

Non-drug approaches grants - Information for applicants

Parkinson's UK is the largest member-led charitable funder of Parkinson's research in Europe. So far, we've invested more than £93 million in ground-breaking research.

Purpose and scope

Non-drug approaches to Parkinson's are important to people affected by Parkinson's and at some stages of the condition, are of equal or greater importance than pharmacological treatment.

We are keen to fund research that focuses on what matters most and improves quality of life for people affected by Parkinson's in the shorter term.

To help us focus on what matters most, we worked with people affected by Parkinson's, their families and professionals to come up with a [list of key priorities for improving everyday life in the shorter term](#).

Applicants may wish to consider the priorities identified by people with Parkinson's.

With these awards we are focused on delivering outcomes that make a difference to people with the condition. That means that we're looking for projects that, if successful, have a clear pathway to be made available to people affected by Parkinson's.

- Non-drug approaches could include:
 - Physiotherapy
 - Occupational therapy
 - Speech and language therapies
 - Mental health therapies (non-drug)
 - Health and social care
 - Complementary therapies
 - Nutrition
 - Exercise, dance
 - Technology and devices
- We're keen to receive applications from researchers working in the above areas, related to Parkinson's. This is not an exhaustive list.
- The duration of a non-drug approaches grant is for a maximum of two years.
- There is no minimum value for the non-drug approaches grants, however, the maximum cost of applications is up to £200,000.
- If you have any queries on making an application in this area, please contact the team on researchapplications@parkinsons.org.uk.

Eligibility

- Applications must be directly relevant to people currently living with Parkinson's.

- Grants are tenable at a UK university, NHS trust, statutory social care organisation or other research institution.
- Principal applicants should hold employment or honorary (if a clinical academic) contracts with the host institution that extend beyond the period of the grant.
- Applicants may be new to Parkinson's research, but must have relevant Parkinson's experience within the proposed team.
- Co-applicants and collaborators may be based at institutions outside the UK and / or at pharmaceutical or biotech companies. There is no upper limit to the number of co-applicants / collaborators that can be added to an application.
- Applicants should read [Research grant terms and conditions](#) and the charity's [research grants costs guidance](#) before completing the application form.
- Applicants should be directly relevant to the [charity's research priorities](#).

Application procedure

- There is one pre proposal deadline (April) and one full application deadline (July) per year, and applicants will receive funding decisions in October. Closing dates for pre-proposal and full proposals can be found on the Parkinson's UK [types of grants pages](#). Deadlines may be subject to change. Any changes will be shared widely via the charity website and relevant newsletters.
- Application is by a two stage process, consisting of a pre-proposal and a subsequent full proposal. The full proposal stage is by invitation only for those applicants who have passed independent scientific and lay peer review at the pre-proposal stage. The pre-proposal application form can be obtained by contacting researchapplications@parkinsons.org.uk.
- All applications must be made in English.
- The full application form will be emailed to applicants who are successful at the pre-proposal stage. Full applications should be submitted by email to researchapplications@parkinsons.org.uk by the deadline date. Applications received after the deadline will not be considered.
- Applicants are not required to submit a hard copy application.
- Details of any collaboration should be included and a letter confirming agreement from each collaborator should be submitted.
- If the project includes work with patients please ensure a letter of written support is supplied from a clinical collaborator.
- Any relevant 'in press' articles should be attached as appendices.
- Applicants will receive confirmation by email once an application is submitted.
- Unless the charity requires further information, no correspondence will be entered into until the results are notified. Applicants are requested not to initiate contact with the Research team during the review process.

Costing the application

- Applicants must justify the funds requested.
- Applicants must apply for funding in British pounds sterling.
- Applicants should seek the advice of their institution's Finance or Research Office on costing the application well in advance of the application deadline. Online submissions of the application are sent directly to Parkinson's UK.
- In line with the Association of Medical Research Charities guidelines, Parkinson's UK will only reimburse directly incurred research costs for awarded grants as per the application submitted. **Please read our [guidance on research costs](#).**
- **Staff costs:** Basic salary should be stated for each individual. Provision for London weighting, superannuation and National Insurance should be shown separately in the space provided. An appropriate grading and salary must be quoted even where a named assistant cannot be specified; both grading and salary should have the approval of the appropriate administrative officer of the institution

where the assistant would be employed. If appropriate, applicants can apply for support costs for PhD students.

- **Research expenses:** Details must be given. Non drug approaches grants do not cover administrative expenses, costs for attending conferences or publishing costs. Please see our guidance on [open access publishing](#).
- **Equipment:** Please specify each piece of equipment requested.
- You may include costs for any planned PPI activities in your application, for example travel expenses for a face-to-face meeting.
- **Inflation:** Inflation will not be paid in year one; inflation in years two and three is allowable up to 3%.

