

PCR Early Career Fellowship in Prostate Cancer Research

Call for Applications

Prostate cancer remains the most commonly diagnosed cancer in men in the UK and significant challenges remain in early detection, risk stratification, treatment optimisation and improving quality of life. Through this Fellowship, Prostate Cancer Research (PCR) will invest in exceptional researchers whose work has the potential to transform outcomes for men affected by prostate cancer.

The Fellowship is intended to provide a critical bridge between postdoctoral research and full research independence, enabling talented researchers to establish their own scientific identity, generate preliminary data and develop the skills, networks and leadership experience required to become future leaders in the field.

The Fellowship provides protected research time, salary support, research funding and career development opportunities to enable Fellows to undertake innovative, high-quality research with the potential to advance understanding, diagnosis, treatment and survivorship of prostate cancer.

Guidance for Applicants

Fellowship Objectives

- Support outstanding early-career researchers transitioning towards research independence.
- Attract and retain talented researchers within prostate cancer research.
- Generate high-quality preliminary data to support future funding applications.
- Accelerate research with clear relevance to people affected by prostate cancer.
- Develop future leaders committed to improving outcomes for patients.
- Foster multidisciplinary collaboration and innovation.
- Strengthen the UK prostate cancer research ecosystem through investment in emerging talent.

Fellowship Duration

Awards will normally be made for **three years, up to a total value of £250K**. Subject to exceptional justification and available funding, shorter or longer durations may be considered. Applicants may propose a fellowship that is co-funded through other sources, provided that all sources of support are clearly described and do not duplicate the costs requested from PCR.

Eligible Costs

Applicants may request costs directly attributable to the proposed programme of research, including:

- Salary support for the Fellow.
- Research consumables.
- Small items of equipment.
- Access to core facilities and specialist services.
- Bioinformatics and statistical support.
- Software licences and specialist databases.
- Training and professional development.
- Travel, networking and collaboration costs.
- Patient and public involvement and engagement activities.
- Open access publication costs where appropriately justified.

Salary support for the Fellow may be requested on a full- or part-time basis where appropriate. Applications incorporating matched or co-funding from host institutions, NHS organisations, universities or other sources will be considered, provided arrangements are clearly described and justified.

All requested costs must be fully justified and represent value for money. Where matched funding or in-kind support is provided, applicants should clearly describe the contribution, its source, duration and relevance to the proposed fellowship.

Ineligible Costs

PCR will not normally provide funding for:

- Indirect costs or institutional overheads.
- Estate costs.
- Major capital equipment.
- Retrospective costs incurred before the award start date.
- Costs not directly attributable to the proposed programme of research.
- Activities already adequately supported through existing funding sources.

PCR reserves the right to seek additional justification for any requested cost and to amend funded budgets as part of the award process.

Eligibility

Applicants must:

- Hold a PhD, MD or equivalent higher research degree.
- Have up to six years of postdoctoral research experience (assessment will recognise diverse career paths, career breaks and career interruptions).

- Demonstrate a clear commitment to prostate cancer research.
- Be based at, or have the support of, an eligible UK university, NHS organisation or recognised research institute.
- Have identified an appropriate host institution and academic sponsor.

Applications are welcomed from researchers following a variety of career pathways, including academic, clinical-academic and other non-linear career trajectories, provided applicants can demonstrate a clear pathway towards research independence.

Applicants should not have previously held a substantial independent research fellowship.

Competitive Applicant Profile

PCR is seeking researchers with the potential to become future leaders in prostate cancer research.

Competitive applicants are expected to demonstrate:

- Scientific creativity and originality.
- A strong track record of achievement relative to career stage.
- Increasing research independence and ownership of their research direction.
- The ability to deliver high-quality research.
- A clear long-term vision for their research career.
- A commitment to improving outcomes for people affected by prostate cancer.

Research Independence

A central objective of the Fellowship is to support the transition from postdoctoral researcher to independent research leader.

Applicants should clearly explain:

- How the Fellowship will support progression towards research independence.
- How the proposed programme differs from, or builds beyond, the work of their current supervisor or research group.
- Their longer-term plans for research leadership and future funding.

Scope of Research

Applications are welcomed across the full spectrum of prostate cancer research, including but not limited to:

- Translational science.
- Early detection.
- Diagnostics.
- Precision medicine.

- Imaging.
- Health services research.
- Quality of life.
- Health inequalities research.

Research addressing important unmet clinical needs and demonstrating a clear pathway to patient benefit is particularly encouraged.

Multidisciplinary and cross-sector collaborations are strongly encouraged.

Patient Benefit and Involvement

PCR is committed to ensuring that research remains focused on the needs and priorities of people affected by prostate cancer.

