

Living Well 2026: Call for applications

Summary

We have extended the lifespan of our [research strategy](#) from spring 2026 to spring 2028, to align our organisational and research strategies. We fund research that covers the causes, consequences and effects of the most prevalent arthritis conditions, and those that have the highest impacts on people. We will also support those conditions most frequently associated with arthritis. We do not actively exclude any areas of arthritis-related research. We will prioritise our investments to ensure that we maintain a varied and balanced research awards portfolio that covers the most prevalent arthritis conditions as well as rarer conditions.

This investment will support applied health and social care research that aims to develop innovative ways to help people live well after arthritis diagnosis or treatment, while addressing health inequalities. Proposals should consider the need to move support and care into the community, and the long-term combined impact of arthritis on a person's physical, psychological and social health. Proposals should aim to address changes across the life course; we are particularly interested in the transition from childhood onset into adulthood.

We want to identify ways to improve long term outcomes after an arthritis diagnosis or treatments, including across self-management, non-drug and non-surgical health and social care approaches and effective remote monitoring while minimising digital exclusion.

We expect the outcomes from this investment to help implement interventions into practice – either through co-developed projects with a clear path to implementation, or through proposals that focus on implementing interventions already supported by strong evidence.

Funding is available for up to 36 months duration, between £400,000-£1,000,000 in value. We plan to invest around £2M, making between 2 – 5 awards.

If your proposal is suitable for co-funding with another funder, please email us as early as possible, at awards@arthritis-uk.org as we may be able to facilitate such partnerships.

Please note, we are transitioning to a new Grant Management System. Applications can be worked on offline using the associated guidance document. Applications to this one-stage process will be through our new Grant Management System with anticipated access online from 1 April. The application deadline is **16:00 Wednesday 24 June 2026**.

If you have any questions or would like to discuss your research proposal, please email the Awards Office at awards@arthritis-uk.org.

What we are looking for

Arthritis UK is the largest dedicated funder of arthritis research globally. We fund research driven by the needs of people with arthritis and with the greatest potential to improve the quality of their lives. Our research ambition is to accelerate the pace and precision of research that benefits people living with arthritis.

We have extended the lifespan of our [research strategy](#) from spring 2026 to spring 2028, to align our organisational and research strategies. Our organisational strategy is 'Arthritis First' which means that we will continue to fund research that focuses on the most prevalent and impactful arthritis conditions in our existing priority areas; early detection and prevention, targeted treatments, living well, and people and partnerships.

We aim to maintain a research award portfolio that will bring most benefit and impact for people with arthritis. We fund research that covers the causes, consequences and effects of the most prevalent arthritis conditions, and those that have the highest impacts on people. We will also support those conditions most frequently associated with arthritis.

We do not actively exclude any areas of arthritis-related research. Where necessary, we will prioritise our investments to ensure that we maintain a varied and balanced research awards portfolio that covers the most prevalent arthritis conditions as well as rarer conditions. We will support research into the causes and consequences of arthritis. We may also actively seek research proposals in defined, narrower areas where needed.

All our research investments aim to generate the best possible impacts for the benefit of people with arthritis. Proposed studies should advance the translational pathway towards impact for people with arthritis.

This Call follows on from our previous Living Well 2025 funding Call and co-funded Oliver Bird Fund Calls with the Nuffield Foundation. Through these Calls we have invested in projects on extending working lives, reducing economic inactivity and impact/employment retention/vocational readiness, as well as in population data research in musculoskeletal diseases/arthritis. We have also invested in research into pain at work, pain management in young people and in Black communities, and explorations of views and interventions to help people in underserved or disadvantaged communities. These include farmers, people needing palliative care and people experiencing socioeconomic disadvantage.

This investment will support applied health and social care research that will develop innovative ways to help people live well after arthritis diagnosis or treatment, while addressing health inequalities. Proposals should consider the following: the need to move support and care into the community, and the long-term combined impact of arthritis on a person's physical, psychological and social health; Changes across the life course - we are particularly interested in the transition from childhood onset into adulthood.

We want to identify ways to improve long term outcomes after an arthritis diagnosis or treatments, including better self-management, non-drug and non-surgical health and social care approaches, and effective remote monitoring while minimising digital exclusion.

We expect **the outcomes** from this investment to help implement interventions into practice – either through co-developed projects with a clear path to implementation, or through proposals that focus on implementing interventions already supported by strong evidence.

We expect interventions to improve outcomes in any of the following areas:

- **Empowering patients**

Helping people make better health decisions when considering supported self-management and lifestyle changes, including but not limited to:

- providing clear, tailored information or education materials for specific groups, including the use of artificial intelligence and digital tools,
- offering information support for people experiencing joint disembodiment due to chronic pain or joint replacement.