Review procedure

- Pre-proposals will be independently peer reviewed by three members of our external [College of Experts](#) and a minimum of four lay grant reviewers (people directly affected by Parkinson's).
- Full applications will be independently peer reviewed by three members of our external [College of Experts](#) and at least four lay grant reviewers.
- All applications are reviewed using a ten point system, with 0=Unfundable and 10=Highly fundable/Highly competitive at International Standard. **(see Appendix)**
- Applicants submitting pre-proposals with substantive scientific merit and deemed likely to have a meaningful and translatable impact on the lives of people affected by Parkinson's, will simply receive an e-mail notification inviting them to submit a full application.
- Applicants submitting pre-proposals which lack scientific merit and or lack potential impact for people affected by Parkinson's, will receive an email stating they are not being invited to submit a full proposal and a brief statement why they have been unsuccessful at this stage.
- For full applications, the mean review scores from both the scientific College of Experts and lay grant reviewers will be utilised to identify a shortlist of highly ranked applications for further discussion at a panel meeting.
- Feedback from lay and College of Expert reviewers will be sent to principal applicants of shortlisted applications for review. Applicants will have at least one week to reply to the queries raised or provide clarification. Principal applicants will receive an email alerting them to the timing of the 'right-to-reply' period.
- The review panel of scientists from the College of Experts and lay members will discuss and identify applications at a virtual meeting, and make recommendations for funding to the Parkinson's UK Chief Executive Officer.
- Successful applicants will be given feedback from the panel meeting and the opportunity to respond and develop areas of the application, with input from appropriate experts as necessary. Funding may be awarded on the condition that particular areas of the application are developed as suggested by the funding panel.
- Successful applicants (grantholders) will submit annual and final reports as per the Parkinson's UK research grants terms and conditions, which will be reviewed by appropriate members of the College of Experts and lay grant reviewers. Comments will be fed back to the grantholder who will be required to respond to them and make amendments to the study as appropriate.
- Successful applicants (grantholders) may be asked to participate in the charity's Project Engagement Volunteer programme, which involves engaging with people affected by Parkinson's throughout the duration of the project.
- Edited comments from the combined reports of external peer and lay grant reviewers and panel members will be made available to unsuccessful applicants to encourage the strengthening of research proposals and studies going forward. No further discussion with Parkinson's UK staff or with members of the College of Experts is allowed.
- Applications will be judged by external peer reviewers and panel members against the following criteria:
 - importance and relevance of the research to people living with Parkinson's
 - **potential impact of the research for people currently living with Parkinson's**
 - scientific quality of the proposal
 - **likelihood of being rolled out on a wider scale if successful**

- quality of the researcher and team
- value for money
- budget and infrastructure
- A good plain English summary is essential for evaluation by lay grant reviewers who will judge applications against the following criteria:
 - the importance and relevance of the research for people affected by Parkinson's
 - the potential benefit of the research for people affected by Parkinson's
 - if the proposed research involves human participants, whether they think people would be likely to take part

Patient and public involvement

- We recommend that all applicants work with people affected by Parkinson's in the development of an application for funding and, if successful, throughout each stage of the research process.
- Parkinson's UK can support researchers to involve people affected by Parkinson's through our [patient and public involvement](#) (PPI) programme, including by helping you to plan meaningful involvement activities and find people to involve.
- See our [PPI Guidance for researchers](#) for more information and get in touch with the team for support with PPI at researchinvolvement@parkinsons.org.uk
- Remember to include costs for any planned PPI activities in your application, for example travel expenses for a face-to-face meeting. For further guidance, see INVOLVE's '[Budgeting for Involvement](#)' document and '[Cost Calculator](#)'.

Recruiting participants

Parkinson's UK can also help researchers [to find participants for their research studies](#).

If you have further questions about making an application, please contact the Research team.

Email: researchapplications@parkinsons.org.uk

Writing a research grant application

We only fund the best quality research so that every penny donated towards research will benefit people with Parkinson's. We receive a high volume of applications in each grant round, so it's vital that you make your application stand out from the crowd. Below are some tips and pitfalls to avoid when writing your grant application to give yourself the best chance of success.

Make a good first impression

- Read the 'Information for applicants' document for the appropriate grant scheme.
- Read the Parkinson's UK research grant terms and conditions and costs guidance – make sure your requests are allowable by Parkinson's UK.
- Give all the information required in the correct format - Arial typescript, size 11pt.
- Ensure that your application undergoes an internal peer review process at your institution, to gain feedback on the scientific quality of the proposed study, and ensure proof reading has identified typographical and grammatical errors.
- Ensure figures make sense and are correctly referenced in the text.
- Make sure everything in your research proposal is correctly referenced.
- Even if your ideas are excellent, a badly presented application may make reviewers wonder if this is an indication of how the research will be conducted.

