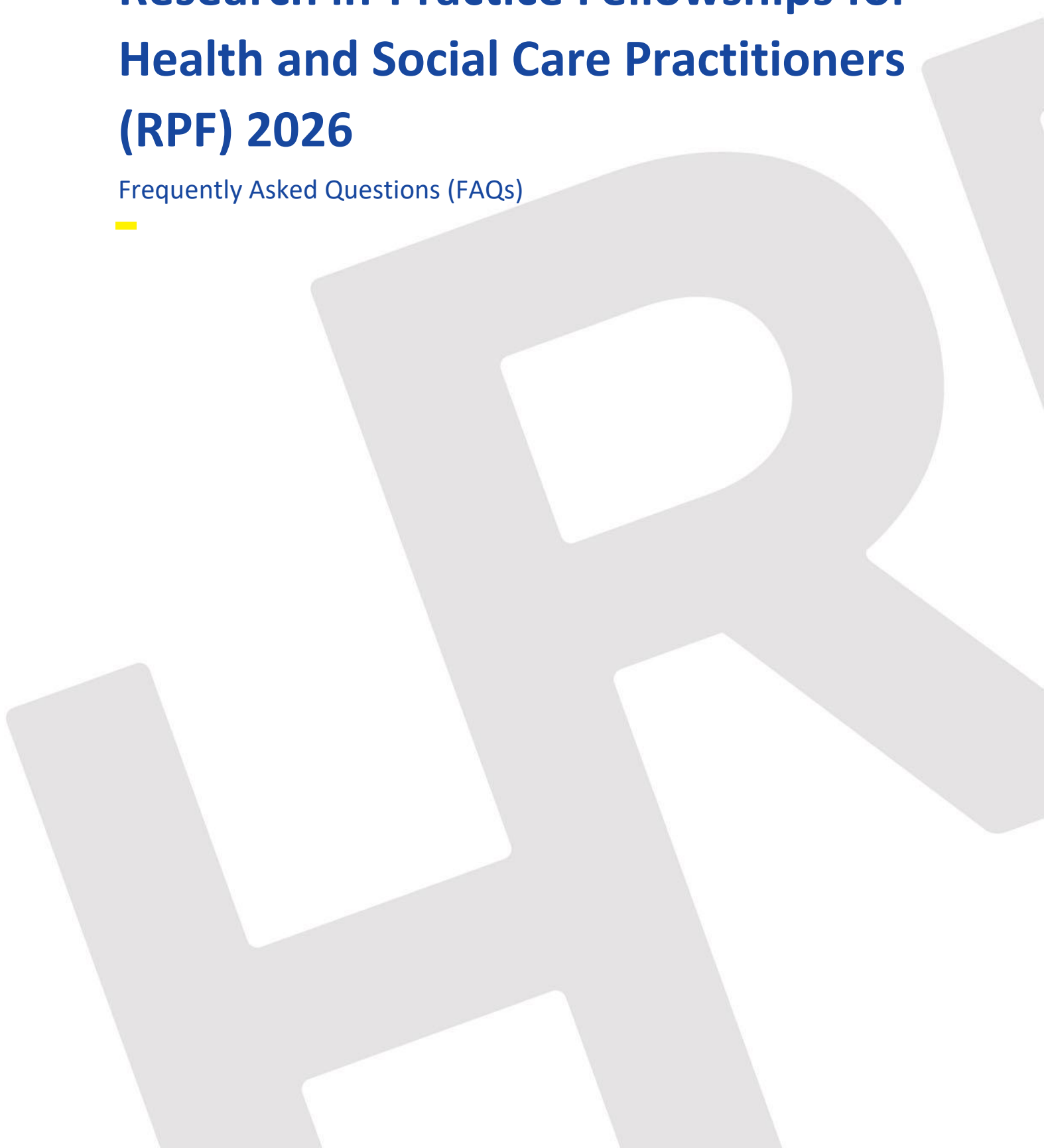


Research in-Practice Fellowships for Health and Social Care Practitioners (RPF) 2026

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)



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1 General

1.1 How do I apply for the RPF fellowship?

All applications must be made using the HRB online Grant E-Management System GEMS <https://grants.hrb.ie>. Applicants are strongly advised to carefully read the guidance and details of the research areas covered. In order to start an application, the lead applicant (LA) must satisfy the conditions of a checklist that they will be asked to complete (please refer to appendix I, page 21-22).