- **Improving the health pathway**

Supporting patients in making informed decisions with their care teams, including any of the following areas:

- giving patients more say in when, where and by whom they are reviewed,
- removing barriers to equitable access to holistic care,
- improving management of co-morbidities
- developing non-drug and non-surgical health and social care interventions.
- providing psychological support for people:
 - being treated for prosthetic joint infections, or
 - experiencing joint disembodiment due to chronic pain or joint replacement.

We determine areas for investment and the expected outcomes through research priorities defined by our [Research Advisory Groups](#), and collated in our [gaps and opportunities](#) document.

If you have any questions about the scope of this call or would like to discuss the eligibility of your proposal please email awards@arthritis-uk.org.

Requirements

Pace and Precision - a translational approach

We want research to **rapidly enhance** better-tailored solutions that directly benefit people with arthritis, translating discoveries more quickly and efficiently into practice.

Applicants should explain what the next steps will be after completion of the proposed study.

Research Involvement

Applications should involve people with arthritis in the development and design of the outlined work. There should clear plans for continued collaboration with them in the oversight, delivery and dissemination of the proposed project, this includes discovery research. More information

and guidance can be found in our Patient and Public Involvement and Engagement Hub on our website: [support for researchers to involve people with arthritis](#).

Diversity and Inclusion

Our vision is for our research to reflect, and address, the diverse needs of all those living with arthritis. We aim to be open, inclusive and equitable in the support and service we provide to our stakeholders. We are committed to ensuring meaningful inclusive involvement in research and the promotion of equitable access to participation in, and the benefits from research. We are committed to diversity, equity and inclusion in who does research, what research is done, and who benefits from research. We will publish our research DEI plans in 2026.

We expect people with arthritis from a diverse range of backgrounds, cultures and experiences to be partners and participants in our research activities, representing the full life-course of the population. Where a research proposal involves the participation of people with arthritis, we will only fund research that is able to demonstrate appropriate representation and diversity (ethnicity, socioeconomic, gender and age) as relevant to the aims of the proposal.

Research involving animals, cells and tissues should consider sex, genetic and other relevant characteristics. For research using animals use the National Centre for the Replacement, Refinement and Reduction of Animals in Research (NC3Rs) [Experimental Design Assistant](#) to support experimental design.

We will fund health service research that accounts for differences in local environments, noting that specific needs of the four UK nations devolved healthcare and research funding contexts require tailored solutions.

Applicants should design research carefully to ensure that project outputs and impacts do not contribute to exacerbation of health inequities. Applications should show that they have deliberately considered the desired impact on health inequities, any risks or possible unintended consequences, and identified any relevant barriers.

Animal Research

We will only fund animal research where there is no viable alternative, that is well designed, ethical and scientifically justified. We are committed to the principles of reduction, replacement and refinement (3Rs) in animal studies. More information and guidance can be found on [Applying for an Award](#).

Collaboration and partnership

We welcome collaborations and partnership with industry and international stakeholders. If your proposal is suitable for co-funding with another funder or you have third party funding, please email awards@arthritis-uk.org as early as possible.

In some areas – such as multiple long-term conditions, rare diseases and collective immune-mediated inflammatory – we particularly welcome partnership approaches.

Clinical Research

Please contact your relevant national service supporting and advising applied health, public health or social care researchers, or a relevant Clinical Research Facility or Clinical Trials Unit before starting an application:

- England [NIHR Research Support Service](#)
- Scotland: [NHS Research Scotland Research Design Service](#)
- Wales: [Health and Care Research Wales Support and Delivery Service](#)
- UKCRC-registered Clinical Trial Unit: [find a CTU – UKCRC](#)

Pilot/feasibility studies to inform the development of a clinical trial to test an intervention, will be accepted. Beyond preliminary studies, clinical studies must show feasibility evidence relating to outcome measure selection, study design and statistical methods, participant recruitment and retention and delivery of the intervention.

Clinical studies can include a mechanistic evaluation, either as a sub study within a clinical trial or as part of an observational study.

With the current clinical research challenges in the NHS, investigators and sponsors are required to make transparent and realistic assessments of capacity and capability to deliver.

Co-applicants and collaborators at NHS sites are asked to support proposals only if there is a certainty that they can meet recruitment targets and timelines indicated.

It will be taken that institution signatories in the role of Sponsor are wholly satisfied and supportive of the assurances provided upon submission of the application.

Data and sample resources

We encourage researchers to make use of established, pre-existent cohorts, collections, bioresources and registries. When proposing to make use of human tissue, consider carefully whether existing resources meet your needs and justify why any new collection is necessary.

We require those receiving funding to create a tissue collection, provide access to this and register the collection in a publicly accessible directory.

Intellectual Property

Applicants should make careful consideration regarding use of background IP. Use of patents, software, datasets, biological materials, compounds, cell lines or any background IP owned by your institution or other institutions involved and confirm access through the required agreements (Material Transfer Agreements, licenses and permissions).

