

## Application guidance

### NIHR South London Health and Care Professional Internship Programme - Cohort 1

Please read this guidance carefully before applying for the NIHR South London Health and Care Professional Internship Programme. Please share this document with your line manager and budget holder who are required to approve your application on behalf of your employing organisation.

We encourage both applicants and managers to attend one of the Q&A webinars, where you will have the opportunity to raise any questions.

#### Webinar dates and times:

- Tuesday 23rd September, 14:00 – 15:00
- Sunday 28th September 2025, 20:00 – 21:00
- Wednesday 1st October, 12:00 – 13:00
- Tuesday 7th October, 09:00 – 10:00
- Thursday 16th October, 18:00 – 19:00

#### Access details:

Join the webinars here: [Join the meeting now](#)

Meeting ID: 394 734 326 649 1

Passcode: bh2aR6LH

**\*\*The application deadline is Sunday 26th October 2025 at 5pm. All applications must be fully signed off by the applicant, line manager and budget holder by this time.\*\***

## 1. Introduction

This award is open to all health & social care professionals across South London and is directed at pre-doctoral applicants (those staff who aren't on a doctoral pathway already and/or don't hold a PhD qualification). The internship programme is aimed at professionals from a wide range of backgrounds with different career aspirations including those:

1. **Stepping into research:** first step for those with little or no research experience.
2. **Growing in research:** enhanced or advanced practitioner wanting to develop research confidence.

3. **Developing research delivery leadership:** extending research skills and practice for those in a research delivery role (or aspiring).
4. **Clinical or practitioner academic:** aspiring to develop own research and would like to apply for a pre-doctoral award.

In particular, it aims to support staff from areas and organisations which do not currently have high levels of research activity and opportunities. It will provide an opportunity for tailored training and support to explore incorporating research into your clinical role. There are 23 internship places available for Cohort 1.

## 2. Background

The South London Health and Care Professional internship programme has been funded for three years (2025-2028) by the National Institute for Health and Care Research (NIHR) as part of their [expanded portfolio](#) of career support for health and care professionals.

It is hosted and managed by A Centre of Research for Nurses and Midwives (ACORN) at Guy's and St Thomas' NHS Foundation Trust (GSTT). It has been set up and will be overseen in collaboration with ten NHS partners, three academic institutions, two NIHR funded research centres and eight network supports, providing interns a unique opportunity to be exposed to research activity and to build research capacity across South London. The ACORN team have significant experience in developing staff who are new to research and have delivered a successful internal internship scheme for four years.

## 3. Internship aims

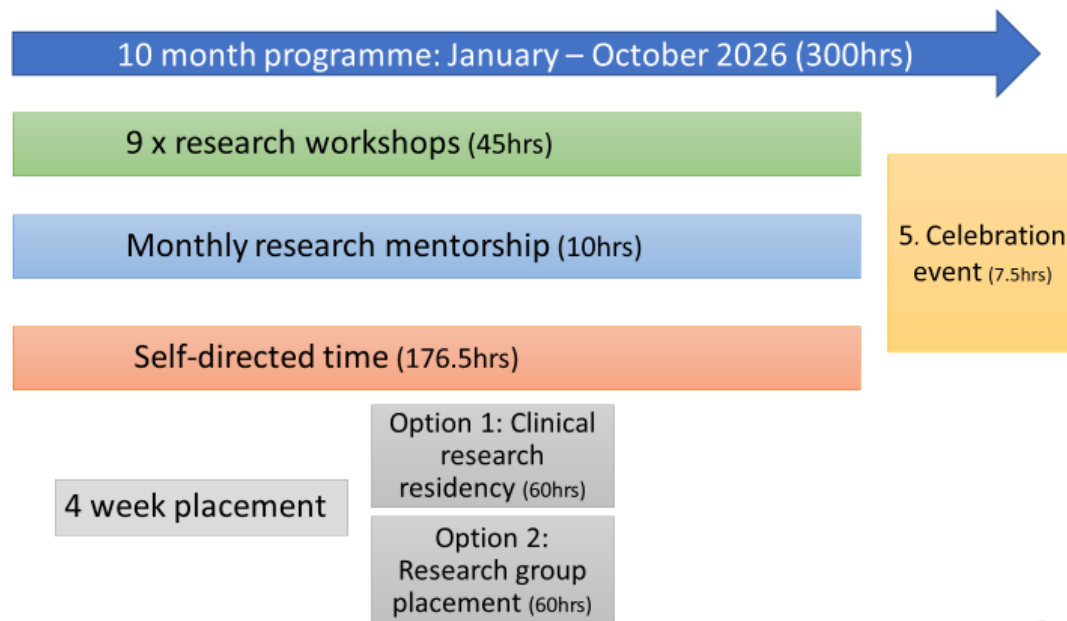
Our internship focuses on those with little previous exposure to research, those who want to expand their research role and those who may be unsure about their career path in research. We will provide a foundational research programme that enables health and care professionals to integrate research into their careers - whether as clinical academics, in research delivery roles, or as practitioners who confidently use evidence and critically reflect on their own practice. The internship will nurture individuals to champion a dynamic research culture within their own area of practice.

