Network Plus Project Funding Call #2: Interventions
Opens on 1st July 2020

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Who is eligible to apply for the grants?

Applications from UK Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) in collaboration with non-academic bodies, charities, third sector organisations and other relevant agencies are welcome to apply. Projects co-led by a HEI in partnership with non-academic groupings are also strongly encouraged, however, due to UK Research & Innovation (UKRI) funding requirements, funding may only be transferred to the HEI partner.

We strongly encourage multi-disciplinary and cross-sector collaborations and welcome the inclusion of early career researchers and lived experience researchers as co-applicants (or principal/lead applicants if they have the necessary affiliation).

Are applicants from non-UK institutions eligible to apply?

Unfortunately, due to funding criteria from UKRI, we are not able to fund non-UK based projects. Applications must be from individuals working within a UK HEI or eligible research institution recognised by UKRI (please see https://www.ukri.org/files/funding/tcs/eligible-independent-research-organisations-pdf/). However, individuals from non-UK institutions can be co-applicants, but the research must directly benefit the UK. Please note that the combined costs of co-applicants from outside the UK, the third sector, UK business, or government bodies must not exceed 30% of the total full economic cost (fEC) of the grant application. Further information on this can be found in the ESRC funding guide: https://esrc.ukri.org/files/funding/guidance-for-applicants/research-funding-guide/

What is meant by an Early Career Researcher (ECR)?

The network uses the Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC) formal definition of an ECR: an individual who is within eight years of the award of their PhD or equivalent professional training, or an individual who is within six years of their first academic appointment. These durations exclude any period of career break, e.g. for family care or health reasons. The 'first academic appointment' is defined as the first paid contract of employment, either full-time or part-time, which lists research and/or teaching as the primary functions. We consider the date shown on the PhD certificate to be the PhD award date.

Do I need to be employed on a permanent contract to be eligible for a research grant?

Principal applicants do not need to have a permanent post, but they must have an existing contract at the time of application that covers the duration of the award period. Individuals not affiliated to a HEI/eligible RO may be included as co-applicants or consultants.

I have an (unpaid) honorary research contract with a University, am I eligible to be the lead applicant/Principal Investigator (PI)?

This is something you need to discuss with your University. From our perspective, we would willingly consider you as a PI with your honorary contract, and arrangements for your pay should be arranged between yourself and your institution.

A person is eligible to be a PI regardless of whether they are established members of a recognised Research Organisation (RO). Please note it is essential that the organisation submitting an application must be an eligible organisation (for a list of these see https://www.ukri.org/funding/how-to-apply/eligibility/). 'Established' academic staff are those who have appointments that are either permanent or not less than two years, in posts whose funding, for teaching or research, is derived from, or attributed to, RO general funds.

If the PI has a contract with a recognised RO (we would expect this to be the submitting organisation), the contract must be due to last at least as long as the proposed project. PIs who are not paid a salary (e.g. honorary staff) should show on their application their hours allocated to the project, but with a zero salary cost request.

If the PI does not have a contract with a recognised RO lasting at least as long as the project, they must be accommodated by a recognised RO (we would expect this to be the submitting organisation) i.e. including provision of appropriate facilities to carry out the research - the submitting organisation should include with the application a covering statement on headed paper from that recognised RO confirming that, should the application be successful, it will provide to the applicant for the full duration of the grant such accommodation and facilities as would be provided for an established member of staff.

Am I eligible for funding if I haven't completed PhD or equivalent?

Principal and co-applicants are not required to hold a PhD. A one-page CV must be submitted for all applicants and this should demonstrate their relevant skills and experience.

Am I eligible for funding if I have not got an affiliation with a university?

At least one co-applicant on the application must have an affiliation with a university. If you do not currently have one, we would encourage you to contact an academic with experience in your area of interest to suggest a collaboration. We welcome the involvement of third sector organisations and practitioners as co-applicants on proposals.

You may want to look at our website to see **our Co-Investigators**, who are happy to discuss research applications in their areas (https://www.ucl.ac.uk/psychiatry/loneliness-network/meet-team) and some of our other Network members, who might have overlapping interests with you (https://www.ucl.ac.uk/psychiatry/loneliness-network/network-members).

You can also contact ellie.pearce@ucl.ac.uk with an outline of your idea (no more than 300 words), and what other research areas or sectors you would be interested in exploring or working with. We can then circulate this to the Network with the aim of putting people in touch with others with similar research interests wherever possible.