Applications will be divided into two streams at the application stage based on the lead applicant's profession. To facilitate this, the applicants are requested to choose the application which corresponds to their profession:

- Research in-Practice Fellowships for Health and Social Care Practitioners (RPF) 2026 – **medical practitioners**
- Research in-Practice Fellowships for Health and Social Care Practitioners (RPF) 2026 – **health and social care practitioners (non-medic)**

Please select the application which is relevant to your profession.

1.2 Is RFP 2026 the same as Clinician Scientist Fellowship (CSF)?

RPF 2026 fellowship replaces the Clinician Scientist Fellowship (CSF) scheme and is a part of the HRB research career path for health and social care practitioners. The RPF 2026 largely resembles the CSF scheme, however please note the key differences:

1. The HRB is committed to broaden the spectrum of health and social care professions supported at this level. Therefore, incentives for applicants from underrepresented professions (other than medicine) are introduced.

a) Change of scheme name

The name of the scheme has been changed to enhance its visibility across professional backgrounds and target a wider range of health and social care professions in Ireland.

b) Introduction of two funding streams

The HRB wishes to encourage more applications from underrepresented professions and improve their success rate. Applications will therefore be divided into two streams based on the lead applicant's profession:

- Medical practitioners, and
- Health and social care practitioners (non-medics).

At both shortlisting and panel recommendation stages, applications will be assessed using the same criteria and ranked within their respective stream. A single interview panel will assess applications from both streams.

We envisage awarding the same number of grants to each stream. Subject to quality of applications, we plan to fund approximately 10 fellowships in total

2. Research-related costs cap is increased to up **€80,000** (previously €50,000).
3. The gap between the end of PhD and the start of post-PhD period is shortened.
4. Applicants must hold a PhD or have PhD equivalent research experience or be in the final stage of their PhD to be eligible to apply. If the applicant is in their final stages of their PhD, they must successfully defend their thesis prior to 31 May 2026. Written evidence of passing the PhD viva will be required at the time of shortlisting.
5. The application stage is extended from typically 10-12 weeks to approximately 18-19 weeks to provide more time to prospective applicants to prepare an application.
6. Assessment criteria weight has changed to the following:
 - a) The lead applicant - 35%
 - b) The research project - 35%
 - c) The support - 30%

2 Lead applicant (LA) eligibility

2.1 Can a lead applicant submit more than one application for this call?

No, only one application per LA will be considered in this round.

2.2 Can I apply if I was previously awarded a Clinician Scientist Fellowship?

No. If you have previously been awarded a CSF you are not eligible to apply to RPF 2026.

2.3 Does a lead applicant need to have a minimum number of publications to be eligible?

There is no minimum number of publications required for eligibility. However, LAs must be able to demonstrate some contribution to scientific knowledge appropriate to the career stage and active research experience.

2.4 Does the lead applicant need to have a PhD?

Yes. However, if the LA does not have a PhD, they must be able to demonstrate PhD equivalent research experience as detailed on the [HRB website](#) . Please note that equivalency must be granted before a submission of an application and specifically by 31 January 2026, please contact the HRB to discuss equivalency. You can find the HRB PhD equivalent research experience request form [here](#).

2.5 Is there a minimum limit of active postdoctoral research after the PhD?

No, there is not.

2.6 Is there a maximum limit of years postdoctoral research experience post PhD?

No, there is not. However please note the HRB run the Emerging Clinician Scientist Awards (ECSA) scheme targeting health and social care practitioners who are ready to transition towards research independence. Updates regarding the next call for ECSA will be posted on the HRB website

2.7 I am currently working abroad, can I apply?

Yes, provided you have the support of a HRB approved host institution in the Republic of Ireland and have already obtained or are negotiating a post in a clinical or a social care services organisation in the Republic of Ireland. Please note that this call is not open for host institutions from Northern Ireland.

