

NIHR SPHR Transdisciplinary Fellowship (TDF) in public health research - Application guidance

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Section 1 Introduction and background to the School

1.1 Introduction

Applications are invited from individuals who currently working outside of public health, but in a relevant academic field, who want to gain experience and transfer their skills to academic public health research. We are committed to a supportive, inclusive, caring, and positive community. We warmly welcome applications from disabled people and those of different cultures, genders, ages, ethnicities, and beliefs.

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.

The Transdisciplinary Fellowships (TDF) are intended to provide people currently working in fields from which public health researchers are not traditionally drawn, such as engineering, architecture, public policy, arts and humanities or data science, but who would like to move into public health research and undertake a fellowship in the NIHR School for Public Health Research. The TDFs will be available for up to 24 months offering those appointed the opportunity to consolidate and build their CV and to prepare funding applications to secure future funding (e.g. an NIHR fellowship).

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.

The TDF is expected to complete a Public Health Masters at the host Member institution and is required to complete their Masters project on a topic that aligns with the SPHR research programmes.

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 or 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:



Our training pathway also featured the opportunity to undertake a short transdisciplinary placement with the SPHR at one of our member institutions. Profiles of some of those who were selected to take up this opportunity can be found [here](#) and a blog can be found [here](#).

1.5 NIHR Academy

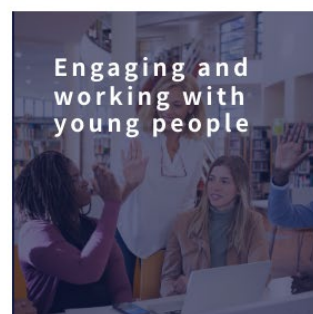
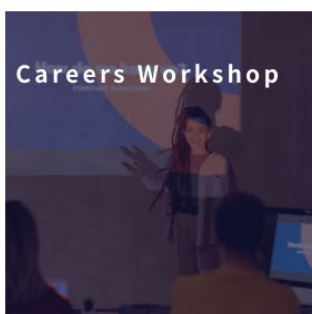
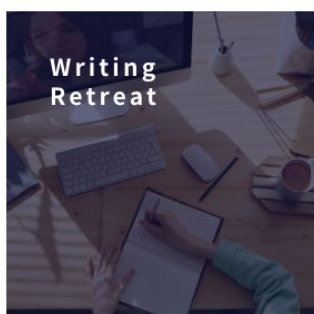
All SPHR TDFs become members of the [NIHR Academy](#). The purpose of the [NIHR Academy](#) is to develop a highly-skilled academic research workforce capable of advancing the best research which improves health, and benefits society and the economy.

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 your host institution, you 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. Most of the School projects will offer links within Local Authority or other public health practice settings, which will provide an opportunity for you to undertake a short placement in a public health practice or policy setting. It is an expectation that our fellows work in practice as part of their award. Carrying out a [practice placement](#) helps you to gain an insight into the opportunities and challenges of implementing research in fast moving public health practice and policy environments.

“My SPHR fellowship has provided me with some incredible opportunities to develop my research leadership skills, build an international support network and build an exciting research plan to continue to contribute new and impactful research outputs”. SPHR fellow, Penny Breeze, Sheffield University

The School is committed to providing a positive research culture in which our fellows can flourish. We believe in offering opportunities that will help to develop your research and leadership skills as an early career researcher in public health research. Our fellows can apply to supervise a summer intern within the School through our [summer internship programme](#).

“Many thanks for all the support from the SPHR team, it is really appreciated. I think the summer internship programme is a great scheme to diversify engagement in public health research and give undergraduate students insight into public health research”

“I think having this opportunity is a nice time to start to learn the skills of being a supervisor in a research setting”

SPHR Trainees

1.7 ResNet

The [SPHR Researchers' Network \(ResNet\)](#) links our researchers working on projects across all the members of the School. As an SPHR transdisciplinary fellow 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 fellows will publish research from their fellowships 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 Transdisciplinary Fellowship

2.1 Introduction to the TDF scheme

The SPHR Transdisciplinary Fellowship may be based at any of the member institutions and will normally be taken up April 2024. Transdisciplinary Fellowships are salaried and offer funding of up to 24 months. Individuals must have a strong research track record in their base discipline (which has relevance to public health). The first year will involve undertaking an approved MSc in public health at an SPHR member institution, there is an expectation that the MSc research project aligns with SPHR research programmes. During the second year the fellow will contribute to one or more SPHR research projects where they will make a substantial contribution to it using knowledge and experience from their base discipline. The TDFs will equip successful applicants to undertake research that is closely connected to practice, acquire skills in new methodological approaches and provides the opportunity to undertake a practice-based placement. This is the first time we are running this scheme and we currently have no plans to launch another call. If you have any further queries after reading this guidance or feedback, please email sphr.training@ncl.ac.uk.

Remuneration for fellowships will depend on previous experience but most appointees will receive a salary of £35,000 - £50,000 per annum. The fellowship covers salary and some research and training costs. The host university is awarded a fixed sum for the fellowship.

Fellowships are available on a part-time basis (usually at a minimum 0.6fte but requests for 0.5fte will be considered on a case by case basis).

Application information and details of the research areas on offer at member institutions follow in this document.