Write a good plain English summary **Might be a good idea to get Tash and Annie's input on this to see if they have anything to add.**

- Our lay grant reviewers bring the unique and valuable perspective of people affected by Parkinson's into the funding decisions made by Parkinson's UK. It ensures that their needs and interests are reflected in our research.
- Researchers may not have personal experience of Parkinson's and therefore may not consider some of the issues that are highlighted by people affected by the condition. This is why the input of lay grant reviewers is so important.
- We recommend that you work with people affected by Parkinson's in the development of your plain English summary to ensure it is as clear as it can be.
- Lay grant reviewers may have considerable personal experience but little specialised scientific knowledge, so it is important that you think carefully about your lay reader when writing your plain English summary.
 - The plain English summary must accurately reflect the research proposal and scientific abstract. Applicants should be realistic about the potential outcomes of their research and the likely timescales involved.
 - Avoid using jargon, abbreviations and technical terms wherever possible – if you have to use them provide a clear explanation.
 - Include a good glossary.
 - Avoid complicated English or uncommon words.
 - Avoid elaborate explanations of 'what is Parkinson's'. They are very likely to know a lot about this and want to know about the particular research project.
 - Use active not passive phrases, for example say 'we will do it' rather than 'it will be done by us'.
 - Keep sentences short - try not to use more than 15 to 20 words per sentence.
 - Break up the text, for example by using bullet point lists.
 - If your study involves participants ensure you have included details of what will be involved for them and how they will be supported.
- You can find more tips on writing a good plain English summary on the [Make it Clear campaign website](#).

Clearly demonstrate how your research relates to Parkinson's

- Parkinson's UK only supports research into Parkinson's. We want to fund research that has the greatest chance of improving the lives of people with Parkinson's.
- Peer and lay reviewers have a lot of knowledge of Parkinson's and will usually have considered many applications over the years. They expect applicants to demonstrate a good understanding of Parkinson's. Applicants whose expertise and publications record primarily relates to another field should seek to collaborate with relevant experts in Parkinson's and people affected by Parkinson's where necessary.
- Parkinson's UK will consider applications which may provide insights into a number of neurodegenerative conditions, but again you will need to show the particular relevance to Parkinson's.

Ensure your research proposal is clear and logical

- Make sure your hypotheses are clear and firm and are reflected clearly in the methodology.
- Show how the various experiments and stages of proposed research relate to each other.
- Give clear information on what the outcome measures will be.
- Identify and address any potential challenges or pitfalls – what will you do if your first proposed experiment doesn't result in the outcome you expected? Or if you have challenges with recruitment or retention of participants?
- Provide sufficient detail on the experiments and how they will be carried out to show your understanding of what you're doing. As this scheme is focussed on the impact on the lives of people affected by Parkinson's, provide information on how you will measure impact
- Give realistic sample sizes and power calculations based on evidence.
- **Clearly describe the future clinical benefits and timescales of practical improvements that could result from the research.**
- Ensure your application includes details of how the results of your research will be made available to others.

Appendix - 10 point scoring system used by the Parkinson's UK College of Experts

Funding category	Characteristics for Scientific Members	Rating scale	
Highly fundable	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Very important research questions; likely to result in advancement in the scientific understanding of Parkinson's or significant benefit for people affected by Parkinson's by addressing the priority research areas for improving everyday life. • Excellent and appropriate methods and research design. • Very strong, internationally competitive team, containing all relevant disciplines. • Very good value for money. • Clear and well written proposal. • Strong evidence of meaningful and well-planned patient and public involvement, with activities integrated at appropriate points throughout the project. • Plain English summary accurately reflects the research proposal and is realistic about potential outcomes and timescales involved. 	Exceptional	10
		Excellent quality research	9
		Very good, bordering on excellent	8
Potentially fundable	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Relevant research questions; likely to result in advancement in the scientific understanding of Parkinson's, or benefit for people affected by Parkinson's by addressing the priority research areas for improving everyday life. • Good quality and appropriate methods and research design. • Competent and appropriate research team containing all key disciplines. • Good value for money. • All key aspects of application are clearly presented • Some evidence of patient and public involvement, with activities well planned and integrated at appropriate points. • Plain English summary accurately reflects the research proposal and is realistic about potential outcomes and timescales involved. 	Good quality research	7
		Above average quality research	6
		Acceptable quality	5
Not fundable (without significant changes)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Research questions are not directly relevant to the scientific understanding of Parkinson's or do not address the priority research areas for people affected by Parkinson's. • Inappropriate methods and research design of only modest or poor quality. • Applicants without relevant research experience or key disciplines not represented. • Poor value for money. • Key elements of the application are unclear. • Limited evidence of patient and public involvement with unclear plans. • Plain English summary is unclear, does not accurately reflect the research proposal and is unrealistic about the potential outcomes and timescales involved. 	Borderline quality research	4
		Below acceptable quality	3
Definitely not fundable	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Irrelevant research questions. • Poor/flawed/duplicative methods and research design. • Key skills missing from the research team. • Very poor value for money. • Unclear application. • No or limited evidence of appropriate patient and public involvement in the research. • Plain English summary is unclear, does not accurately reflect the research proposal and is unrealistic about the potential outcomes and timescales involved. 	Many identified flaws	2
		Serious weaknesses or major concerns	1