2.8 What type of clinical post do lead applicants hold to be eligible?

LAs must be health and social care practitioners and have or will have at the time of the award:

- A clinical post (permanent or a fixed-term contract that covers the duration of the grant) in the Irish health service or social care organisation (e.g., specialist registrar, nurse practitioner, public health practitioner, physiotherapist).

or

- A clinical post in a private practice (e.g. general practitioners, private physiotherapy practice, private dentist practice, private pharmacy) providing inclusive care to the public (e.g. participation in the General Medical Services Scheme).

or

- A post in a health and social care organisation (e.g. Tusla, Section 38 or Section 39 agencies)

or

- A joint health or social care and academic position (e.g. teaching/education) without a significant research element, maximum 0.2 FTE, within a higher education institution and the Irish health services or other social care organisations.

2.9 I am a medical doctor currently completing my SpR after which I will be eligible for a consultant post. Can I still apply even if my contract may not cover the duration of the award?

Medical doctors applying while conducting their clinical specialty (SpR level) are eligible to apply even if the clinical contract will not cover the full duration of the award. Medical doctors who currently do not have a hospital consultant post and are trying to obtain one at the time of this application must have the endorsement of the Head of Medical School from the HI they will be applying from, and this must be provided to the HRB. **Only 'Public-only' contracts** will be allowed for individuals obtaining new consultant posts.

2.10 Can the lead applicant apply for 1.0 FTE research time?

No, it is expected that the HRB will fund up to 0.5 FTE of protected research time, whereas the relevant hospital group (and the higher education institution, if applicable, e.g. joint lectureship) will support the remaining clinical time up to 1.0 FTE (and teaching, if applicable). The HRB will buy out a minimum of 0.3 and a maximum of 0.5 FTE of clinical or academic non-research time of the lead applicant, however it is expected that the lead applicant will dedicate 0.5 FTE protected research time to this grant.

Please note that the HRB expects lead applicants (prospective fellows) to maintain 0.5 FTE in clinical or social care practice throughout the fellowship. However, a reduced commitment of no less than 0.2 FTE may be considered, provided it is strongly justified, including for personal reasons due to part time working arrangements. A letter of support from the current or future employer in the Republic of Ireland must be provided as part of the application.

2.11 How do I document the career break(s)?

As part of the HRB narrative-like CV used for this scheme, the LA and mentor have the opportunity to describe any breaks from research that might have affected or influenced their progression as a researcher. This may include statutory leave, secondments, flexible work arrangements or other relevant changes (e.g., sector or discipline).

2.12 I currently have type B or C consultant contract; can I apply to this fellowship?

Medical doctors with a hospital consultant post should not provide private practice during the grant. The HRB expects applicants who are currently on type B or C consultant contracts to negotiate with their employer to provide a work-plan which excludes any private practice during the grant. This should be confirmed in the letter of support from the employer in-practice at the time of the application.

Note: Applicants who are applying or negotiating a new consultant contract must have a 'Public only' contract to be eligible to apply.

2.13 If the lead applicant is currently supervising other researchers, are they eligible to apply?

LAs are ineligible to apply if they acted or are acting as primary supervisor or sponsor to an early career researcher such as PhD researcher, post-doctoral researcher, clinical fellow or masters by research student.

Supervision of researchers outside of the criteria outlined above will not render a LA ineligible. Where an applicant has secured a relatively small award in their own name which has supported, for example, supervision of research assistants for a limited period of time would not render them ineligible, as this does not constitute them having built their own research team as PI.

2.14 I have received a peer-reviewed research grant, am I eligible to apply?

A LA is ineligible if they secured any a peer reviewed research grant as a lead applicant which supports research personnel and the building of a research team. Fellowships, scholarships and/or peer reviewed research grants secured by the LA as PI, which do not support research staff, will not render the LA ineligible.

2.15 If I am eligible at the time of application submission but my situation changes before the final outcome, will my application be withdrawn?