As a Service User/Survivor/Lived Experience Researcher, am I eligible to apply?

We strongly encourage lived experience researchers to apply. You are eligible to apply as a principal applicant if you are affiliated to a university, otherwise you could apply as a co-applicant led by a researcher affiliated to a university. You may also wish to be included in a project's budget to provide service user involvement. Please see the separate 'Information for Lived Experience Researchers, Third Sector and Practitioners' sheet for more information. We will fund at least one project led by a lived experience researcher in this funding call.

Should every project proposal involve input from people with lived experience?

One of our application criteria is that all projects should have ongoing input from people with relevant lived experience. If your project does not have any such input we suggest you access advice regarding Patient and Public Involvement (PPI) from the university linked with your proposal. Funding may also be available from your local Research Designs Service (https://www.rds-london.nihr.ac.uk/patient-public-involvement/enabling-involvement-fund/). The Network has a Co-production Group (CoG) and they can also advise on PPI. One of their members may also agree to have some of their time costed into your project for ongoing PPI during the course of the grant project. **If you would like to discuss this please contact m.birken@ucl.ac.uk by 31st July 2020 at the latest.** Payment for involvement should be included in applicant budgets. Please be aware that there are potential issues here with benefits payments and you may want to consult INVOLVE, which is an organisation providing helpful resources on PPI: https://www.invo.org.uk/.

I'm interested in researching loneliness in people with dementia – does this fall under the call remit?

We follow the UKRI guidance in excluding neurogenerative disorders such as dementia. The UKRI explain that although it is widely accepted that neurodegenerative disorders fall under the broader umbrella of 'mental health problems', since research on neurodegenerative disorders is being funded through alternative routes, the UKRI has deemed them to be out of scope for these mental health network plus project calls. Aside from the exclusion of neurodegenerative disorders, this research agenda is open to research that focuses on the broad range of mental health conditions, in addition to research that concentrates on maintaining wellbeing or preventing mental health problems.

I'm interested in researching loneliness in a specific group of people, for example carers / people with autism / refugees in the UK / looked-after children / international students – does this fall under the call remit?

We would expect that work looking at conditions such as autism, or groups such as carers, migrants, new parents, looked-after children, or international students, would focus on interventions addressing components of the relationship between loneliness/social isolation and the onset or maintenance of mental health problems (such as depression, anxiety and psychosis) in that specific group. We will not fund research that looks at autism but does not also investigate mental health problems such as depression, anxiety and psychosis.

Is a person who is on a directly incurred fellowship contract with a Research Council and an early career researcher eligible to lead as Principal Investigator (PI)?

We encourage ECRs to apply, but they should be able to fulfil the role of PI, including undertaking responsibility for directing the research and observing the terms and conditions, as well as being actively involved in carrying the project through. This should be clear from your CV.

We follow the Economic and Social Research Council's (ESRC) general policy that, provided the investigator's time is not overloaded overall, there is no reason why a person holding a grant from any Research Council should not be an investigator on a new application (other than for exceptional situations where either award's terms and conditions prohibit this). UKRI policy is that the maximum amount of time that the Research Councils will fund across all the projects they collectively support for any one investigator is 1,650 hours a year (equivalent to 37.5 hours a week, 44 weeks a year).

Applicants have the option to include a project team member as a consultant instead of as a co-applicant, in which case the consultancy costs claimed must be fully justified and broken down in the Justification of Costs section of the Application Form e.g. number of hours/hourly rate/duration dates etc as appropriate. Further information is available in the ESRC's Research Funding Guide https://esrc.ukri.org/funding/guidance-for-applicants/research-funding-guide/.

I have a good idea for a research project, but little research time or research experience. What should I do?

We expect principal/lead and co-applicants to spend a proportion of their time on the research project, but you might consider bringing on other co-applicants, research assistants and consultants to conduct some of the research, and this should be factored into your budget.

You may like to look at our website to see our expert Co-Investigators, who are happy to discuss research applications in their areas (https://www.ucl.ac.uk/psychiatry/loneliness-network/meet-team), and some of our other Network members, who might have overlapping interests with you (https://www.ucl.ac.uk/psychiatry/loneliness-network/network-members).

