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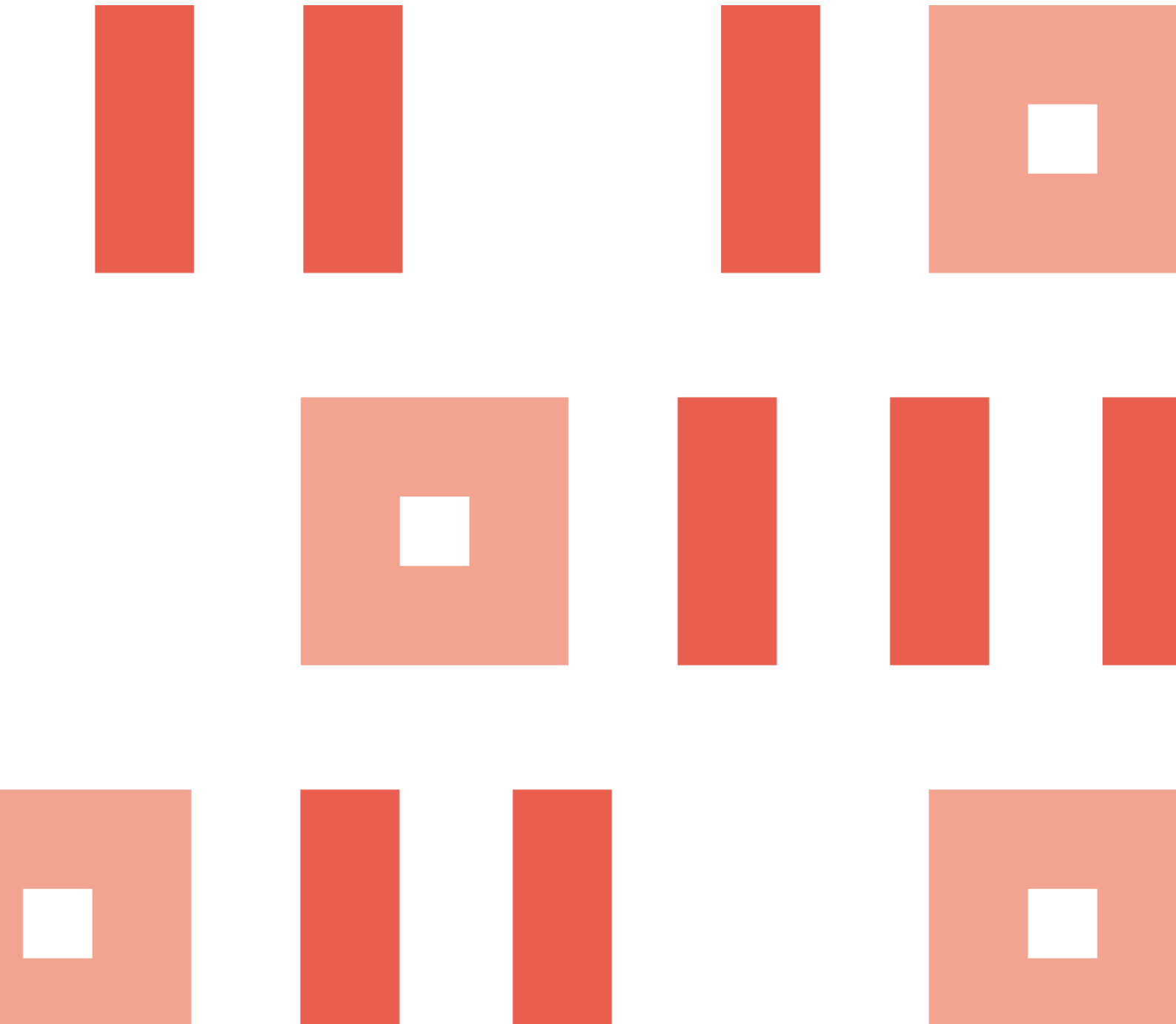
NIHR Three Research Schools' Dementia Research Programme

Post-Doctoral Research Fellowships

Guidance for Applicants

February 2026



NIHR Three Research Schools' Dementia Research Programme
Post-Doctoral Fellowships

Background and Context:

The NIHR Schools for Primary Care Research (SPCR), Public Health Research (SPHR), and Social Care Research (SSCR) – collectively known as the "Three Schools" – have forged a unique collaboration among leading academic centres in England. This collaboration is dedicated to three distinct Programmes funded by the National Institute for Health and Care Research (NIHR): one on mental health hosted by SPCR, the second on dementia hosted by SSCR, and the third on prevention hosted by SPHR. This research call specifically pertains to the **Dementia Research Programme.**

The Dementia Research Programme is dedicated to developing the evidence base for dementia-related practice in England. Our mission is to fund and support high-quality research that improves the wellbeing, independence, dignity, and quality of life of people living with dementia, their carers, families, and communities. The Dementia Research Programme also aims to build capacity in dementia research, supporting early- and mid-career researchers to become experts in their field and strengthening links between research, policy, and practice.

As part of this mission, the Dementia Research Programme is offering **Post-Doctoral Fellowships** to support early-career researchers committed to developing independent careers in dementia research. These Fellowships will enable applicants to establish collaborations across NIHR schools, undertake independent research, publish findings, develop new methodological skills, and prepare for future funding opportunities (e.g. NIHR Advanced Fellowships). Fellows will also benefit from training, mentoring, and integration within the Three Schools' vibrant research community and the NIHR Academy.

Fellowship Details:

Fellowships will be available for up to 24 months full-time, but requests for part-time at minimum 3 days a week (0.6 FTE) will be considered. Applicants must be hosted by a Three Schools' Member Institution for the duration of their award and have a dedicated supervisory team led by a senior academic with a background in dementia research. Fellowships should begin no later than December 2026 and must be completed by January 2029. The Host Institution will be awarded a fixed sum for the Fellowship which is not to exceed £160,000 to fund salary including 30% overheads, plus research, conference travel, training, and Working with People and Communities costs.

Complete applications must be received by 5pm Friday 1st May 2026.

Eligibility Criteria:

- Hold a PhD awarded no more than 3 years (FTE equivalent) prior or expect to have a PhD awarded by interview stage, in public health, primary care, social care or closely related subject with a focus relevant to dementia research.

- Demonstrate an emerging track record of research excellence and commitment to developing an independent career in dementia research that is closely connected with public health, primary care and/or social care practice.

- Be a UK citizen or have confirmed right to work in the UK for the duration of the award.

Applicants do not need to be employed by one of the Three Schools' member institutions at the time of application, however, the Fellow must be appointed at one of the Three Schools' member institutions (SPHR, SPCR, SSCR) by the start of the award. Candidates should also ensure they meet the eligibility criteria of the Host Institution (please see individual university websites for details)

We encourage applicants with a PhD who may also have worked or be working within public health, primary care, or social care practice but wish to pursue an academic or practice-academic career. Applicants will usually have been awarded their doctorate within the last 3 years. However, applications will be considered from researchers who have transitioned into applied health research from a different disciplinary background or who have re-established a research career following a significant career break.

Fellowships are not appropriate for medical trainees. The NIHR Academy have Fellowships that you may wish to consider, for example, the ICA or PCAF schemes. You can view these on the NIHR Academy website here. Potential applicants are encouraged to get in touch to discuss eligibility.

What We Fund:
Fellowship projects must align with the NIHR remit as well as the Dementia Research Programme remit, which includes research that:

- Sustainably improves health and wellbeing outcomes for people living with dementia and/or strengthens support of their carers, families, and communities
- Strengthens the evidence base for dementia care delivery, organisation, and workforce support.
- Addresses inequalities in access, quality, or outcomes in dementia care.
- Involves service users, carers, and communities as partners in research design and delivery.
- Has clear paths to impact on policy, practice, and the broader dementia care field.

Supervision:
The Three Schools bring together academics from over 20 leading academic centres with excellence in research across England. Applicants must identify a suitable supervisory team, led by a senior academic with a background in dementia research. Applicants should research and contact potential supervisors to discuss specific topics of interest. Member institutions can be found here: SPHR, SPCR, SSCR. Each School has a dedicated Academic Capacity Development Lead who may be able to support you with identifying appropriate supervision.