## 4. Internship programme overview

### Structure

The programme consists of several core components, plus a range of options which can be tailored to suit those interested in different research career pathways ([see infographic](#))

below). This includes workshops, tailored research mentorship and a 4-week placement in a research delivery team or academic research group. All interns will complete an agreed set of core competencies, mapped against relevant capabilities contained within the [NHSE Multi-professional Practice-based Research Capabilities Framework](#). Every intern will have the opportunity to obtain academic credit for their internship via work-based learning modules offered by our partner universities.



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Successful applicants will start the 10-month programme in January 2026. Prior to starting, an initial meeting with an allocated research mentor and the ACORN NIHR internship programme lead will facilitate development of a tailored internship programme that best addresses their personal goals.

## Workshops

Workshops will cover a variety of topics relevant to understanding, using and conducting research, audit and quality improvement. ACORN will lead on workshop delivery, with some sessions delivered by partner organisations. There will be one workshop per month, held in person in Central London. They will be led by experienced facilitators, and support and consolidate learning completed in self-directed study time, on placement, or with mentors.

There is an expectation that interns will attend all sessions and we ask for an 80% attendance rate for workshops to complete the internship.

## **Research mentor**

All interns will be allocated a mentor, who can support them to achieve their research goals and improve research awareness and engagement in their practice area. At the start of the internship, individuals will meet with their allocated mentor and the programme lead to design an individual plan that addresses their personal goals.

Those considering a clinical/practitioner academic career, with plans to apply for fellowship or other research training programmes (both within and outside the NIHR infrastructure), will be allocated an additional academic mentor to support them from one of our partner universities.

All interns will have the opportunity for a 1:1 meeting with an independent careers' consultant, enabling them to consider their wider career aspirations and how they might be achieved.

## **Self-directed time**

Time for self-directed activity will run throughout the whole internship period. Interns will use the time flexibly to suit individual and organisational needs. All interns will have access to resources available via ACORN and King's Clinical Academic Training Office.

A pre-meet with an allocated mentor and the programme lead will provide opportunity to discuss goals and activity focus. In addition to choosing one of the option placements, interns will select activities from a directory detailing the opportunities available via collaborating organisations and from wider infrastructure, to enable them to tailor the internship to their needs and to complete agreed personal objectives. These will include completing foundational e-learning modules such as the NIHR introduction to research modules, Good Clinical Practice (GCP) and/or other training and development courses available from across our partnership.

These hours will also provide time for the intern to work towards completion of i) a draft project proposal; ii) the design of a poster and oral presentation and iii) the research competencies.

## **Placements**

Interns will undertake one of two placement options during the programme. Each placement will be a maximum of 60 hours over a four-week period.