You can also contact ellie.pearce@ucl.ac.uk with an outline of your idea (no more than 300 words), what discipline you are working in, and what other research areas or sectors you would be interested in exploring or working with. We can then circulate this to the Network, including our network of ECRs. We aim to help put people in touch with others with similar research interests where possible.

Can individuals holding a university post and an NHS post can be costed according to NHS costings for the purpose of the grants?

Following UKRI rules, if a potential project staff member on a grant application is employed by both an academic organisation and an NHS body, we would pay their salary costs at 80% FEC regardless of which organisation they were listed at. We would expect this project staff member to be listed at the organisation where their role is most relevant to the role they are to play on the proposed project, and at the salary rates they are paid by that organisation. Bearing that in mind, and also because applications are assessed according to factors including value for money, it is the submitting organisation's decision over which organisation/salary rate to list that staff member at on the application.

Further information regarding NHS Bodies as organisations eligible to apply for funding can be found at https://www.ukri.org/funding/how-to-apply/eligibility/.

What is the maximum award value?

Proposals will need to show 100% of full economic cost (fEC) of the proposed research, but we will award 80% of the fEC, as per usual Research Council funding arrangements. Total permitted project costs will vary depending on the combination of HEI and non-HEI costs included but may not exceed £50,000 for the large grants (which at 80% funding, is £40,000) or £15,000 for the small grants (which at 80% funding, is £12,000). In other words, the maximum available funding that can be given by the network is £40,000.

What funding model is being used?

All projects must be costed at 100% full economic cost (fEC). Consistent with UKRI funding guidelines, the proportion of total project costs that will be covered by the Network is dependent on the type of organisation:

- **HEIs** – the Network will cover 80% of the total project cost (consistent with UKRI research funding guidelines). To put this simply, if you were to apply for the maximum grant of £50,000, you would be funded £40,000 of that and would be expected to contribute £10,000 from your organisation and/or relevant partner(s).
- **Businesses, third sector organisations, and government bodies** – the Network will cover 100% of justified costs for these types of co-applicants. Businesses and government bodies may not claim overheads or other indirect costs, whereas third sector organisations can.

The combined costs of co-applicants from outside the UK, the third sector, UK business, or government bodies must not exceed 30% of the total fEC of the grant application. Further information on this can be found in the ESRC funding guide: https://esrc.ukri.org/files/funding/guidance-for-applicants/research-funding-guide/

Applications must clearly show which costs will be incurred by UK HEIs and which will be incurred by partners in business, the third sector, or government bodies. We have provided a Budget Form which should help you to calculate the relevant costs for the project and this is available on our website: www.ucl.ac.uk/psychiatry/loneliness-network/network-funding-call.

You may want to consult this UKRI factsheet explaining their funding structure: https://www.ukri.org/files/legacy/documents/fecfaq-pdf/

Your institution should treat this application in the same way it treats all UKRI applications in terms of costings. We expect the academic institution where the funding would be held to advise applicants on how to cover the 20% of total costs not covered by the Network.

How many grants is the network likely to award in each round?

We anticipate funding around 2-3 large grants and up to 6 small grants, totalling up to £200,000 overall.

Does my proposal fall within the remit of this call? How do I find out?

Proposals should fall under the Pathways theme of the funding call, as outlined in the Brief and Terms of Reference. These are both on our website. To discuss your specific project please email ellie.pearce@ucl.ac.uk.

Can I submit a proposal as PI if I am a PhD student?

PhD students cannot be a Principal/Lead applicant and we cannot cover fees or stipends. PhD students may be included as Co-Applicants, but any costed time should not adversely affect the primary focus on their PhD (usually time on an application should not more than 7 hours per week).

Can I submit more than one application?

Individuals may submit more than one application as principal/lead applicant to each grant call but a maximum of one would be funded. However, they may be co-applicants to multiple proposals. Lead/principal applicants who applied to the first Pathways funding call may still apply as principal applicant to this call, whether or not they were successful.

Do I need to contact the Contracts Department within the principal applicant's organisation before I submit the application?

You will need to discuss with your contracts department how to proceed if your funding application is successful : as part of the application form we ask for confirmation that, if awarded the grant, you would accept the terms set out in the standard contract template on our website (http://www.ucl.ac.uk/psychiatry/loneliness-network/network-funding-call). We recommend consulting your contracts department at an early stage in preparing your application.

