



# Mental Health Award: Finding the right treatment, for the right people, at the right time for anxiety and depression

This call aims to support validation of biological, psychological, social or digital markers to enable stratification in anxiety and/or depression as early as possible. Stratification will allow targeted treatment and ensure that the right people get the right treatment at the right time.



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On this page



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## Scheme at a glance

**Career stage:** Leading a research programme, Postdoctoral research, Postgraduate training, Returning to research

**Where your host organisation is based:** Anywhere in the world (apart from mainland China and countries that are the target of international sanctions)

**Level of funding:** Up to £5 million

**Duration of funding:** Up to 5 years

## Next deadline

Preliminary application deadline: 7 June 2023

**View all key dates**



## About this call

As part of our new strategic focus, Wellcome aims to **drive a transformative change in the ability to intervene as early as possible in the course of anxiety and depression**, broadly defined, in ways prioritised by the people who experience them. This work involves advancing scientific understanding of how brain, body and environment interact in the course and resolution of these conditions; finding new and improved ways to predict, identify, and stratify groups of people so that we can provide more timely and personalised interventions; and finding new and improved ways of intervening.

We recognise that to make progress we need to bring together an equitable, ethical, diverse and global research community to focus on the value of stratification for mental health. Through this call, we aim to foster the field of stratification in mental health research by encouraging applications from multi-disciplinary teams from diverse settings, both geographical and in terms of level of resource. We are also looking to encourage equitable collaborations between low- and middle-income countries (LMICs) and high-income countries (HICs) so that findings may be applicable globally.

Current mental health diagnostic categories are imperfect, and rely on subjective measures, resulting in significant heterogeneity of people within each diagnostic category, which in turn impacts development and provision of effective interventions. Stratified medicine aims to identify sub-groups of individuals within a heterogeneous disease population based upon unique characteristics of each sub-group (strata) such as underlying mechanisms, risk factors, course of disease or treatment responses.

A number of different methods can be utilised to measure the unique characteristics of the sub-groups including, but not limited to:

- genetics
- biochemical



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- behavioural or psychological assessments

Use of stratification approaches have the potential to identify the sub-groups of individuals that will benefit most from a targeted pharmacological or non-pharmacological treatment. Furthermore, stratification of people with mental health conditions will enable early intervention with the potential to alter trajectories of these conditions and have maximum impact on people's lives.

In this call, we aim to advance stratification in anxiety and/or depression, through funding further validation of promising biological, psychological, social and digital markers, whether alone or in combination with observable or behavioural characteristics, with a goal to enable early identification of sub-groups and targeted treatment.

Throughout the duration of the funding, Wellcome will encourage collaboration between funded groups through engagement activities (for example webinars and workshops), to support external validation efforts, in order to foster the field of stratification in mental health research and support the building of a community of stakeholders from various settings.

## Eligibility and suitability

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Who can apply, who can't apply, what's expected of your host organisation



What are we looking for?

We are seeking applications that focus on the validation of markers that can be used for stratification in anxiety and/or depression.

Markers may be biological, psychological, social or digital and may be used in combination with observable or behavioural characteristics to enable stratification according to risk/susceptibility, diagnosis, prognosis, prediction, underlying mechanisms or monitoring of anxiety and/or depression.



- We take anxiety and depression as broadly defined categories to include all types of anxiety and depressive disorder (including obsessive compulsive disorder, post-traumatic stress disorder and bipolar disorder).
- We recognise that the current diagnostic categories are imperfect but removing all categories or creating new ones also presents difficulties. We, therefore, use the terms anxiety and depression to refer to overlapping constellations of thoughts, feelings and behaviours that have historically been classified as discrete conditions.
- In this call, we are focusing on markers relevant to anxiety and/or depression only.

Applications should focus on marker(s) with a clear underlying hypothesis and there should be robust pilot data to support the marker selection. We will accept applications at any stage along the **development pipeline**, but the proposal must enable progression to the next stage of development.

Applications must also consider ethical implications in both design and uptake, reflect on risks and potential mitigation strategies/considerations, and involve people with lived experience in their proposed research project.

We want to support validation of markers in diverse settings, including external validation of markers in low resource settings, if not developed there initially, and encourage multi-disciplinary collaboration between researchers, including between low- and middle-income countries and high-income countries (where applicable).

External guidance is provided through the **MRC Stratification Framework** and **UKCDR guidance on equitable partnerships**.

