

Working With Dementia Network Plus

Research Grant Fund 2026/7

Expression of Interest Guidance

Introduction to the WWD Network Plus

In the United Kingdom, 850,000 adults are living with dementia and 7.5% are under the age of 65. The increasing age of retirement mean more people will be working later in their life. These factors mean that individuals will likely experience symptoms or receive a diagnosis of dementia whilst in employment, as well as impacting family members in employment providing informal care to those living with dementia that are either in employment themselves or out of the workforce. This poses a serious challenge, as public policy commitments to extend working lives with the aim of retaining an economically active, but ageing, population increases the likelihood of dementia impacting the employment opportunities and experiences of individuals.

Whilst research has demonstrated the potential for continued employment of those living with a diagnosis of dementia and their family/informal carers', and protections under the Equality Act 2010 are set out in UK policy, there remains significant gaps in experiences of individuals and action on obligations by employers.

The Working With Dementia Network Plus aims to develop impactful solutions to these challenges through research and evidence-informed recommendations and innovations that consider the complex interplay of individual, organisational, societal and economic factors involved in the meaningful employment experiences of those living with dementia and their family/informal carers'.

Background to the Fund

The Working With Dementia Network Plus Research Grant Fund is intended to promote innovative, transdisciplinary research that will deepen and broaden the evidence base on the topic of dementia and employment, with the ultimate purpose of enhancing the labour market experiences for those living with dementia and their family/informal carers.

Funding will be aimed also at supporting the development of early career researchers from a range of disciplinary backgrounds, providing opportunities to expand traditional research boundaries and enable a growing research community in the field of dementia and employment into the future.

About the funding scheme

Eligibility

- Lead applicants must be an early career post-doctoral (or equivalent doctoral experience) researcher. Definitions of early-career researcher vary, and we aim to take an inclusive approach with the aim of supporting researcher development. Lead applicants may identify a definition of 'early-career researcher' previously used by a UK funding body, and specify in the EOI the suitability of this description with their status.
- Lead applicants must be based at an eligible UK research institution as per the UKRI research funding requirements: [Research organisations eligible for UKRI funding – UKRI](#). This includes:
 - Higher Education Institutions
 - UKRI institutes
 - NHS bodies
 - Public sector research establishments
 - Independent research organisations
 - Catapult centres
 - Non-governmental organisations (NGOs) with research capacity
 - Recognised UK government departments and/or devolved government department administrations

Funding

Financial proposals (budgets) are not requested at the Expression of Interest stage. This will be requested of shortlisted applicants selected to submit a full proposal. We have detailed below key information on the funding through this call, to support applicants as they develop a feasible scope for their proposed research.

- Research projects will be funded based on 80% Full Economic Costing (FEC) of the research proposal, in line with UKRI guidelines.
- Research projects are invited to submit proposals with a maximum budget of £50,000 (FEC), meaning organisations will receive a maximum of £40,000 based on 80% FEC.
- Funding will be awarded for projects of maximum length of 12 months from project commencement.
- Funding will be provided quarterly in arrears to the lead applicant organisation, based on actual costs incurred.
- At full proposal stage, applicants can share any in-kind contributions that they have secured to undertake their research alongside funding requested from the Network.
- Applicants should ensure that the scope of their research proposal has considered feasibility based on the funding and time limits as described, and the 80% FEC contribution model.

Priority research areas

The Working With Dementia Network Plus Research Grant Fund has been developed with insights from a priority-setting research project conducted by academics at the University of the West of Scotland. This research study, using Nominal Group Technique, conducted a series of focus groups with stakeholders to identify their priorities for improving the work-related experiences of people living with dementia and family/informal carers. Focus groups were conducted with people living with dementia, family/informal carers, academics and researchers, policymakers and employers to gain broad insights and identify cross-cutting priorities.

The results of this priority-setting research have been used to inform the focus of this call for proposals, aligned to the Network's themes of Work and Wellbeing, Inclusive workplaces, and Economic costs & benefits.

