



GREAT ORMOND STREET
HOSPITAL CHARITY

GOSH Charity National Paediatric Cancer Clinical Trial Grants

Scheme Guidance

About GOSH Charity

Great Ormond Street Hospital Charity (GOSH Charity) is the UK's largest dedicated funder of paediatric health research.

In our new [cancer research strategy](#), we are committing to fund at least £15 million in paediatric cancer research over the next five years. We believe that no childhood should be lost to cancer, and our mission in cancer research is to transform the outcomes and experiences of children and young people with the rarest and hardest to treat cancers.

This funding scheme aligns across our three cancer research priorities, but in particular with our commitment to develop new treatments and cures that are more effective and targeted.

Scheme Overview

This funding scheme aims to address unmet needs in paediatric cancer research, specifically the hardest to treat cancers with limited treatment options.

We know that survival for childhood cancers collectively has increased from four in ten in the 1970s, to over eight in ten now¹. However, this is not equal across all cancer types and for some, survival has lagged behind. Disparities in progress can be due to not enough research and a lack of sufficient funding and investment.

¹ Cancer Research UK.

While industry-sponsored clinical trials make up most of the clinical trial activity in adult cancer, this is not the case in paediatric cancer². The rarity of paediatric cancers can make trial recruitment challenging and offers less economic incentive for industry. In addition, specialised care and dosing requirements for children across an age spectrum can lead to more complex clinical trial design.

The current model of moving novel therapeutics to children only once they have been assessed in adults has led to significant approval delays. This limits availability and access for children. In addition, cancer is different in children and young people compared to adults, and so therapies designed for adults may not be appropriate or best suited for children. Examples include the unique biology, genetic and molecular differences, how drugs are absorbed and broken down and the effects of drugs on the body.

This has led to significant funding and opportunity gaps for clinical trials specifically for children and young people with cancer, which GOSH Charity is ideally placed to fill. By providing high value funding, we will support cutting-edge clinical trials and associated translational research to speed up the testing and approval of new therapies. This is a new funding scheme to be delivered for the first time in 2025/2026, under our new cancer research strategy.

Remit: what we will fund

We are inviting applications for ambitious and innovative early phase clinical trials and associated research proposals that have the potential for significant impact on the lives of children and young people with the hardest to treat cancers.

What do we mean by “hard to treat” cancers?

To be eligible for this funding call, proposals must relate to the hardest to treat paediatric cancers or those with the greatest unmet need.

- **Hard to treat cancers**

Eligibility criteria for hard to treat cancers are:

- Cancers with low or poor survival rates (for example a survival rate below 50%)
- Cancers that have returned or not responded to initial treatment (relapsed and refractory stages)

² Joseph M. Unger et al. Patient Enrolment to Industry-Sponsored Versus Federally-Sponsored Cancer Clinical Trials. *JCO* 42, 3917-3925(2024).

- **Cancers of greatest unmet need**

We will also use [Life Arc's report](#) on indications that have the greatest unmet need. The following cancer types are classed as having the greatest unmet need and are eligible for study through this call:

- Paediatric-type high-grade glioma
- ATRT, ETMR and other embryonal brain tumours
- Osteosarcoma
- High-risk neuroblastoma
- Rhabdomyosarcoma
- Ewing sarcoma
- Desmoplasia small round cell tumour
- AML
- High-risk ALL
- Ewing-like sarcoma
- Medulloblastoma
- Ependymoma
- Other sarcomas

What type of research are we looking for to fund?

Early phase clinical trials

We will fund early phase clinical trials testing new biologically targeted therapies. These would be trials up to phase II a/b designed to test the safety, tolerability, pharmacokinetics and preliminary efficacy of a new treatment. These trials aim to identify the appropriate dosage, delivery mode and administration schedule, assess potential side effects and gather initial data on the treatment's effectiveness.

We are open to funding standalone paediatric clinical trials, a paediatric arm for an existing adult trial where the cancer type spans the age spectrum, or a new UK paediatric arm of an existing international platform trial. We are looking to fund treatments that are novel, advanced and targeted.

We will prioritise first-in-child or first-in-class treatments, and areas such as immunotherapy, precision medicine, cell and gene therapy, vaccines, novel delivery approaches and CAR-T therapy over standard conventional treatments.

Translational research packages

Translational research work packages linked to an existing clinical trial are also eligible for this call. The work package must directly support a clinical trial by supporting its potential to move through the research pathway. We have provided two examples of the types of project this might include:

- **Biomarker development:** identify and validate biomarkers that predict patient response to treatment, disease progression or relapse. This can help tailor therapies to individual patients and improve trial outcomes.
- **Adaptive trial designs:** insights from translational research can inform adaptive trial designs, which allow for modifications to the trial procedures based on interim results. This can accelerate the trial process by making it more flexible and responsive to emerging data.

