the project.

**Section C: Project Costs and Resources**

The maximum budget for this call is £15,000. Please provide a detailed breakdown of costs in the format used for the table below and the contribution from the university who you will be working with.

Budget:

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Item** | **Cost £** | **Explanatory note** | **Funded by?**  *i.e. RCN Foundation/another organisation/applicant organisation* |
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**Next Steps**

Applications open on 3 October and close at 5pm on 7 November 2025.

Interviews will be held week commencing 24 November 2025.

Proposals received after the closing date will not be considered.

Completed proposals should be submitted by email to: [grants@rcnfoundation.org.uk](mailto:grants@rcnfoundation.org.uk)

Should you have any questions about this funding call please contact Dr Sarah McGloin, Head of Grants and Impact at the RCN Foundation: sarah.mcgloin@rcn.org.uk.

Thank you for your interest.

**Application checklist**

Please ensure that you have included the following in your application:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Does the research require:   * Health Research Authority (HRA) approval for England and Wales * NHS Research Ethics Service approval for Scotland * HSC Integrated Research Application System in Northern Ireland * University ethical approval | Yes/No |
| A comprehensive proposal including:   * Research design and methods * Evaluation method * Comprehensive dissemination plan * Impact measurement * Sustainability of the project | Yes/No |
| A clear and comprehensive indicative budget | Yes/No |
| CVs for the research / project team | Yes/No |
| A timeline presented in a Gantt chart | Yes/No |
| Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) presented in a table | Yes/No |

**References**

Whitehouse CL, Tinkler L, Jackson C, et al. 2022. BMJ Leader 6:323– 326. Available at [Embedding research (ER) led by nurses, midwives and allied health professionals (NMAHPs): the NMAHP-ER model](https://ueaeprints.uea.ac.uk/id/eprint/86730/#:~:text=Aim%3A%20To%20develop%20an%20innovative%20research%20capacity%20building,Allied%20Health%20Professionals%20%28NMAHPs%29%20in%20complex%20clinical%20environments.) Accessed 15/09/25