No. Eligibility applies to the application stage submission date only. If you are eligible at the submission date then your application is eligible for the whole process. Should your situation change after the 1 October 2025 but before the end of the RPF 2062 review process you should let the HRB know, however, your application will not be withdrawn.

3 Mentor and collaborators

3.1 What is the role of the mentor?

The mentor is expected to provide support and guidance during the grant for the research project, career milestones and research vision. The mentor will also be supporting the fellow in the acquisition of skills necessary for applied research aimed to finding practical solutions to specific problems or evidence gaps. The mentor will need to approve their participation and complete the mentor section in the online application before it is submitted. The lead applicant is typically based in the same institution as the mentor.

3.2 Who should I choose as the mentor for this fellowship?

The mentor should be an established and independent investigator who can demonstrate expertise in applied research, capacity building and career coaching. The mentor must have strong evidence of:

- Expertise and a skillset in knowledge application and/or translation and/or implementation
- Experience in networking, collaborating and ideally influencing clinicians, executives, health care personnel, policy makers and/or other relevant stakeholders
- Leadership experience
- Experience in conducting research projects and programmes
- Track record in scholarly publication and communication (peer-review articles, research data publications, national or international briefing/reports, etc.)
- Coaching and mentoring.

3.3 Can the mentor be my current supervisor?

Yes, the mentor can be your current supervisor.

3.4 Is the mentor required to approve my application before I can submit it?

Yes, the mentor must first accept your invitation to participate in your application as a mentor and then the mentor must also approve the application before it is submitted to the authorised signatory of the nominated host institution for the final approval.

3.5 Can the mentor receive payment for their role in the project?

No, the salary of the mentor cannot be bought out through this fellowship.

3.6 Can the same mentor support more than one candidate in the RPF 2026 call?

Yes, the same mentor can be named in other applications.

3.7 Can I invite collaborators from outside of Ireland?

Yes, collaborators may include investigators or organisations from outside the Republic of Ireland, but an individual or organisation should only be named as collaborator if they are providing specific contributions (either direct or indirect) to the activities.

3.8 Will the HRB pay for visits from or to collaborators?

Yes, visits to or from collaborators where justified may be included in the application budget under running costs.

3.9 Is a collaborator agreement form needed?

A collaborator agreement form must be signed by each collaborator and uploaded with your application.

3.10 Can a collaborator be from private enterprise?

Yes, a collaborator may be from private enterprise. Collaborators from a private enterprise are encouraged where they add value to the project for example in terms of access to expertise, technologies, and reagents. The HRB does not have the capacity to broker these arrangements. The terms of the collaboration should be determined early, and relevant agreements must be in place by the onset of the project. Consideration should be given to issues such as relative responsibilities, governance arrangements, intellectual property rights, reporting and access to data and samples.

3.11 Can a collaborator receive payment for their role in the project?

Collaborators are eligible to receive funding from the award for running costs only, when properly detailed and justified in the application. The HRB does not pay the salary of collaborators.

4 Scope

4.1 I'm not sure if my application fits within the scope of the call.

The scheme will support fellows to advance applied health and social care research projects where specific problems or evidence gaps are documented and where the project is focused on practical solutions, with a clear pathway to impact. In line with the strategic remit of the HRB, research projects are welcome spanning the areas of clinical research, population health research and/or health services research.

Further guidance and details of the research areas covered can be found in page 5-6. If you are still unsure, please contact the HRB for further guidance at fellowships@hrb.ie.

5 Funding and duration

5.1 What is the duration of the award?

The fellowship awards provide funding for 48-60 months.

5.2 How much can I apply for?

The fellowship will support the pro rata salary related costs of the RPF 2026 fellow up to 0.5 FTE and research-related costs up to a maximum value of €80,000, over the lifetime of the fellowship which include:

- Running costs
- Training costs
- Research data management and sharing costs
- Small equipment costs up to €2,000
- Dissemination costs
- Open access costs
- PPI costs
- Travel grant/research experience abroad

5.3 How much salary can I apply for?

You can apply for a minimum of 0.3 and a maximum of 0.5 FTE of clinical or academic non-research salary-related costs.