Do UCL applicants need to submit any additional documents?

In addition to the Budget Form, UCL internal applicants will need to submit a Worktribe Stand Alone Budget using ESRC Default Scheme, approved by their Head of Department. All applicants should fill in both the 'Budget' and 'Costings' tabs in the call Budget form: in the Budget spreadsheet, please fill in the 'Budget tab' as well as pasting your full costings for your project, from Worktribe or similar, into the 'Costings' tab.

How should applications be submitted?

Applications should be sent to: ellie.pearce@ucl.ac.uk with the email header *'Interventions Funding Application – [Surname of Principal/Lead Applicant]'*. Please ensure you attach copies of (i) your application form (with appended CVs for principal and co-applicants) and (ii) your budget form, with file names as per the table below. Forms can be downloaded from our website:

http://www.ucl.ac.uk/psychiatry/loneliness-network/network-funding-call

Application forms should be sent as word documents and not as pdfs.

In the Budget spreadsheet, please fill in the 'Budget tab' as well as pasting your full costings for your project, from Worktribe or similar, into the 'Costings' tab. Both the Budget and Costings tabs need to be filled in.

The deadline for applications is **5pm on Friday 2nd October 2020**.

Email title:	'Interventions Funding Application – [Surname of Principal/Lead Applicant]'
Attached Document 1:	'Application_InterventionsFundingCall_[Surname of Principal/Lead Applicant]'
Attached Document 2:	'Budget_InterventionsFundingCall_[Surname of Principal/Lead Applicant]'

What will happen to my proposal once I have submitted it?
Applications will be shortlisted by a panel comprising network Co-Investigators from a number of different disciplines (see our website for Co-Investigator details: https://www.ucl.ac.uk/psychiatry/loneliness-network/meet-team), members of the network Co-Production Group, and independent assessors who will provide an independent check of quality.

What is expected of me if I win a grant?

You will be expected to:

- Work with the Network to communicate the research plans, progress and findings in a form that is accessible to service users/ people with lived experience, including through engaging with the Network CoG by presenting research plans and results at meetings and considering feedback from the CoG in carrying out and reporting the research.

- Provide financial and activity updates at intervals specified by the Network.
- Present a summary of the findings at a **Network event** after completion of the project period.
- Write a **final report** of 3,000-4,000 words within 6 months of the end of the project detailing the key findings of the project, the impact/expected impact of the research for the knowledge-base, policy and practice, and lessons learned. The report should be formatted for an academic journal. Where research findings have already been published in a peer-reviewed journal within this timeframe a copy of the published article will also be acceptable as a final report. If you feel that this is not the format for the type of research project that you are planning (for example, if the project relates to audio-visual output) we can discuss this at the time of awarding funding.
- Write a **blog disseminating findings** to the general public, for example for inclusion on the Network's website.
- Where applicable, grant holders should formally deposit data generated by the research project with a responsible data repository (e.g. the UK Data Service) and provide metadata for resource discovery to the UK Data Service and to the Network within three months of the end of their grants. This will maximise the utility of the data and help progress research in this area.
- Report to the Funder via whatever means are required (e.g. ResearchFish) for as long as required and potentially after the end of the project period.

What are the criteria for assessment?
The proposals will be assessed on the following criteria, and will be assessed on the 7 point (0-6) scale outlined in the Terms of Reference:

- **Originality and potential contribution to knowledge**: Are the question(s) important, novel and likely to lead to significant new understanding, funding and/or impacts?
- **Research quality**: Is there a feasible plan for conducting research that will answer the research question posed? Have ethical and data management considerations been adequately addressed?
- **Value for money**: Are the funds requested essential for the work and justified by the importance and potential of the questions, project objectives relative to Network objectives and areas of thematic interest?
- **Evidence of active lived experience involvement** and engagement during project development.
- **Outputs, dissemination, and impact,** including development of the research workforce.

- **Cross-disciplinarity** (including cross-sector collaboration).

The outcomes of the review panel will be:
(1) Approval - a proposal is deemed satisfactory for approval and will subsequently receive funding, or (2) Rejection – a proposal does not score sufficiently against the assessment criteria to merit the approval of the panel or is not deemed competitive relative to other proposals. The panel's decision is final.

Can I expect feedback on my proposal?

The panel will aim to provide feedback on proposals submitted to the call in a format that will be helpful for the applicants to consider in editing their proposal for resubmission for a future funding call.