Note that the above is not an exhaustive list. If you are in doubt over the eligibility of your planned translational research package, please contact the grants team for guidance at grants@gosh.org.

Eligibility Criteria: what are we looking for?

By setting clear eligibility criteria, we aim to identify and support research teams that have the necessary expertise, experience and commitment to drive meaningful advances in paediatric cancer research.

Requirements for the lead applicant

- Must hold a relevant salaried academic or clinical position for the duration of the proposed grant.
- Must be affiliated with a recognised UK university, research institute or NHS trust.

Requirements for the research team

- Must demonstrate a strong track record in their field.
- Must include relevant expertise to deliver the proposal including statistics, data sharing and intellectual property (IP) and tech transfer.

Requirements for cooperation and collaboration

- Discuss the proposal early with the MHRA and Translational Research Office.

- Discuss the proposal in advance with a UKCRC registered clinical trial unit or relevant sponsor.
- Discuss with relevant research groups such as UK Collaborative for Cancer Clinical Research (UKCCCR) and Experimental Cancer Medicine Centre (ECMC) Paediatric Network for support and endorsement and to ensure it fits in within the landscape to avoid competing studies.
- Consider freedom to operate (FTO) and intellectual property (IP) and what the route to clinic / market would be.

Other considerations

- We encourage junior co-investigators to be included as part of the proposal.
- The proposal must demonstrate strong and meaningful involvement with children and / or families affected by paediatric cancer in the development of proposal and in future plans.
- We welcome partnerships between other locations (across the UK and internationally).

Funding available

Up to £6 million is available for this funding scheme in 2025/2026. From this we expect to award 2-3 grants.

There is no maximum grant value. However, there is a balance of ensuring that costs and budgets demonstrate good value for money as well as ensuring the proposed work is feasible and achievable within the proposed costs and budget.

As a guide, we expect to receive applications for translational work packages of up to £500,000 and clinical trials of up to £2.5 million. If your proposed research is likely to cost more than this, please contact the grants team (grants@gosh.org) to discuss your application finances before applying.

Eligible costs

This funding scheme will cover the direct research costs associated with the research proposal. Examples of eligible costs include:

- Salaries for research staff and trial management staff (including post-doctoral research associates, research assistants, research nurses, technicians, statisticians, technologists, methodologists etc.)
- Consumables.

- Equipment costs for items essential to the project. Note that equipment items costing more than £10k should be discussed with the grants team prior to submission and match funding may be required. Where there is an option to borrow or share an existing equipment item this should always be pursued before proposing to buy a new item.
- Manufacturing costs for novel therapies.
- Sample collection, processing and storing.
- MHRA regulatory costs.
- Patient and public involvement activities, accommodation and travel costs during treatment.

The salary of the Principal Investigator is not eligible for funding through this scheme. Please contact the grants team (grants@gosh.org) if you would like to discuss costs for protected research time. This would need to be fully justified, with assurances from your host institution that sufficient backfill will be provided and research time will be released. Note this cost will not be awarded if no clear plan and assurance for clinical backfill is provided.

NHS excess treatment costs and indirect research costs are not eligible. This scheme is quality-related research (QR) and Clinical Research Network (CRN) eligible so these costs can be claimed from the Charity Research Support Fund (CRSF) and NIHR.

The examples provided above are not an exhaustive list and all costs requested should be fully justified within the proposal. If you are in any doubt of the eligibility of a proposed cost, please do contact the grants team at grants@gosh.org

Application process

Applications for this scheme will be in two stages: outline and full. Outline applications are assessed and shortlisted by a dedicated cancer assessment panel and only shortlisted applicants will be invited to submit a full application.

Before you apply

Before you start writing an application, you must contact your research office in good time so they can advise you on the internal steps required to submit a proposal. If you have any questions about the funding call that aren't answered in this document, you can get in touch with the GOSH Charity grant funding team (grants@gosh.org).

Pre-application support will be available to all applicants to ensure confidence in aligning with the funding scheme's goals and eligibility criteria. There will be a launch webinar with further guidance held in June 2025. Please sign up to attend on our website. The webinar will also be recorded for those unable to attend on the day.

Outline applications

The outline application form will open in **late May 2025** and close at **3pm on Thursday 11th September 2025**.

Applicants must submit their outline application through GOSH Charity's [grants management system](#). Signatories and co-applicants must be invited to participate in the application prior to submission. Once the application has been submitted, it will go to signatories for final sign-off. Please note that this sign-off must occur before the final submission deadline of **Thursday 11th September 2025**, so ensure you leave plenty of time for this.