#### >Option 1 Clinical research residency

This option is for those interns who wish to develop a career in research delivery practice and/or leadership. Placements will be offered across our collaborating organisations. Activities will include shadowing research delivery clinical/practitioners and/or a principal investigator at one of our collaborating organisations or within the South London research delivery network (RDN).

#### >Option 2 Academic research team placements

This option will include opportunities to shadow activities and to obtain some practical skills in research design, approvals, data collection and analysis from across our collaborating organisations. This will include placements with research teams in our collaborating universities as well as with NIHR funded centres hosted within our collaborating local authorities, universities and NHS organisations.

### 5. Eligibility

To be eligible to apply for South London Health the applicant **must**:

**1. Be a professional with a registered healthcare, social work or public health background.** They must be registered with one of the following regulatory bodies;

- Academy for Healthcare Science
- General Chiropractic Council
- General Dental Council (excluding dentists)
- General Medical Council (excluding doctors)
- General Optical Council
- General Osteopathic Council
- General Pharmaceutical Council
- Health and Care Professions Council
- Nursing and Midwifery Council
- Social Work England
- UK Public Health Register

Doctors and dentists are not eligible for this award.

**2. Be employed by an organisation within the South London region** ([See Appendix 2 for full list](#)). Please note that staff employed within London Ambulance Service and Royal Brompton and Harefield Hospitals are eligible for this award. There are similar awards being offered in other areas of England if you work in an organisation outside of South London, for which you may be eligible.

**3. Have signed support from their line manager and budget holder for the duration of the internship programme.** [Appendix 3](#) is a topic guide to help you prepare and lead discussion with your line manager and identify the budget holder.

#### **4. Funding**

This award provides dedicated time via salary backfill of £10,000 per intern for the 300hrs required by the programme over 10 months. The award will cover direct salary costs only. Indirect or estates costs (i.e overheads) are not covered. This is not a personal bursary or training budget and will only be paid via invoice directly to the employing organisation. The most efficient backfill arrangements are to be decided by the intern, line manager and budget holder.

If the £10,000 contribution does not cover the backfill required for 300hrs of the intern's time (costed at top of Band 6 spine point), then line managers are encouraged to think creatively about how to release eligible staff, including using full study leave allowance as per your local policy.

The Internship award will be of up to 10 months in duration, starting January 2026 and the funding will be paid in advance of the internship to enable adequate backfill arrangements. Finance department details will be requested from successful applicants only.

#### **5. What are the benefits?**

Research is the foundation of high-quality care and there is increasing evidence that research active organisations have better patient outcomes and experiences as well as improved multi-professional teamwork and job satisfaction. Research is fundamental to improving care across all settings, but many health and social care professionals struggle to develop research skills, experience and confidence in their day-to-day roles. This internship offers staff the opportunity to gain the skills and confidence they need to champion research in their own practice environment, to inspire their team and to progress their career. We

know from evaluations of previous schemes that research internships bring benefits to individuals, teams, managers and organisations.

This prestigious NIHR funded scheme is a fantastic opportunity to grow the research culture across South London and to enhance collaboration between all our organisations.

## 6. Application process

You should provide all the information requested on the application form. Use clear and concise language with minimal use of technical jargon. Where you use abbreviations, these should be fully described in the first instance. Applicants must not use generative AI to write their application. However, they may use AI tools to refine wording, spelling and grammar.

At the end of the application, you will be invited to complete some optional equality, diversity and inclusion questions. The reason for collecting these data is that we know that certain professions and groups have been under-served in terms of research and career development opportunities and it is a requirement of NIHR funding that all schemes are inclusive. The [NIHR Operating Principle for Inclusion: Best Research for Best Health](#) states:

*“We are committed to equality, diversity, and inclusion in everything we do. Diverse people and communities shape our research, and we strive to make opportunities to participate in research an integral part of everyone's experience of health and social care services. We develop researchers from multiple disciplines, specialisms, geographies and backgrounds, and work to address barriers to career progression arising from characteristics such as sex, race or disability.”*

The optional EDI questions are being asked so that the ACORN team can monitor the inclusiveness of the internship scheme, address any barriers and report back to NIHR on the diversity of applications and successes. This information will be stored anonymously, will not be linked to your personal data and will not be shared with the people assessing your application.