The HRB will cover a maximum of 0.5 FTE of the salary-related costs of the:

- a) Lead applicant or the locum replacement for the lead applicant, if buying out clinical or social care time and/or academic non-research time. This salary should be at the point on the relevant scale for replacing the lead applicant directly. This salary should be negotiated with the health service employer (for service delivery) and/or the academic employer (for academic time) and justification for this salary amount must be provided.
- or
- b) Lead applicant if the lead applicant is based in private clinical or social care practice or at agency providing inclusive care to the public. This salary should be negotiated with the Host Institution and should be in line with the equivalent host institution academic scale for independent health/social care investigators and justification for this level of salary must be provided.

5.4 Does the HRB pay pension contributions?

Yes, pension provision up to a maximum of 20% of gross salary will be paid to the HI to enable compliance with the Employment Control Framework (an additional 5% employee contribution is part of the salary).

If secondment arrangements will be in place a pension of 25% should be applied. Please seek advice from the host institution and the clinical employer regarding the secondment arrangements and

pension costs. For more information, please refer to Section 10 Project budget of the RPF 2026 guidance notes.

5.5 Are there limits within the different budget heading in the research-related costs?

Only for equipment which is limited to a maximum of €2,000. There are no other limits and the maximum value of the contribution to the research related costs is €80,000. Proper justification for each item under each budget heading must be provided.

5.6 Are overheads included in the fellowship awards?

No, the HRB does not pay overheads for fellowship schemes.

5.7 Can I hire a consultant (e.g., statistical support) to support the project?

Yes, this cost should be included under running costs.

5.8 Can I include the cost related to the data to be generated and/or to access secondary data?

Yes, this cost should be included under research data management and sharing costs.

6 Training and professional development plan

6.1 If the lead applicant applies for the travel grant/research experience abroad, do they have to stay for several months abroad or can they organise shorter trips?

You can avail of the travel grant either by planning a longer stay abroad (usually maximum of one year) or by planning shorter visits and trips where appropriate and justified. Multiple trips in different locations can be requested depending on the nature of collaborative work, the best value for your professional development and training, and your personal circumstances. Please note that in order to avail of this opportunity, you must include this at application stage.

6.2 What does the funding cover?

This usually covers your travel, relocation, and accommodation costs to stay overseas. It does not cover any clinical related items, such fees, clinical indemnity etc. while you stay abroad.

7 Supporting documents

Does the lead applicant have to submit additional documentations in the application form? There are some mandatory and non-mandatory documents which you must provide as part of your application.

Mandatory documents for all applicants:

- Letter of support for lead applicant from the current clinical employer
- Research and professional development Gantt chart
- Objectives and deliverables Gantt chart

If applicable:

- Letter of endorsement for medical doctors applying for new permanent contracts, for medics only
- Collaboration agreement form(s) – required for all collaborators
- Infrastructure agreement form(s) – required for biobanking and access to clinical research facilities
- Project description Support file – a maximum of 5 figures which can be a combination of images, graphs, tables, scales, instruments, or surveys (maximum file size 2MB)
- Letter of support from sponsor abroad
- Co-funding commitment letter

Further information on the requirements for each of the supporting document can be found in the guidance notes for the RPF 2026 scheme.

8 Submission

8.1 What is the GEMS submission process?

Prior to final submission to the HRB, all applications must first be reviewed and approved within GEMS by the signatory approver at the research office (or equivalent) at the HI. It is critical therefore that LA leave sufficient time in the process for the Research Office (or equivalent) in their nominated HI to review, seek clarifications and approve applications prior to the final submission date and time. This may involve being aware of and complying with any internal HI deadlines for review and approval, distinct from the HRB deadline.

8.2 What is the closing date for submission of applications?

All Pre-applications must be submitted to the HRB using HRB GEMS by **13 February 2026 at 13:00.**

8.3 How will I know that my application has been successfully submitted?

Once the HI approves your application it will be sent automatically to the HRB to be considered for funding. A grant application number will be assigned to the application, and you will receive a confirmation email.

8.4 I have submitted my application but have just realised I have amendments to make; can I amend the application?

No, once you have submitted your application, you cannot edit or un-submit it.