Applicants will be informed of the outcome of their outline application in **October 2025**.

Full applications

The full application form will be open from **late October 2025** and close in **late January 2026**. Only applicants whose outline applications have been shortlisted will be invited to apply for a full application.

The GOSH Charity grant funding team are available to discuss feedback from the shortlisting stage and outline the next steps for the full application with shortlisted applicants in **November 2025**.

Applicants must submit their full application through GOSH Charity's [grants management system](#). Signatories and co-applicants must be invited to participate in the application prior to submission. Once the application has been submitted, it will go to signatories for final sign-off. Please note this sign-off must occur before the final deadline, so ensure you leave plenty of time.

Following the submission of the full application, translational work packages will go through written peer review and be given the chance to provide a written rebuttal to reviewer comments in **April 2026**.

Clinical trials will be taken through a live peer review process in the form of an External Advisory Group meeting. Applicants will be required to attend part of this meeting to present their research proposal and answer questions from the group.

These meetings will take place in **March 2026** and the GOSH Charity grant funding team will provide more information when confirmed.

Applicants will be informed of the outcome of their full application in **June 2026**.

Assessment

GOSH Charity assesses research proposals using three key criteria:

1. **Scientific quality.** GOSH Charity is committed to funding only the highest-quality scientific research. For all applications, we consider whether research proposals are underpinned by a good scientific rationale; whether the proposed approach, methodology and analyses are sound; and whether the research is competitive in the national and international landscape. Applicant teams are also assessed on whether they have sufficient expertise and experience to carry out the intended research.
2. **Patient benefit.** While we recognise that research proposals may not have an immediate impact on patients, we expect that research proposals have the potential to have a significant impact on children and young people with rare and hard to treat cancers. Addressing clinical unmet needs and strong and meaningful involvement with children and families with lived experience of cancer throughout the research process are considered here.
3. **Deliverability.** GOSH Charity must ensure that all research proposals funded can be successfully delivered. We expect applications to have clearly defined project plans, timelines, milestones, data and statistics, with defined risks and mitigation plans. We consider whether the requested costs are appropriate and sufficient to deliver the research proposal. Finally, we consider sustainability and whether applicants have clear plans for continuing to take the work through the research pipeline to clinical delivery following the end of GOSH Charity funding.

To be awarded funding, applications will need to score highly against each of these three criteria.

Applications will be assessed by three key groups: a dedicated cancer assessment panel (CAP), our Research Patient Insight Panel (RPIP) and an expert External

Advisory Group (EAG) or independent peer review. They each have a different but equally important part to play in the assessment process, as outlined below.

Cancer Assessment Panel (CAP)

The role of the CAP is to assess research funding applications and provide recommendations on which research proposals are of the highest scientific quality, with the greatest potential for patient benefit and alignment with GOSH Charity's cancer research strategy. It is made up of external members whose cancer research expertise covers a range of expertise and relevant specialties.

CAP is responsible for shortlisting outline applications for this scheme. They will also make the final funding recommendations following review of the RPIP and external advisory groups in **May 2026**.

Research Patient Insight Panel (RPIP)

The role of RPIP is to provide perspective based on lived experience of paediatric healthcare. This network of lay panel members helps GOSH Charity ensure we fund research which has, or will have the maximum benefit for patients, how patient involvement is considered in the applications and that the research is suitable described for sharing with the public.

They will assess specific parts of the full application, namely the lay summaries and patient and public involvement and engagement (PPIE) sections in **February and March 2026**. Their scores will feed into the scientific review by CAP, who will make the final funding recommendations. Feedback given by the lived experience panel may dictate conditions of the award which applicants will need to act on to receive funding.