Applicants should clearly describe:

- The unmet need being addressed.
- The potential scientific, clinical or societal impact of the proposed research.
- How outcomes could ultimately benefit patients.
- Any plans for meaningful patient and public involvement throughout the research process.

Patient relevance will form an important component of the assessment process.

Human-Relevant Research

Applicants are expected to select the most appropriate and scientifically robust experimental models available. Encouragement is given to human-relevant approaches, including studies using:

- Patient samples.
- Clinical cohorts.
- Human tissue-based models.
- Organoids.
- Computational approaches.
- Imaging.
- Epidemiology.
- Artificial intelligence.
- Other non-animal methodologies.

Applications involving animal research will be considered where applicants provide a clear scientific justification that suitable non-animal approaches cannot adequately address the research question. Such applications must demonstrate how the principles of Replacement, Reduction and Refinement (3Rs) have informed study design.

Mentorship and Career Development

Each Fellow must be supported by:

- A primary academic supervisor.
- At least one independent mentor outside the immediate research group.

Applicants should describe:

- Skills they intend to acquire.
- Opportunities for collaboration.
- Leadership and management development.
- Patient engagement activities.
- Plans for progression to research independence.
- Future fellowship and grant aspirations.

Community and Engagement

Fellows may be invited to participate in:

- Scientific networking events.
- Research showcase meetings.
- Leadership development opportunities.
- Patient engagement activities.
- Activities that strengthen the wider prostate cancer research community.

Fellows will be encouraged to act as ambassadors for research excellence throughout and beyond the duration of their award.

Institutional Commitment

The host institution must demonstrate a strong commitment to the Fellow's scientific development and future independence. Where applicable, the institution should confirm any matched funding, protected clinical time, salary contribution or other support being provided to enable successful completion of the fellowship.

You will be required to submit a statement of institutional support should describe:

- The quality of the research environment.
- Available facilities and infrastructure.
- Access to training and development opportunities.
- Commitment to protected research time.
- Support for collaboration and networking.
- How the institution will promote progression towards research independence.

Assessment Criteria:

Applications will be assessed against the following criteria:

Applicant Potential (50%)

- Academic achievements relative to career stage.
- Research productivity and contribution to the field.
- Evidence of creativity, independence and leadership potential.
- Commitment to prostate cancer research.

Scientific Quality and Innovation (35%)

- Importance of the research question.
- Scientific quality and rigour.
- Innovation and originality.
- Appropriateness of methodology.
- Feasibility of delivery.

Research Environment and Career Development (15%)

- Quality of the host institution.
- Strength of supervision and mentorship.
- Training opportunities.
- Support for progression towards independence.

Assessment Process

Applications will undergo a rigorous and transparent assessment process.

Stage 1 – Eligibility Review

Applications will be assessed for eligibility and completeness.

Stage 2 – Independent Expert Peer Review

Each eligible application will be reviewed by at least two independent experts with relevant scientific expertise.

Peer reviewers will assess applications against the published assessment criteria and provide written comments and scores.

Stage 3 – Fellowship Assessment Panel

Shortlisted applicants will be invited for interview.

The Panel will consider:

- External peer review.
- Applicant responses where requested.
- Interview performance.
- Scientific excellence.
- Career potential.
- Patient relevance.

The Panel will make funding recommendations based solely on scientific merit, applicant potential and alignment with the objectives of the Fellowship.

Stage 4 – Award Approval

Funding recommendations will be submitted to the Charity's Board of Trustees for formal approval.

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

PCR is committed to creating an equitable funding environment. Applications are welcomed from researchers of all backgrounds.

Assessment will recognise achievement relative to opportunity and will take appropriate account of career breaks, flexible working, caring responsibilities, clinical training and other non-linear career pathways.

Expectations of successful fellows

- Undertake the approved programme of research.
- Engage in patient and public involvement activities where appropriate.
- Acknowledge PCR support in all publications and presentations.
- Submit annual scientific and financial reports.
- Submit a final report at the completion of the Fellowship.
- Seek onward independent funding during or at the conclusion of the Fellowship.
- Participate in Fellowship Network activities where appropriate.

How to Apply

Applications must include:

- Completed online application form (<https://www.prostate-cancer-research.org.uk/early-career-fellowship/>.)
- Curriculum vitae.
- Research proposal.
- Career development plan.

- Lay summary.
- Justification of resources.
- Statement of support from the host institution.
- Mentorship statement.
- Details of ethical and regulatory considerations where applicable.

Key Dates

Application deadline: 12 October 2026

Applicants notified of interview invitation: Early November 2026

Interviews: Early December 2026

Funding decisions: December 2026

Notification of Outcome: January 2027

Award acceptance / contracting deadline: 12 March 2027

All applications will be assessed through open competition using independent peer review and transparent assessment criteria.