Recommended common measures for anxiety and depression	+
Lived experience	+
Pathway to impact	+



## What are we not looking for?

The following are **out of scope** for this Mental Health Award:

- studies exploring neurodevelopmental conditions, neurodegenerative diseases, or mental health problems outside of anxiety and/or depression (for example psychosis, eating disorders and substance abuse)
- replication of existing studies unless limitations are clearly identified in the proposal or marker is being validated in a different context or setting
- research to support chronic management unless relevant to advance early intervention
- 'blue skies' or purely curiosity-driven research
- epidemiological studies
- applications with research involving healthy volunteers as the sole focus of the proposal
- phase III trials of pharmacological interventions, although please contact us to discuss repurposing opportunities
- implementation science research as the sole focus of the proposal
- health systems research around the distribution and uptake of interventions
- direct service provision or support for access to current services.
- healthcare reorganisation
- applications that do not include the involvement of lived experience experts in the proposed project
- applications that do not comply with Wellcome's **research environment principles** of open science and relevant **diverse inputs**
- applications that fail to articulate or evidence review of ethical considerations relating to the research and potential uptake, as well as review of the risks and mitigation strategies/considerations to address them

Writing your preliminary application



Assessment criteria





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- from a relevant discipline from eligible organisations (see below)
  - based anywhere in the world, apart from mainland China and sanctioned territories

We encourage applications from multi-disciplinary teams, including those outside the life sciences. We consider a broad range of disciplines to be relevant to mental health science, including but not limited to those listed in our **mental health funding remit**. We want to encourage applications from a range of career stages.

Each application should include the necessary expertise to answer the proposed research question(s) and the contribution of each co-applicant (and collaborator) to the project should be justified. When research occurs in more than one location, applications must include co-applicants based in each country where the research will take place.

All applications must include the involvement of people with lived experience expertise in the planning, design and delivery of the research.

Team size should be appropriate for the proposed research.

## Lead applicant

### You must:

- Have the experience, or the necessary support structures in place, needed to drive and lead a research programme to address your proposed research questions in anxiety and/or depression.
- Have experience of people and research management and training, as appropriate for your career stage.
- Have experience of or demonstrate commitment to effectively leading a team that embeds lived experience as relevant to the project and approach.
- Be able to contribute at least 20% of your research time to this project.



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- Be based at an eligible host organisation that can sign up to our **grant conditions**.
  - Only request salary recovery if this is a condition of your employment contract.

You can only be listed as 'Lead applicant' on one application for this call. You can, however, be included as co-applicant on one other application or hold other Wellcome awards but must demonstrate that you have sufficient capacity for both projects if funded. See 'Who can't apply' below for more detail.

## About your co-applicants:

### Each co-applicant:

- Must be essential for the delivery of the proposed research and make a significant contribution, for example designing the research, writing the application, leading and/or delivering a specific work-package or research aim or managing the programme.
- Must demonstrate the team's commitment to effectively embed lived experience as relevant to the project and approach.
- Must be able to contribute at least 20% of their research time to this project.
- Does not need to have a permanent, open-ended or long-term rolling contract at their host institution. However, must have a guarantee of space from their host institution for the duration of their commitment to the award.
- Must be based at an eligible organisation that can sign up to our **grant conditions**.
- Can be based in the same or in different organisations, can be at any career stage, and come from any discipline, but the added value of the team approach must be clear.

You may want to consider involving people with lived experience of anxiety and depression (as appropriate) to be included in the project team, as co-applicants



expertise, access to tools or resources) but are not leading on a specific work package or research aim of the project.

## Time spent away from research

You can apply if you've spent time away from research (for example a career break, parental leave or long-term sick leave). We'll take this into consideration when we review your application.

If you have retired, please contact us before applying.

Lead and co-applicants can be part-time. There is no formal minimum, but part-time working needs to be compatible with delivering the proposal successfully.

## What's expected of your host organisation

### The organisation can be a:

- Higher education institution
- Research institute
- Non-academic healthcare organisation
- Not-for-profit or non-governmental research organisation based anywhere in the world (apart from mainland China and sanctioned territories). These organisations must be able to sign up to Wellcome's grant conditions.
- Company: any commercial organisation based anywhere in the world can apply (apart from mainland China and sanctioned territories), as long as they can sign up to our grant conditions. You are not eligible for this call if your company is not established and/or doesn't have working capital. Funding to a company may need to occur through a convertible loan, or revenue sharing agreement to ensure public benefit. Please contact us to discuss further.