What is the timeline for this application?

- The call opens on 1st July 2020 and **closes at 5pm on 2nd October 2020**.
- Applicants will be made aware of the outcome of their application by 1st December 2020.
- Projects can start from 1st March 2021 and must finish no later than 1st April 2022 (12 months later).

Please note that contract negotiation tends to be the limiting stage for starting projects, and you are advised to discuss how to proceed if your funding application is successful with your contracts department as soon as possible.

Can letters of support/in-kind contributions be included in the application?

Your application should include your application form and your budget form. We will not accept additional letters of support. You can mention support/in-kind contributions either in the 'role in/contribution to the project' section for co-applicants, and/or in the justification of costs section.

How should the references cited in the research proposal text be included in the application form?

References do not count towards the 3,000 words count for the research proposal. You should include them at in the References section in the application form (after the research proposal section).

How do you expect the finances to be split between research and delivery of interventions?

The funding is predominantly for doing the research, but an element of implementation development may be included in the budget e.g. testing an intervention, with input from researchers, might be considered.

Are you more interested in new interventions and collecting new data?

Your research project could be testing at an existing intervention and conducting research into its impact. It could involve existing data. We cannot fund service evaluations, however, so there needs to be a research question with applicability beyond the specific context you are working in.

Would developing an intervention through co-design fall under the remit of the call?

The research would need to be embedded into the project. A test that what you have in mind would be a rigorous research process might be if it would lead to a peer-reviewed academic paper.

Can we do qualitative research?

Yes, absolutely you can do qualitative research, and mixed methods are an option too.

How much are you expecting that the project could be expanded, or replicated?

It should be clear that it is generalizable, and has a theoretical basis for what the intervention is doing and why it might be expected to work. It should not be too local and idiosyncratic, but should have the potential to be scaled up and have a framework that could be generalized. You should justify this in your application. If you are unsure whether your project is appropriate to the call, please feel free to contact ellie.pearce@ucl.ac.uk to discuss this further.

We have an existing project; how do we find an academic partner?

We encourage use of our Slack channel - the link to join is on our website: http://www.ucl.ac.uk/psychiatry/loneliness-network/network-funding-call. We could try and assist further to put you in touch with potential academic partners e.g. through our newsletter – please contact ellie.pearce@ucl.ac.uk with a short summary of your project and details of who you are looking for.

How much of the budget can go to a third sector/community organisation?

The combined costs of co-applicants from outside the UK, the third sector, UK business, or government bodies must not exceed 30% of the total full Economic Costings of the grant application. Further information on this can be found in the ESRC funding guide: https://esrc.ukri.org/files/funding/guidance-for-applicants/research-funding-guide/

Can principal applicants be Early Career Resarchers (ECRs)? Are there cases when the proposal is being assessed when the panel would prefer to see a senior or junior Principal Investigator to lead the bid?

ECRs can lead applications, and this would be cost-effective, but it might also be helpful to have someone with more experience on the research team who will be actively engaged with the project. Your institution would need to be able to support an ECR as a lead or co-applicant. If the ECR is a student, they cannot lead the project.

What sample size is expected for a feasibility study?

The study does not need to be powered like a trial, but the sample size required depends on the intervention. It might be worth getting someone with trial experience involved to advise.

I'm finishing my PhD and will not be at my current organisation by March/April next year. What would you advise?

You would need to contact someone at a University, with an affiliation that would last throughout the length of the project, to be the principal applicant. You would be able to be a co-applicant.

Does the interdisciplinary nature of the call imply you need investigators from different departments of a university, or can one team from the same department cover that?

You need to be able to explain what skills and experience each member brings to the team and how these draw on different disciplines. This could be from within a single department but you would need to clearly justify how your team is interdisciplinary and would actively contribute to the proposed project. Please get in touch with us if you have specific questions: ellie.pearce@ucl.ac.uk. We are also keen on cross-sector collaborations e.g. including third sector partners.

We have an existing intervention and cannot run a control group, what research could we do?

A before/after comparison might be possible. We cannot fund service evaluations, however, so there needs to be a research question with applicability beyond the specific context you are working in.

What outcome is needed for these research projects?

We expect outputs to include academic papers but are also keen on ways of disseminating the findings which go beyond an academic paper e.g. blogs, videos, portraits.