

NIHR Local Authority Academic Fellowship Programme and Associated Opportunities



This programme of fellowship schemes and short placement awards supports individuals based within local authority settings to develop as health and/or social care researchers whilst retaining their existing employment and salary. This new initiative provides exciting opportunities for a wide range of individuals.

In order to address the complex health and social care challenges of the 21st century, it is crucial to develop and support future research leaders from a wide range of settings and disciplines. The Local Authority Academic Fellowship (LAAF) Programme and similarly focussed short placement awards are designed to strengthen the capacity for local authority settings to generate and support health and social care research by offering research training awards to the individuals that work within them.

The training opportunities include three schemes:

- LAAF Programme **Pre-Doctoral Local Authority Fellowship (PLAF)** Scheme
- LAAF Programme **Doctoral Local Authority Fellowship (DLAF)** Scheme
- **Local Authority Short Placement Award for Research Collaboration (LA SPARC)** Scheme

Additional schemes, including complementary post-doctoral funding opportunities, may be added to the LAAF Programme in the future.

By offering this range of funding opportunities to individuals embedded within local authority settings, these schemes contribute to the development of a credible 'practitioner academic' career pathway within local authorities and local authority supporting services.

What the awards provide

Each class of award provides protected time within an individual's current employment to undertake fully funded research training, professional development and, depending on the scheme, a research project and academic qualifications.

Stage	PLAF	DLAF	LA SPARC
Competition Launch	January	September	Autumn
Application Deadline	March	November	Winter
Award Start Date	September - March	September - March	April - February
Duration (when taken full-time)	1 year or 6 months	3 years	Short placements

Pre-Doctoral Local Authority Fellowship (PLAF) Scheme

These fully funded pre-doctoral fellowships enable awardees to retain their existing employment contracts and salaries, whilst protecting their time to prepare an application for a PhD fellowship and undertake a fully funded programme of relevant Masters level training.

Doctoral Local Authority Fellowship (DLAF) Scheme

These fully funded doctoral fellowships enable awardees to retain their existing employment contracts and salaries, whilst protecting their time to undertake a PhD by research, undertake academic training and develop professional skill sets.

Local Authority SPARC (LA SPARC)

The scheme provides funds for short 'placement opportunities' in a part of the NIHR (e.g a Biomedical Research Centre, Applied Research Collaboration, NIHR School etc.). It supports individuals working in local authority settings and NIHR Academy members allowing movement between NIHR/academia and local authority settings in either direction. These will be bespoke, personalised training and career development placements for individuals to develop their skills, knowledge and expertise, train in a specific technique and build meaningful relationships with other researchers.

These placements will draw on the skills of the academic, NIHR, and the local authority setting to co-produce research that delivers real benefits to people and communities. This may appeal to those who are interested in enhancing their careers, in experiencing research from a different perspective or perhaps looking to take the next step in developing a practice academic career.

Individuals can apply to LA SPARC for up to £15,000 to undertake a bespoke short placement. Applications are short/light-touch and will be assessed in open competition.

Who can apply?

LAAF programme

The LAAF programme awards are available to individuals of any profession or background, with the exception of doctors and dentists who can already access equivalent dedicated funding opportunities. Applicants must, however, be employed by:

- a local authority
- a provider of local authority commissioned services
- a non-profit organisation (such as a charity) that provides services on behalf of a local authority, or supports a local authority in meeting its objectives.

These schemes represent exciting new opportunities for a wide range of individuals, but especially for those without professional social worker or clinician status. Eligible clinicians and social workers are welcome to apply for support from this programme or from the other existing NIHR Academy administered programmes that cater for their own professional groups, but cannot apply to both concurrently.

LA SPARC

To be eligible to apply for the LA SPARC, individuals should hold a minimum level of qualification at degree level (BSc/BA) or equivalent and hold a contract of employment in England with either a:

- local authority
- provider of local authority commissioned services (including those based in the NHS)
- non-profit organisation (such as a charity) that provides services on behalf of a local authority, or that otherwise supports a local authority in meeting its objectives
or
- be a Public Health Specialty Trainee based in England

The placement must be focused around early translational (experimental medicine), clinical and applied research that pertains to health, public health and/or social care.

Guidance notes

Prospective applicants are strongly advised to read the scheme specific applicant guidance notes in full before beginning an application:

- [Doctoral Local Authority Fellowship Scheme Applicant Guidance Notes](#)
- [Pre-doctoral Local Authority Fellowship Scheme Applicant Guidance Notes - Round 2 January 2022](#)
- [Local Authority SPARC Applicant Guidance Notes - Round 2 September 2022](#)

The LAAF programme and LA SPARC can only support research, or the development of research, that meets the [NIHR Academy remit for personal awards](#).

Other NIHR funding

Research for Social Care:

An annual competition, run by NIHR's [Research for Patient Benefit \(RfPB\)](#) programme.

The aim of the annual RfSC call is to fund topics and research methodologies that increase the effectiveness of social care services, provide value for money and benefit service users and carers.

HEE/NIHR Integrated Clinical Academic Programme:

This programme provides personal research training awards to health and social care professionals (**including statutorily registered social workers**, but excluding doctors and dentists) who wish to develop careers that combine research and research leadership with continued practice and professional development.

Contact us

Call: 0113 532 8444

Email: Academy-awards@nihr.ac.uk for the local authority fellowships programme or icbs@nihr.ac.uk for the LA SPARC.