Applications must be received by 12 noon on Noon Monday 11th March 2024

2.2 Eligibility criteria

These placements are aimed at people working outside of public health research but in a relevant field (e.g., engineering, architecture, law, public policy, data science, arts and humanities). Public health research is transdisciplinary and intersects with many areas of society. Successful applicants will have a strong research track record in their base discipline, which must have relevance to public health. Applicants will be expected to provide evidence of research outputs in a form relevant to their field and demonstrate the impact of this work. Applicants must be a UK citizen or have confirmed right to work in UK.

Who is not eligible to apply?

Individuals who are working in a discipline that is traditionally recognised as a route into public health research. This includes epidemiology, psychology, sociology, anthropology, health economics, medical statistics, nursing, dentistry and professions allied to medicine such as physiotherapy and nutrition. If you are not sure if you are eligible to apply, please contact sphr.training@ncl.ac.uk.

2.3 Application shortlisting criteria

Your application will be assessed using the following criteria as part of the application shortlisting process:

- A first or upper second-class UK honours degree, or the equivalent qualifications gained outside the UK, in an appropriate subject (qualifications, or a combination of qualifications and experience, which demonstrate equivalent ability and attainment will also be considered)
- Candidates should also ensure they meet the eligibility criteria of the host institution (please see individual university websites for details).
- Evidence of higher training in base discipline is desirable
- Relevant previous research experience
- Substantial research outputs in a form relevant to the base discipline
- Evidence of the impact of research in base discipline
- Evidence of potential as a career researcher

- Excellent written and verbal communication skills
- Highly motivated
- Able to work both independently and as part as part of a team
- Able to plan and manage own work
- Evidence of skills that can be transferred from base discipline and applied to public health research
- Clearly demonstrates the impact of fellowship on career development

Please note: NIHR SPHR brings together multidisciplinary teams to conduct high quality research to increase the evidence base for public health practice. This requires a wide range of knowledge and skills. Applicants are not expected to meet all of the criteria outlined above but should demonstrate an excellent academic trajectory and a commitment to a career in academic public health.

2.4 Important areas for consideration when submitting a TDF application

- **Identification of potential fellowship host and supervisor**

The members of the School are located throughout England, each one has a wide range of facilities and expertise. Every member hosts a number of academics. Visit the SPHR TDF 'where I can go' guide to identify a potential host for your fellowship.

- **Helpful resources available to applicants**

Where I can go guide: This guide details the different Members of the School that you can contact to host a fellowship.

Transdisciplinary case studies: This provides examples of people who have used their skills from different disciplines and applied to a placement in public health research.

Frequently asked questions: Please read this before contacting us with a question as the answer might be featured in this FAQ section.

- **Training and development plan/needs**

It is important to note that applicants are encouraged to explore the wide range of facilities, expertise and opportunities available to them across the School for their personal and professional development and develop a fellowship that is bespoke to their individual training needs, background, skills/experiences, as well as their proposed career trajectory. For example, individuals may wish to consider seeking a host member that equips them with the skills and experiences to work across disciplines and

specialisms, making connections that are important to their work/research and that may spark innovative new ways of working in public health research.

Section 3 How to apply

3.1 Completing your application

The application process consists of three stages.

Stage 1 Please complete and submit the application form which can be downloaded [here](#).

You are asked to complete a number of application questions and then send to sphr.training@ncl.ac.uk along with a covering letter (maximum 1 page) and 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 and covering letter using the following naming convention:

Surname_application_TDF

Surname_CV_TDF

Surname_letter_TDF

We also ask that you identify two academic referees or other suitable referees

Stage 2

Applications will be shortlisted, and candidates selected for interview will be contacted and invited to attend an interview on week commencing 1st April. Candidates may also be invited to attend a pre-interview assessment prior to interview. At least one of the referees identified by shortlisted candidates will be contacted ahead of interview and asked to provide a statement of support. You should make your referees aware of this in advance.

Unsuccessful applicants will be informed.

Stage 3

Successful candidates will be required to register for the fellowship at the host institution. You may be asked to attend an interview at the host institution prior to appointment. Detailed guidance will be provided to successful candidates. More information can be found on individual institution websites.

3.2 Application deadlines and competition deadline

Applications must be emailed to sphr.training@ncl.ac.uk by 12 noon on Noon Monday 11th March 2023

Competition launch	Monday 22 nd January
Deadline for application	Noon Monday 11th March
Shortlisted candidates invited to interview	W/C 1 st April
Interviews	Thursday 25 th April (London)
Announcement of Awards	W/C 6 th May
Start of fellowships	From 1 st August 2024

3.3 Equal opportunities and diversity

NIHR and DHSC have a duty as a public body to promote equality of opportunity. We will contact all applicants shortly after the application closure date with an Equality Monitoring Form. Monitoring ensures that all applications to NIHR SPHR Programmes are treated equally in terms of gender, ethnicity and/or disability. Information will be anonymised and stored separately from your application, only be used for the purpose of monitoring equal opportunities and be kept securely and in confidence.

3.4 Useful contacts and links

Please direct questions to Andi Sull, SPHR Training and Development Manager sphr.training@ncl.ac.uk or directly to the potential host member main contact that is named in the 'where I can go' guide.