

NIHR SPHR PhD by publication in Public Health research- Application guidance

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Section 1 Introduction and background to the School

1.1 Introduction

This bursary is for individuals that are employed as SPHR researchers whose circumstances are such that they cannot pursue this route to a PhD and find their opportunities for progression limited by not having one. We wish to tackle this inequity as part of our EDI agenda and support SPHR researchers in these circumstances to obtain a PhD by publication at one of our member institutions, and to provide bursaries to cover the cost of registration and submission fees.

Public health research is undergoing 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 a world leader in public health and prevention research, and to meet the substantial public health challenges we face. The School strives to produce 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 and our planet and reduce health inequalities. The experience of the COVID-19 pandemic has served to heighten the urgency of doing so. 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. Public health research requires a multidisciplinary workforce and needs to be representative of the populations that it serves. It is important to us that we attract people from a wide range of relevant disciplinary fields and ensure that we are inclusive in our approach and offer equality of opportunity to people from diverse backgrounds and circumstances.

1.2 Background to the School

The NIHR School for Public Health Research (SPHR) is a partnership between the Universities of Bristol, Cambridge, Exeter and Sheffield; Imperial College London; The London School for Hygiene and Tropical Medicine (LSHTM); the LiLaC collaboration between the Universities of Liverpool and Lancaster; Fuse, The Centre for Translational Research in Public Health, a collaboration between Newcastle, Durham, Northumbria, Sunderland and Teesside Universities; and the PHRESH collaboration between the Universities of Birmingham, Warwick and Keele.

The SPHR aims to increase the evidence base for cost-effective public health practice by:

- Conducting applied public health research to increase the volume and quality of useful evidence on cost-effective interventions
- Creating an environment where first class applied public health research, focussed on the needs of the public, can thrive
- Supporting local public health practitioners and policy makers to engage with research, and actively seek out high quality research evidence to inform their decisions
- Contributing to ongoing efforts to build research capacity in public health research

SPHR is funded by the [National Institute for Health and Care Research \(NIHR\)](#).

You can find out more about the School, our research and researchers on our [website](#).

1.3 SPHR Research Programmes

Public mental health – identifies ways to reduce mental health inequalities across the life course by exploring how the settings in which people live, learn and work can support good mental health and wellbeing.

Children, young people & families – adopts a multi-sectoral, multi-level approach to produce research that drives equitable, cost-effective policies, practices and interventions for child and adolescent health.

Health inequalities – produces high-quality evidence to support a step change in action on the social inequalities driving health inequalities.

Healthy places, healthy planet – develops the evidence base for improving and bringing greater equity to place-based health and environmental sustainability.

1.4 SPHR Training pathway

In SPHR, we aim to inspire the next generation of academics into public health research with the option to combine academic research with practice as a career pathway. The School provides a setting where interns, PhD students, research fellows and employed early and mid-career researchers can benefit from the leadership of researchers at the top of their field and from our extensive networks with public health policy and practice. It is also a place where supplementary training, networking, mentoring, guidance and collaboration between members who are geographically spread across England, are part of the added value that the SPHR environment brings.

We have developed a training pathway that provides a range of [training opportunities](#) for those interested in pursuing a career in public health research including placements, internships, PhD studentships, and pre- and post-doctoral fellowships. You can find out more information about these opportunities and hear from our current students and alumni by following the links below:



Academy

All SPHR funded trainees become members of the [NIHR Academy](#). The purpose of the [NIHR Academy](#) is to develop a highly-skilled academic research workforce capable of advancing the best research which improves health, and benefits society and the economy.

NIHR is committed to a supportive, inclusive, caring, and positive community. Diversity and inclusion are fundamental to NIHR's values and success. As NIHR Academy Members, you will be able to access a portfolio of NIHR Academy development and support activities. The NIHR Academy also provide a range of leadership and mentoring programmes, regular networking opportunities, [bespoke workshops and events](#) and personal advice and guidance on funding opportunities. This includes an annual [NIHR Academy conference](#).