The internship will be awarded on a competitive basis, with selection based on the submitted application. After the submission deadline, applications will first be reviewed internally to confirm eligibility. Eligible applications will then be considered by an independent panel,

which will score them anonymously against detailed shortlisting criteria. The panel will consist of members of the programme management group, representing the collaborating organisations across South London.

Applicants will be notified of the outcome by **Friday 21 November 2025**.

## 7. ACORN contact details

Please contact the ACORN team [via email](#) with any queries that you have or if you need any additional support in completing the application form.

Email: <mailto:gstt.acornnihrinternship@nhs.net>



## Appendix 1: Collaborating organisations and partnerships

### NHS partners

- Lead: A Centre of Research for Nurses and Midwives (ACORN) at Guy's and St Thomas' NHS Foundation Trust
- The Royal Marsden NHS Foundation Trust
- South London and Maudsley NHS Foundation Trust (SLaM)
- Central London Community Healthcare NHS Trust (CLCH)
- King's College Hospital NHS Foundation Trust
- St George's University Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust and Epsom and St Helier University Hospitals NHS Trust
- Oxleas NHS Foundation Trust
- Lewisham and Greenwich NHS Trust
- London Ambulance Service NHS Trust
- South West London and St George's Mental Health NHS Trust

### University partners

- London South Bank University (LSBU)
- King's College London (KCL)
- Kingston University London

### NIHR funded research centres

- Lambeth Health Determinants Research Collaborative (HDRC) (Lambeth HEART)
- Public Health Intervention Responsive Studies Team (PHIRST) (hosted by LSBU)

### Network support

- National Institute for Health and Care Research (NIHR) South London Regional Research Delivery Network (RRDN)
- NHS South East London Integrated Care Board (ICB)
- NHS South West London Integrated Care Board (ICB)
- NHS England London Region (NHSE London)
- South West London Teaching Partnership (Social Work) (SWLTP)
- South London Allied Health Professions (AHP) Councils
- Care England
- National Institute for Health and Care Research (NIHR) Applied Research Collaboration (ARC) South London

## Appendix 2 Organisations within the NIHR South London Footprint

### NHS organisations:

- Guy's & St Thomas' NHS Trust
- Kings College Hospital
- Epsom & St Helier University Hospitals NHS Trust
- St George's University Hospital
- The Royal Marsden
- Lewisham & Greenwich NHS Trust
- Oxleas Foundation Trust
- Croydon Health Services NHS Trust
- South London & Maudsley NHS Trust
- South West London & St George's Mental Health NHS Trust
- Kingston and Richmond NHS Trust
- London Ambulance Service

### Residential Care:

- Athol House Care Home
- Mushkil Asaan Home care agency
- St Raphael's
- Amazing Homecare
- The Glow Rest Home
- Milverton Nursing Home
- Avant-Garde Services Limited
- Little Sisters of the Poor - St Peters Residence
- Bexley Health Neighbourhood Care CIC
- The White House Nursing Home
- Purley View Nursing Home
- Bromley Park care home
- Royal Trinity Hospice
- Evolve Housing
- MEARS
- St Christopher's Hospice
- St Marys Care Home Streatham

