

NIHR SPHR Pre-doctoral and Launching Fellowships in Public Health Research

The purpose of this paper is to set out the rationale for SPHR Fellowships and the expectations of members who are supporting them. It also describes the role of the Member Training Lead and indicates the support that will be provided by the NIHR SPHR Directorate. This paper needs to be considered in conjunction with the [NIHR SPHR Capacity Building, Training and Development Plan](#).

Rationale for NIHR SPHR Fellowships

Public health research is entering a phase of transformation following the publication of the Academy of Medical Sciences report 'Health of the Public 2040'. There is a drive to build on existing strengths to make the UK the world leader in public health and prevention research, and to meet the substantial public health challenges we face. We need research that is useful, timely and accessible to those responsible for delivering policies and services that ultimately protect and improve the health of the population. We need research that helps answer the most important questions facing policy makers, Local Authorities and service providers. To do this we need to inspire the next generation of academics into public health research with the option to combine academic research with practice as a career pathway. To this end the NIHR SPHR has been provided with funding to support seven Pre-Doctoral and 10 Launching Fellowships.

Requirements of both Fellowship awards

The Fellowships are available for up to 24 months and must be completed by 31st March 2022 at the latest. They may be full or part-time, but if part-time the minimum FTE is 0.6 and can be held alongside a practice post (up to 0.4FTE). All Fellows will be expected to have an individualised training plan (template in draft) and regular progress reviews within the host institution.

Launching Fellowships- expectations

Launching Fellowships are at post-doctoral level and offer those appointed the opportunity to consolidate and build their CV and to prepare funding applications to secure future funding (e.g. an NIHR fellowship). They are also intended to enable applicants undertake research that is closely connected to practice. It is therefore expected that Launching Fellows will:

- Have a line-manager who is an active member of the NIHR SPHR and holds a mid or senior career position in their member institution. They should meet with this person at least monthly. Fellows should also have a separate mentor who is ideally based in another member institution but could be in their member institution. These should be arranged by members. Fellows should meet with their mentor at least four times during their Fellowship. These meetings can be held in person or via the internet but in the latter case should be face to face if bandwidth permits.
- Undertake a practice-based placement of not less than four weeks and not more than 12 weeks in total. This can be as a block placement or spread over several months. These are to be arranged by members. It is expected that most of these will be local placements. Over time our Training Manager will develop a list of national placement opportunities, but this will not be available until 2021 at the earliest.
- Acquire new research skills. This could be in new methodological approaches but should also include training and research experience which increases their skill in multi-disciplinary public health research methods. Fellows should spend a minimum of two weeks and a maximum of four weeks attending research training courses. Courses not provided free by their institution, the NIHR SPHR or wider NIHR must be paid for from their training and development allowance (see below).

- Spend most of the first year of the Fellowship attached to and contributing to one or more SPHR projects and completing publications from their doctorate. Fellows involvement in SPHR projects could be to undertake some of the work that has already been planned or their contribution could involve extending the work beyond what was originally planned.
- Spend most of the remainder of their Fellowship developing an application, or applications, for a further Fellowship or for research project funding. Fellows must ensure that their proposed application is compatible with the NIHR remit and is consistent with at least one of the SPHR themes or programmes.
- Have the opportunity to be involved in public involvement and engagement work either within an SPHR project or as part of the work to develop their own further fellowship or research project application. Complete a draft public involvement and engagement plan six months after the commencement of their award and update this at the beginning of their second year.
- Follow NIHR rules with regards to submitting any publication or output they are a lead or co-author on to the SPHR Communications Manager by emailing sphr.comms@ncl.ac.uk at least one month before submission so that this can be forwarded to the NIHR for approval (please see the [NIHR SPHR Publication Policy](#)).
- Become a [member of ResNet](#) and attend the annual ResNet meeting and NIHR SPHR Annual Scientific Meeting; and
- Present a poster of their research at the NIHR SPHR ASM annually; and
- Provide an annual report to the Training Manager Andi Sull (sphr.training@ncl.ac.uk) on the template provided in a timely way.

Pre-doctoral Fellowships - expectations

The 'NIHR School for Public Health Research (SPHR) Pre-doctoral Fellowships in Public Health Research' offer those appointed the opportunity to consolidate and build their CV and to prepare an application to undertake a PhD in public health.¹ They are also intended to provide the opportunity to undertake research that is closely connected to practice. It is therefore expected that Pre-doctoral Fellows will:

- Have a line-manager who is an active member of the NIHR SPHR and holds a mid or senior career position in their member institution. They should meet with this person on at least a biweekly basis for the first 6 months and on at least a monthly basis thereafter. Pre-doctoral Fellows should also have a separate mentor who is ideally based in another member institution but could be in their member institution. These should be arranged by members. Fellows should meet with their mentor at least four times during their Fellowship. These meetings can be held in person or via the internet but in the latter case should be face to face if bandwidth permits.
- Undertake a practice-based placement of not less than four weeks and not more than 12 weeks in total. This can be undertaken as a block placement or spread over several months. These are to be arranged by members. It is expected that most of these will be local placements. Over time our Training Manager will develop a list of national placement opportunities, but this will not be available until 2021 at the earliest.
- Acquire new research skills. Pre-doctoral Fellows should spend a minimum of three weeks and a maximum of five weeks attending research training courses. Courses not provided free

¹ This may involve applying for funding for a PhD or applying for an advertised doctoral position where funding has already been secured.

by their institution, the NIHR SPHR or wider NIHR must be paid for from their training and development allowance (see below).