SPHR members institution details can be found here or queries sent to: sphr.training@ncl.ac.uk

SPCR members institution details can be found here or queries sent to: spcr@keele.ac.uk

SSCR members institution details can be found here or queries sent to: sscr-dementia@york.ac.uk

NIHR Academy:

All Post-Doctoral Fellows become members of the NIHR Academy. The purpose of the NIHR Academy is to develop a highly-skilled academic research workforce capable of advancing the best research which improves health, and benefits society and the economy.

NIHR is committed to a supportive, inclusive, caring, and positive community. Diversity and inclusion are fundamental to NIHR's values and success. As NIHR Academy Members, you will be able to access a portfolio of NIHR Academy development and support activities. The NIHR Academy also provides a range of leadership and mentoring programmes, regular networking opportunities, bespoke workshops and events and personal advice and guidance on funding opportunities. This includes an annual NIHR Academy conference.

Assessment Criteria:

Your application will be assessed using the following criteria as part of the shortlisting process:

Applicant

- A PhD awarded no more than 3 years (FTE equivalent) prior or submitted PhD thesis for examination (with confirmed date for viva) in public health, primary care, social care or related subject
- Demonstrable academic excellence (e.g., academic prizes or commendations, high quality peer reviewed publications, grant capture, etc.)
- Knowledge of dementia priorities across the Three Schools
- Evidence of commitment to a research career in dementia either in academia or combined with practice
- Evidence of potential as a career researcher or as a research practitioner
- Experience in relevant research methods, dissemination, and collaboration

Project

- Relevance of proposed project/work to the Dementia Research Programme
- Clear aims, appropriate design, and methodological rigour
- Feasibility and potential for meaningful impact within the timeframe

- Working with People and Communities - engagement with patients/service users, carers and/or the public in developing this proposal and active involvement throughout the proposed project
- Strength of Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI)
- Fit between proposed project and proposed supervisory team interests and expertise
- Likelihood of being able to secure a further personal award or research funding at end of this Fellowship

Please note: NIHR Three Research Schools bring together multidisciplinary teams to conduct high quality research to increase the evidence base for dementia research and practice. This requires a wide range of knowledge and skills. Applicants are not expected to meet all of the criteria outlined above but should demonstrate an excellent academic trajectory and a commitment to a career in academic dementia research.

How to make an application:

Potential applicants are strongly encouraged to contact the Three Schools member they would like to host the award to discuss their application. Contact details for each School academic capacity development leads are given above in the 'Supervision' section.

The application process consists of three stages:

1. **Application Submission**
   Submit a completed **application form, CV** (maximum 2 pages A4, Arial size 11 minimum), **costing template**, and **cover letter** (maximum 1 page A4, Arial size 11 minimum) by **5pm Friday 1st May 2026** to **sscr-dementia@york.ac.uk** with subject line 'Dementia Post-Doctoral Fellowship 2026 – Surname'.

2. **Shortlisting**
   Applications will be reviewed against the above 'Assessment Criteria' and shortlisted candidates will be invited to interview. Unsuccessful candidates will be informed by email.

3. **Interview**
   Interviews will take place across 10th and 11th June 2026. Applicants will be assessed on their project proposal, potential, and fit with Dementia Research Programme priorities.

4. **Outcome**

   Applicants will be notified of the outcome by the end of July 2026. Award contracting with host institutions will follow shortly after. Fellowships are expected to start in September 2026.

Timetable	
2nd February 2026	Call launch.
February - April 2026	Applicants work with Three Schools' supervisory team to develop and complete the application form.
5pm Friday 1st May 2026	Deadline for completed applications.
May 2026	Proposals reviewed by assessment panel. Shortlisted candidates are invited to interview.
10th, 11th June 2026	In-person interviews take place.
July 2026	Applicants are notified of outcomes. Unsuccessful applicants receive feedback and successful award letters are issued.
August 2026	Contracting with the host organisation.
September 2026 - August 2028	Fellowship awards run.

Contact:

For questions about the Fellowship call, please contact:

Dementia Research Programme Team
Email: **sscr-dementia@york.ac.uk**
Website: https://sscr.nihr.ac.uk/dementia-programme/