If an application involves a collaboration or partnership across multiple organisations, the partners must enter into a suitable collaboration agreement





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- publication rights
  - access to background intellectual property
  - ownership of foreground intellectual property
  - arrangements for the protection, management and exploitation of foreground intellectual property

Note that the lead applicant's host organisation is required under our grant conditions to own all the foreground intellectual property arising from the project and to take the lead in any commercialisation activity. For guidance, applicants are advised to read the university and business collaboration agreements (model heads of terms agreements on GOV.UK).

We expect organisations based in the UK to meet the responsibilities required by the Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers for institutions, companies, managers and researchers.

Any organisation with Wellcome funding that is based outside the UK is expected, at a minimum, to follow the principles of the Concordat.

**We also expect your host organisation to:**

- Give you, and any staff employed on the grant, at least ten days a year (pro rata if part-time) to undertake training and continuing professional development (CPD) in line with the Concordat. This can include the responsible conduct of research, research leadership, people management, diversity and inclusion, and the promotion of a healthy research culture.
- Provide a system of onboarding, embedding and planning for you when you start the award.
- Provide you with the status and benefits of other staff of similar seniority.
- If your host organisation is a core-funded research organisation, this award should not replace or lead to a reduction in existing or planned core support.



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sanctions.

You can only be an applicant on a maximum of two applications to this funding call:

- you can be lead applicant on one application (but can be co-applicant on another)
- you can be a co-applicant on a maximum of two applications to this funding call
- you must be able to demonstrate that you can dedicate enough time and resources to both projects if funded

### **Other Wellcome awards**

- An early-career researcher can be a lead applicant on one Wellcome award and a coapplicant on one other Wellcome award, or a coapplicant on two Wellcome awards.
- A mid-career researcher can be a lead applicant on one Wellcome award and a coapplicant on two other Wellcome awards, or a coapplicant on three Wellcome awards.
- An established researcher can be:
  - a lead applicant on two Wellcome awards, one as the sole applicant and one as lead applicant for a team, or both as the lead applicant for a team. They can also be a coapplicant on two other Wellcome awards; or
  - a lead applicant on one Wellcome award, as the sole applicant or lead for a team, and a coapplicant on three other Wellcome awards; or
  - a coapplicant on four Wellcome awards.

The awards should be for different research projects, with no overlap in work packages. Information on other open calls from the Mental Health team can be found on **the team's webpage**.



## What we offer

This award includes

- **Duration of award:** projects of any duration up to 5 years
- **Level of funding:** projects of any budget up to £5 million

You should ask for a level and duration of funding that is justifiable for your proposed research. You must justify all costs within the costs section of your application.

If your proposal is likely to exceed the proposed level or duration of funding, please get in touch with us.

Staff	+
Continuing professional development and training	+
Materials and consumables	+
Animals	+
Equipment	+
Access charges	+
Overheads	+
Travel and subsistence	+
Overseas allowances	+
Fieldwork expenses	+
Inflation allowance	+



Search

Public engagement and patient involvement costs	+
Contract research organisations	+
Other costs	+

## How to apply

Stages of application	+
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## Key dates

You must submit your application by 17:00 (BST) on the deadline day. We don't accept late applications.

7 June 2023
Preliminary application deadline
July 2023
Shortlisting
September 2023
Full application deadline
November 2023
Interviews

## Contact us



information advisers a message.

Remit questions

If you have a question about your proposal, contact us at:  
mentalhealth@wellcome.org

Please include the title of the call in the subject line.

We do not answer questions on the scope or competitiveness of proposals.

Ways to stay informed

The best way to stay informed about the latest funding opportunities for mental health is our Mental Health page.

We also share information on Twitter and LinkedIn.

Useful documents


- Research involving human participants policy>
- Lived experience guidance PDF 189.1 KB>
- Common metrics in mental health research>

Science to solve the urgent health challenges  
facing everyone

Grant funding

Find a funding opportunity



Search 

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## What we do

Mental health

Infectious disease

Climate and health

Discovery research

All our work

## Who we are

Jobs

Our strategy

Teams

Our history

How we are funded

Contact us

## News and reports

All news

Media office

Reports

Newsletters

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