1.6 Development and support opportunities

In addition to activities and training opportunities within NIHR Academy and the host institution, trainees will also have access to development and support opportunities provided by us in the School and as part of the 'NIHR School's' which is a collaboration between the NIHR Schools for Primary Care Research (SPCR), Public Health Research (SPHR) and Social Care Research (SSCR).

We aim to provide a supportive environment for our trainees in which you can thrive through training, networking, guidance and collaboration between members and your peers. Examples of past training and development events can be seen by following the link below:



The School is committed to equipping our trainees with the tools to develop and build a research career in public health, by providing options to combine academic research with practice.

1.7 ResNet

The [SPHR Researchers' Network \(ResNet\)](#) links our researchers working on projects across all the members of the School. You would automatically become a member of the ResNet community. It is a forum for communication, peer support and networking to aid the professional development of researchers at any level. We have a dedicated development fund for early career researchers (ECRs) within the School. This funding is for ECR-led pump priming collaborative research and is open to members of ResNet. This provides ECRs with an opportunity to gain experience of developing and leading their own research project, and to build their networks throughout ResNet and across the School. You can find out more about the projects we have funded [here](#).

1.8 Publication & wider dissemination

It is expected that you will publish research from your work in the SPHR in good quality, peer-reviewed academic journals and communicate findings at conferences. In addition, we expect the research to generate outputs that are tailored to applied public health research, public health practitioner, and policy making audiences to ensure that they have maximum impact.

Section 2 About the PhD by publication bursary

2.1 Introduction to the PhD by publication scheme

Our PhD by publication bursary is for SPHR researchers employed at any of the member institutions. Individuals must have a strong research track record, having worked on and produced outputs from SPHR funded projects.

2.2 Eligibility criteria

- Mid or early career researcher employed on SPHR project(s)
- Published 3/4 papers from SPHR funded work (first author not essential)
- Approval to enrol as a PhD by publication student from institution, which must be a SPHR member

2.3 Shortlisting criteria

The doctoral thesis proposed must:

- Have a clearly defined objective
- Be on a topic within the remit of NIHR SPHR and relate to one or more of the research programmes
- Be suitable and realistic for the researcher to submit within the time allowed by the awarding institution.

2.4 Funding available

- Registration fees for 1 year and submission fees (maximum £4k)

2.5 Reporting and results

- Each researcher will be expected to complete a short report at the end of their bursary plus either a blog or a practice or public focussed briefing summarising the work contained in the thesis.

Section 3 How to apply

3.1 Completing your application

The application process consists of three stages.

Stage 1

Please apply to submit a PhD by publication at your host institution, which must be a SPHR member. We ask that you submit evidence of the approval of this with your application.

Stage 2

Please request a copy of the short application form at sphr.training@ncl.ac.uk.

In this form you are asked to complete a number of application questions and then send it to sphr.training@ncl.ac.uk along with a CV (maximum 3 pages). You should ensure your CV includes detail of your career history (current/most recent post first, including start and end dates, your position and the name of the organisation); and details of your education and training to date (relevant professional qualifications, degrees, diplomas, including dates, qualification, subject, grade and name of the awarding organisation).

Please name your application form, CV using the following naming convention:

Surname_application_PhDpub

Surname_CV_PhDpub

We also ask that you identify two academic referees or other suitable referees. If you have already submitted these to your own institution, please attach a copy to you application.

Stage 3

Applications will be reviewed, and if eligible applicants will invited to attend an interview with the Academic Career Development Lead and another Training Lead from a member organisation not involved in the PhD. If successful, your host institution will be provided with a funding letter.

Applications must be emailed to sphr.training@ncl.ac.uk. There is no hard deadline, we have 9 bursarys on offer.

3.2 Useful contacts and links

Please direct questions to Andi Sull, SPHR Training and Development Manager
sphr.training@ncl.ac.uk.