Applicants should select one main research theme and sub-topic that they will focus on in the Expression of Interest.

Research Theme 1: Work and Wellbeing

This research theme is focussed on exploring how work impacts on the individual, with the aim of identifying mechanisms to support those living with dementia and their family/informal carers to maximise their participation in society as it relates to employment, in ways that promote their health and wellbeing.

The following priorities have been identified for further research under this theme:

- The impact of dementia on:
 - Personhood and identity in the workplace
 - This may include a focus on career transitions and pathways for those living with dementia or caring for someone with dementia
 - Agency and employment-related decision-making
 - Mental health and social interaction in the workplace
- Pre & post-diagnostic support for employment
 - This may include a focus on current or proposed guidance, knowledge, and links with employers or employment services

Research Theme 2: Inclusive workplaces

This research theme is focussed on exploring how relationships, systems, cultures and knowledge in the workplace shape experiences of those living with dementia and family/informal carers. This research theme aims to understand how employment practices can enable justice, equity, diversity and inclusion, enabling individuals to be empowered in their contributions.

The following priorities have been identified for further research under this theme:

- Individualised assessment, adjustments and flexibility

- Education, training, awareness-raising and de-stigmatisation
- Workplace policy, guidance, and practical support and signposting
- Workplace initiatives
- Person-centred and empathetic workplace cultures
 - This may include a focus on either/or management structures, peer-to-peer dynamics, organisational or sector-based networks

Research Theme 3: Economic costs and benefits

This research theme is focussed on exploring the economic implications of promoting work-based interventions and wider impacts of working with dementia on society. This research theme aims to provide new insights on financial aspects of dementia care, economic implications at organisation and macro-levels, and consider sustainable solutions.

The following priorities have been identified for further research under this theme:

- Individual and family finances, as it relates to:
 - Household income needs, challenges, changes
 - Pensions
 - Benefits
- Organisational economics, as it relates to:
 - Recruitment and retention
 - Cost-effectiveness for implementation of inclusive practices
 - Capacity building and retention of institutional knowledge
- Societal economics, as it relates to:
 - Demographic and macro-economic trends or data gaps on those of working-age with dementia and family/informal carers of those living with dementia
 - Policy and legal frameworks
 - Employability infrastructure, such as available funding for employers, existing schemes for workplace inclusion, and interconnection between employers, social and health services

Cross-cutting priorities

Applicants should also consider the following cross-cutting priorities in the development of their research plans and proposals:

- Focus of research on those who are living with dementia and/or family/informal carers of those living with dementia
- Evidence of a transdisciplinary approach to research, embedding interdisciplinary academic teams with meaningful engagement with stakeholders in the planning and delivery of the research, including those with lived experience, relevant community groups, employers or employment organisations and social and health services.

Principles of Justice, Equity, Diversity and Inclusion

The WWD Network Plus is underpinned by the principles of Justice, Equity, Diversity and Inclusion. All applicants should consider how their proposals align to these principles through a focus on the context-specific intersectional needs and barriers to working with dementia, including but not limited to the following areas:

- Highlighting experiences of different employment types, considering varying organisation types, sizes, sectors as well as those who are self-employed, contract workers, lone workers or remote workers
- Understanding the experiences of under-represented and minority groups. This may include a focus on gender, age, socio-economic status, race and ethnicity, comorbidities and disability, sexual orientation, rural and urban disparities, and experiences related to more rare forms of dementia. This may also be embedded in the research team or stakeholder composition.

Research topics already in development by the Working With Dementia Network

As part of the early-stage development of the Working With Dementia Network Plus, we have funded research in the following areas that will help to set the agenda and provide insights on key areas where gaps were identified. We would therefore encourage applicants to not submit research proposals that seek to do the following:

1. Conduct a systematic or rapid review of existing literature on:
 - a. Workplace supports and interventions for employees with dementia
 - b. Economic consequences of young-onset dementia
 - c. Challenges of receiving a diagnosis while in employment
 - d. Employment mechanisms that support brain health
2. Conduct an evidence review focussed on employment tribunals in the UK that related to dementia or cognitive impairments.