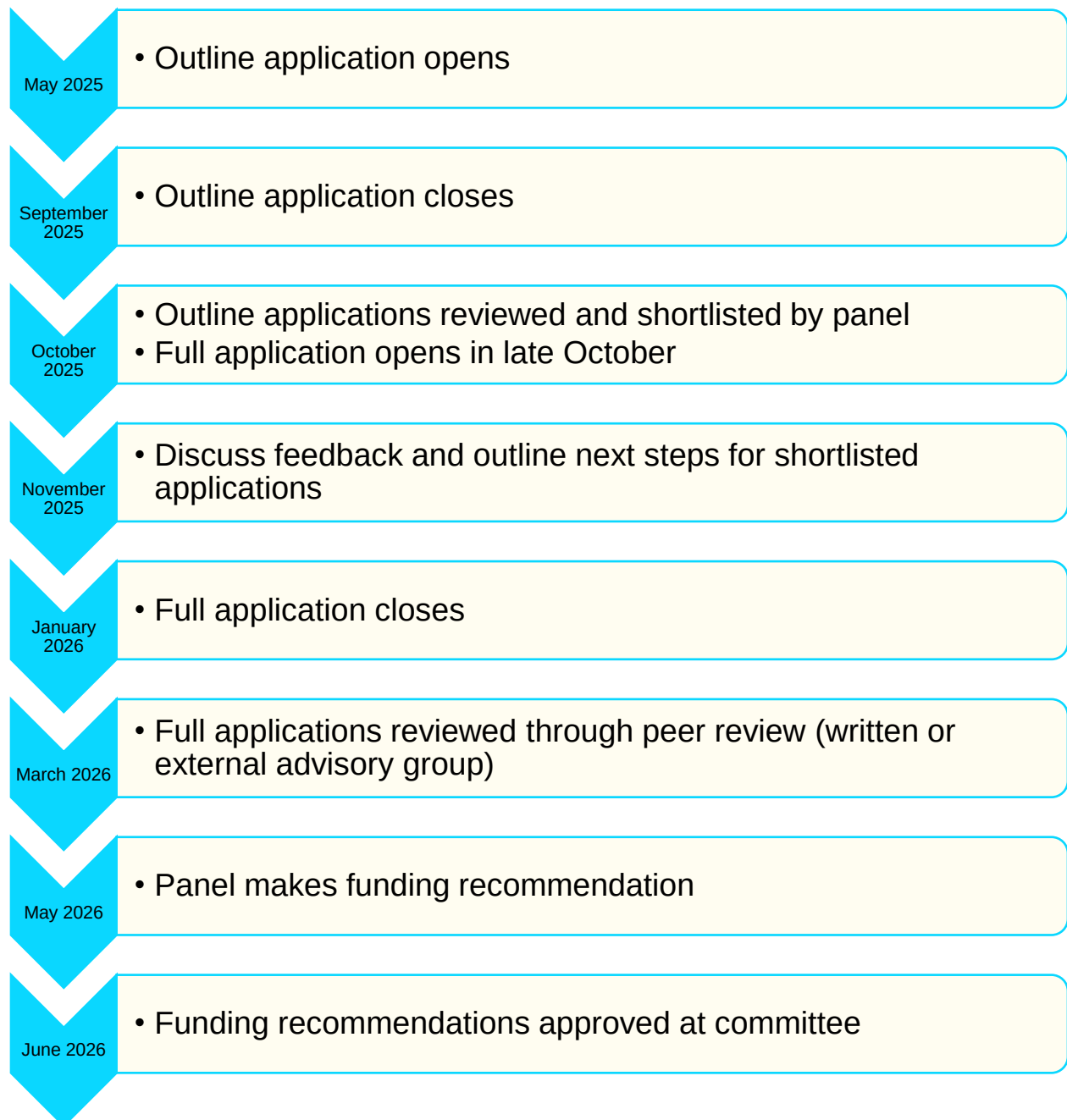
External Advisory Group (EAG)

For other response-mode funding schemes, GOSH Charity carries out written independent peer review with external experts in the field for each application. A written peer review will be carried out for translational research proposals. However, for clinical trial proposals peer review will be conducted by EAGs. An EAG is a panel of independent world-leading experts to provide objective feedback and strategic guidance based on their relevant expertise to each application. EAGs allow us to carry out live peer review for large-scale, complex proposals. They will evaluate the quality, impact and relevance of proposals. During the EAG, they will observe a presentation from the applicant and ask questions. These groups will be convened ad-hoc for each clinical trial full application. At least one CAP member will be part of each EAG.

Funding outcomes

In **May 2026** the funding recommendations made by CAP will be submitted to GOSH Charity's Grants and Impact Committee for final funding decisions. Applicants will be informed of their application outcome only after the Grants and Impact Committee have made the final funding decision.

Please see below a flowchart outlining the steps and timelines for the application process.



COVID-19 statement

As funders, we have signed a cross-funder statement coordinated by the Academy of Medical Sciences, on the COVID-19 institutional memory: how we as funders will look to fairly remember and recognise the impacts of COVID-19 on grant applicant's work in the future.

As part of this statement, we would like to reassure our research community that we are aware of the immediate and long-term impacts of COVID-19 on research activities. Any disruptions to research activities due to the COVID-19 pandemic will be taken into consideration by our panels and committees when assessing an individual applicant's record of outputs, research achievements, and career progression in future grant rounds.

You can read and download the full statement [here](#).

Further information

Feedback will be made available for all unsuccessful applicants to this scheme.

If you have any questions about the scheme or your application, please contact to the GOSH Charity grant funding team at grants@gosh.org.