### GP Practices:

- Robin Hood Lane Health Centre

- Streatham Common Practice
- Akerman Medical Practice
- Mitcham Family Practice
- The Acorn Group Practice
- Woolstone Medical Centre
- Albion Street Group Practice
- The Lewisham Care Partnership
- Bermondsey Spa Medical Centre
- Bridge Lane Group Practice
- Brigstock & South Norwood Partnership
- Clapham Park Group Practice
- Fairview Medical Centre
- Hampton Hill Medical Centre
- Mayfield Surgery
- Royal Arsenal Medical Centre
- The Exchange Surgery
- Paxton Green Group Practice
- The QRP Surgery
- The Westwood Surgery
- Bromley Common Practice
- Hurley and Riverside Practices
- Claremont Medical Centre
- Francis Grove Surgery
- The Chislehurst Partnership
- Riverhouse Medical Practice
- Binfield Road Surgery
- Greenwood Group
- Brockwell Park Surgery
- Lyndhurst Medical Centre
- Hampton Wick Surgery
- The Whitehouse Surgery
- Thurleigh Road Practice
- North Wood Group Practice
- Parkshot Medical Practice
- Broomwood Road Surgery
- Beckett House Practice

- Wells Park Practice
- Bourne Health
- Plas Meddyg
- Violet Lane Medical Practice
- Penrose Health Group
- Country Park Practice
- Wallington Family Practice
- Battersea Fields Practice
- Operose Health Group
- Nexus Health Group

Schools:

- Lady Eleanor Holles School
- Holy Trinity Primary School
- London South Bank University
- Edmund Waller Primary School
- Winterbourne Junior Girls School
- St Andrews Primary School
- Hackbridge Primary School
- Alderwood Primary School
- Deansfield Primary School
- The Villa School & Nursery
- Wingfield Primary School
- Henry Fawcett Primary School
- St Matthews Academy

Other community sites:

- SNS Dental Practice
- Dakatra
- Haydons Road Dental Practice
- Horton Dental Practice
- Charlton Village Dental Practice
- Arcade Hair Salon
- Zebra Access CIO
- Wandsworth Local Authority
- Caribbean & African Health Network
- London Borough of Lambeth

- Bridges Self-Management Ltd
- Nightingale Hammerson
- South West London ICS

## Appendix 3 Talking to your line manager about the internship

The **NIHR South London Internship Programme** offers **10 months of funded, flexible learning** to help health and social care professionals develop research capabilities. Open to **pre-doctoral registered professionals** across **South London** the programme includes taught workshops, mentorship and a personalised research development plan.

### Why speak to your line manager?

It's good practice to have a conversation early with your line managers as they will be required to approve your application and support your release from clinical practice for the 300hrs required by the programme.

This helps:

- Position the internship as part of your **professional development**
- Highlight the **benefits to your team and service**

### How to frame the conversation

Here are some effective ways to present the opportunity:

Framing angle	Suggested points
<b>Professional development</b>	"This internship will enhance my research and improvement skills—key priorities for our team. I'd really value your support."
<b>Service benefit / knowledge transfer</b>	"The programme is designed for interns to bring back new skills. I'd like to apply what I learn to areas like patient involvement, data use, or service evaluation."

<b>Organisational alignment</b>	“This aligns with our focus on quality improvement and innovation. Supporting me reflects our commitment to building research capacity.”
<b>Minimal disruption / funding support</b>	“The internship offers up to £10,000 in funding to backfill my time. I’ll manage my workload to minimise disruption.”
<b>Pilot opportunity</b>	“This is a short-term chance to test how research development benefits our service. If successful, it could pave the way for others.”
<b>Recognition &amp; reputation</b>	“Being part of a prestigious regional programme raises our team’s profile and shows our dedication to staff development.”

## Practical next steps

- **Identify those who need to sign (line manager AND budget holder)**

Confirm who in your organisation needs to sign the internship application and their contact details. They will need to be emailed the links which appear at the end of the application form. They need to complete their approval forms and submit by the application deadline.

- **Share key dates:**

Application deadline: **Sunday 26<sup>th</sup> October 2025**

Internship period: **Jan- Oct 2026**

- **Provide resources**

Signpost your manager to the **application guidance document** and the **Q&A webinars**.