- Spend most of the first 18 months of the Fellowship attached to and contributing to two or more SPHR projects. These projects should be chosen so that they will enable the fellow to extend their existing research skills and develop new ones. Pre-doctoral Fellows should spend the majority of their time attached to SPHR projects but if, to extend their research skills and research experience, they need to work on another cognate NIHR-funded project this is permissible. These attachments should provide Pre-doctoral Fellows the opportunity to become co-authors on papers and to be lead author on at least one paper and to have the chance to present at conferences.
- Spend some of the final six months of their Fellowship developing an application for a doctorate and applying for advertised doctorates. If, after 18 months, a Pre-doctoral Fellow has decided that a doctorate is not the right next step for them then they should continue to be attached to ongoing research projects and discuss other public health related career opportunities with their supervisor and mentor.
- Have the opportunity to be involved in public involvement and engagement work within an SPHR project. Complete a draft public involvement and engagement plan six months after the commencement of their award and update this at the beginning of their second year.
- Follow NIHR rules with regards to submitting any publication or output they are a lead or co-author on to the SPHR Communications Manager by emailing sphr.comms@ncl.ac.uk at least one month before submission so that this can be forwarded to the NIHR for approval (please see the [NIHR SPHR Publication Policy](#)).
- Become a [member of ResNet](#) and attend the annual ResNet meeting and NIHR SPHR Annual Scientific Meeting; and
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NIHR SPHR ResNet funding and Internships

Fellows should be encouraged and supported to apply for ResNet funding and should be encouraged to consider helping to recruit and supervise NIHR SPHR Summer Interns.

Training and development allowances

Each Fellow will be provided with a training and development allowance. This is to be used to cover attendance at conferences, research expenses and the cost of any training which is not freely provided. These allowances must be spent within year and all the money committed by 31st December 2021. Money not committed by this time will be retained by the Directorate.

Teaching Commitments for Fellows

NIHR SPHR Pre- and Post-doctoral Launching Fellowship awards allow Fellows protected time to concentrate on their research and training and development. We recognise, however, that teaching experience can be valuable, particularly for those who wish to pursue a career in academia. We are also aware that some academic departments expect research fellows to contribute to teaching. While supportive of Fellows taking up teaching opportunities we would not expect them to spend more than 10% (0.1FTE) (pro-rated for part-time fellows) of their time on teaching commitments including any activity that supports teaching such as preparation or assessment. Time dedicated to teaching should be reasonably distributed across the year (not in a concentrated block). Teaching commitments should not compromise the Fellow's focus, or achievement of the aims of the fellowship.

Member Training Lead role description

This role was agreed as part of our training plan which was approved by the NIHR SPHR Executive. The role is to provide member level oversight and pastoral support to our Doctoral Students and Pre-doctoral and Launching Fellows and be a key point of contact for them at the host institution and for the SPHR Training Manager, Andi Sull, under the direction of Prof Rona Campbell as SPHR training lead. As numbers are small, we don't anticipate this being an onerous role, but this should be someone who has had a reasonable level of postgraduate supervision experience. It will be Member Training Leads who will be responsible for ensuring that the expectations for their Fellows are being met and to alert the Training Manager if any issues arise in relation to these expectations which cannot be fully dealt with within the member institution.

Now that the SPHR Training Manager is in post, we will be doing a formal assessment of the training needs of our Doctoral Students and Fellows and developing a comprehensive record keeping system of their plans, activities and outputs. We are required to report to the NIHR Academy on these going forward. While the Training Manager will be responsible for coordination, delivery and recording, we will need some input from Member Training Leads as we develop these processes.

We are not expecting the Member Leads to deliver training as part of this role although if they wish to assist with any SPHR Training Events they should indicate to Andi Sull that they would be willing to do so.

Member training leads

As outlined in our training strategy and agreed at the SPHR Executive Group meeting in January 2020, each member was asked to nominate a training lead. The leads are as follows;

Member	Training lead first name	Training lead surname
Fuse	Sheena	Ramsay
Cambridge	Jean	Adams
Bristol	Rona	Campbell
Sheffield	Liddy	Goyder
LiLaC	Ben	Barr
Imperial	Chris	Millett
UCL	David	Osborn
LSHTM	Karen	Lock