Applicants should assess whether the proposed research will create protectable IP: including therapeutics compounds, diagnostics, new methods and models, new targets, MoA (Mechanism of action), devices, software, algorithms, research tools, datasets or proprietary know-how. Please consider anything that produces new IP or provides a competitive advantage, as even negative results or optimisation data can constitute valuable know-how.

Who can apply

Arthritis UK research awards may only be held in universities, NHS Trusts or recognised academic research institutes in the UK. The lead applicant does not need to have a permanent position, but at least one applicant must have a substantive position at the host (lead) institution.

People with lived experience and international collaborators may be included as co-applicants.

Individuals who are employed by, or whose salary derives from, a commercial organisation are not eligible to lead an Arthritis UK award, they can be included as a co-applicant or a collaborator.

We expect applications to take a collaborative and multidisciplinary approach to answering research questions where appropriate to the proposed research.

For further details on who can apply and other roles in the application, for further information see the associated guidance document.

What you can apply for

Awards of up to 36 months duration, between £400,000-£1,000,000 in value are available

Costs for salaries, expenses and small items of essential equipment can be requested.

If you intend to outsource parts of the project, to be undertaken by a third party, please email awards@arthritis-uk.org as early as possible to discuss this with us.

For further details on what you can apply for, see the associated guidance document.

How to apply

This is a single stage application process.

Applications can be worked on offline using the associated guidance document before applying via the Arthritis UK Awards Portal. (anticipated access 1 April). Applicants must carefully read the application form and guidance document before starting an application. Please ensure the most appropriate language is used in each section of the form and that the correct sections are completed.

The deadline for the receipt of applications is **16:00 Wednesday 24 June 2026**.

Submissions after 16:00 will not be accepted. Please allow time for management of appropriate reviewers and signatories to access the grant management system and provide their approvals.

How will applications be assessed

Applications will be reviewed by our Living Well funding panel, which includes people with lived experience of arthritis. All eligible applications will be reviewed and feedback provided. If necessary, a panel triage process may be implemented such that only a proportion of the proposals will advance to provide rebuttal to reviews before a formal funding panel meeting.

Applications will be reviewed and assessed on the following criteria:

- importance and potential impact
- relevance and scope
- novelty and innovation
- involvement in application development
- involvement plans
- research design, delivery and clarity
- feasibility
- value for money.

We expect applications to include information on how the research will bring impact and benefit to people with arthritis. We currently assess impact using our framework below, which focuses on seven areas:

- Policy and Practice – our research is influencing how arthritis is treated or managed.
- Intellectual property, products, and services – new innovations, treatments or tools which improve patients' lives.
- New knowledge – our research has changed what we know about arthritis.
- Patient and Public Involvement – the benefit that patients bring to the research itself.
- Partnerships – new networks, partners and collaborations which extend research.
- Capacity Building – our investments are increasing the human or technical capacity to conduct research.
- Leveraged funding – new funding that has been awarded to continue the research we funded.

More detail around these impact areas can be found in the guidance document, including examples of outcomes which relate to each impact area.

Award management

Reporting – We expect all awards outputs and outcomes to be reported annually during the funded period and for 3-5 years post-completion. Reporting expectations are agreed at the start of the project.

All award holders must also provide an annual expenditure report for monitoring of finances and project progress. A meeting will be held to discuss any budget variance and agree payment for the following year.

Projects that require recruitment of human participants are required to complete a six monthly progress report to the Progress Review Committee.

Publications – All original peer-reviewed articles published as a result of our funding **must** comply with our open access policies. Award holders should tell us directly about all articles in peer-reviewed literature or disseminated publicly (for example, press releases) as soon as possible and by the time the article has been accepted for publication or dissemination.

More information and guidance can be found on [Managing your award](#).

Intellectual property – Award holders must notify us of **any** potential for, or activities relating to, development of intellectual property and seek our consent before progressing any commercial activity arising from this award.

Award holders can get help on IP management from their local technology transfer or commercialisation offices. Early consultation will help prevent issues that might arise during the course of the project and can identify additional opportunities.

Research Engagement - We are dependent on funds raised from public donations. It is important that you join us in raising the awareness of Arthritis UK. Our current logo and acknowledgement of Arthritis UK's support should be used on all documents/presentations relating to this award.

Award holders may be invited to meetings with Arthritis UK to discuss their research and/or asked to contribute written summaries.

Timelines

Call opens on website (application form information to work offline available soon after)	Mid - March 2026
Call opens in grant management system (application form available)	Anticipated Wednesday 1 April 2026
Deadline for applications	16:00 Wednesday 24 June 2026
Invitation to provide a rebuttal to the panel review	Early November 2026
Deadline to provide a rebuttal to the panel review	Late November 2026
Notification of award	January 2027
Project start	From March 2027 at earliest

Contact details

For all enquiries, please email the Awards Office at awards@arthritis-uk.org.