Please note: These topic areas have been developed through consultation on priority needs for synthesised evidence in the area of dementia and employment. Other systematic or rapid reviews are therefore discouraged for this call for proposals.

Key dates for funding call

	Date
Expression of Interest opens	26 th March 2026
Information webinar	21 st April 2026
Expression of Interest deadline	1st June 2026 (12pm)
Review, scoring and feedback	By 7 th August 2026
Shortlisted applicants' deadline to complete full proposal	5 th October 2026

Selection and awarding	By 27 th November 2026
Projects commence	1 st March 2027 (subject to completion of contracting and ethical approval)

Further details on the full proposal application, review and process will be provided to those shortlisted applicants.

Expression of Interest details

Purpose

The Expression of Interest is intended to support researchers to begin scoping their research and request support or partners from the current WWD Network, while offering an opportunity to receive feedback to:

- a) Help refine and strengthen the proposed studies shortlisted and invited to submit a full proposal
- b) Support future applications to other funding schemes and reflect on research design for those EOIs not taken forward to full proposal stage

Expression of Interest form

Expressions of Interest should be completed in the provided template. Details requested include:

- Name of Lead Applicant
- Lead Applicant organisation
- Declaration of early-career research stage of lead applicant
- Co-applicants (name / organisation / project role)
 - o Note: applicants should specify in project role whether the co-applicant is funded, or to be non-funded and if they will be operating in a mentor or supervisory role with funding for time contributed in-kind.
 - o Note: ECR lead applicants should identify an appropriate academic mentor for their research. If not yet identified, there is an option to request in the form matching with a Network team member for mentorship.
- Short description of research proposal (up to 500 words, including only those key references that underpin aligned studies or evidence cited)
 - o Purpose
 - o Fit with research priorities
 - o Research plans or methods
 - o Expected outcomes or impact
- Short description of expected resources required for conducting research and timeframe (up to 250 words)
- Short description of how the research will address the Network's principles of Justice, Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (up to 300 words)

- Description of whether the project will require ethical approval / at what level
 - o Note: all projects should have ethical approval in place by the project commencement date.
- Description of any future research funding identified or intended following this project
- Research Involvement
 - o Applicants can select if they require support in being matched with stakeholders that would be engaged to strengthen their research, for example through providing advice, guidance, participation.
 - o If selected and taken to full proposal stage, the Network will endeavour to support those applicants to be matched with relevant stakeholders for those who have requested this support.
 - o Please include, if known, what kind of stakeholders you would be seeking support in matching with.
- Declaration that the lead applicant has the necessary level of support from their host institution to submit the Expression of Interest, with the potential that they could be selected for full proposal and funding.

Review and selection process

Each Expression of Interest will be screened for eligibility by the Project Management Team – comprising of the Network Lead, Network Manager and Project Manager.

Expressions of Interest will be reviewed, scored and selected based on a fair, transparent approach. A review panel will include equal representation from governance structures of the Working With Dementia Network Plus, as below:

- Academic Network Team – comprising a diverse range of disciplinary expertise
- Lived Experience Panel – comprising those living with dementia and family/informal carers
- Stakeholder Advisory Group – comprising representatives of employers, professional bodies, government departments, employment services and third sector organisations
- Early Career Researcher Forum – comprising self-defined early career researchers with interest in the topics of dementia and employment

Reviewers will independently review and use a consistent 0-5 scale to score the Expression of Interest based on the following weighted criteria:

Criterion	Weighting
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Fit to call/strategic alignment	15%
Need & rationale	15%
Feasibility of methodology	40%
Benefit & impact (high level)	30%

The review panel will discuss outcomes of the independent review process to arrive at collective recommendation. A shortlist of those who submit Expressions of Interest will receive an invitation to submit a full proposal (narrative and financial). Further guidance and feedback will be provided to those selected to submit a full proposal at that stage.