GOSH Charity Lift Off Grants: Discovery Research
Scheme Guidance

About GOSH Charity
Great Ormond Street Hospital (GOSH) Children’s Charity is the UK’s largest charity dedicated to funding paediatric health research. We are committed to accelerating child-health research and transforming the lives of seriously ill children through research-led care. Under our new Research Strategy, we will invest £70m in research into rare and complex paediatric diseases over the next five years.

Lift Off Grants: Discovery Research Overview
Our new Lift Off Grants are intended to support the first step for a new research question in an area of rare or complex paediatric disease. These grants provide seed funding, allowing initial data collection which will take research into the next stage and strengthen future applications for larger project grants.

The Lift Off Grants will have two streams: Discovery Research and Patient Focussed Research. The Discovery Research stream, to be launched in February 2024, will be open to applications for projects that involve laboratory- or data-based research. The Patient Focussed stream to be launched in mid-2024, will be open to applications for clinical research where the hospital and its patient population are the focus. These are new schemes, to be delivered for the first time in 2024 under our new Research Strategy.

This scheme guidance is specific to the Lift Off Grants: Discovery Research stream. Separate guidance for the Patient Focussed Research stream will be provided when the scheme launches in mid-2024.

Remit
Lift Off Grants: Discovery Research provide early-stage research funding, intended to give early support for new research projects. This scheme will support research across the spectrum of medical conditions affecting the foetus, neonates, and children directly, as well as pregnancy disorders that affect the child. These projects should be based in a laboratory setting and at an early stage in the translational pathway. This also includes data-based projects, such as genomics studies. Projects may include basic research into disease mechanisms, development of new treatments, or the improvement of analytical procedures. Funding could be used for:

- Collecting pilot data
- Proof of principle studies
- Feasibility studies
- Methodology/technique development
- New applications of existing concepts
- Animal model development

The examples provided are not an exhaustive list. If you are in any doubt regarding the eligibility of your proposed project, please contact the grants team at grants@gosh.org.

Applications for projects investigating a research question where the hospital and its patient population are the focus for data generation or collection, such as clinical outcomes or quality of life research, will not be eligible for the Discovery Research stream.
and should instead be submitted to the Patient Focussed Research stream, to be launched in mid-2024.

Eligibility
For the 2024 Lift Off Grants, applicants must be employed by GOSH or GOS ICH, or have a substantive honorary research contract at one of those organisations. Your salary must be covered through to the end of the grant period, or a supporting letter must be provided by your organisation guaranteeing your continued employment throughout the duration of the grant.

Applications from Early Career Researchers, Allied Health Professionals, Research Nurses, Pharmacists and other non-medical clinical healthcare professionals are welcomed. Applicants who do not have a PhD or substantive research experience must apply with a research mentor as a co-applicant. A research mentor is someone experienced in research who will be able to guide and support you in carrying out your research project.

The salary of the Principal Investigator is not eligible for funding through this scheme. These grants cannot be used for bridge funding, add-on funding or PhD project extensions. Projects must investigate a new research question.

Funding Available
A total of £600k is available for Lift Off Grants in 2024, with £300k allocated to each stream: Discovery Research and Patient Focussed Research. From this, we expect to award at least 4 grants per round with an expected value of up to £75,000. Applicants wishing to apply for more than £75,000 should contact the Grant Funding Team (grants@gosh.org) to discuss their application costs.

Projects should have a duration of up to 18 months.

Eligible Costs
These grants will cover direct research costs associated with the project. Examples of eligible costs include:

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

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

Application Process
Applications for this scheme will be in one stage. All applications are assessed by the GOSH Charity Lift Off Grants: Discovery Research Scientific Assessment Panel with input from a lay panel – the GOSH Charity Patient Benefit Panel
Before You Apply

Before submitting an application, applicants must engage with the GOSH and GOS ICH joint research office (Grants.Advice@gosh.nhs.uk).

The GOSH Charity Grant Funding Team will be holding a preparatory webinar for potential applicants with further guidance on 23rd February 2024. Please sign up here if you would like to attend. A recording of the webinar will be made available following the event for those unable to join on the day.

Pre-application support is also available from the Grants Team (grants@gosh.org).

Applications

Applications will open in the week commencing Monday 19th February 2024 and must be submitted by 3pm on Thursday 11th April 2024. Proposals will be in one stage, and applicants must submit their applications through the 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 deadline of Thursday 11th April 2024, so ensure that you leave plenty of time for submission ahead of the deadline.

Assessment

GOSH Charity assesses research applications 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 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 landscapes. Applicant teams are also assessed on whether they have sufficient expertise to carry out the intended research.

2. **Patient benefit.** While we recognise that many projects will be in early-stage research and so will not have direct impact on patients for some time, it is essential that the research will, in time, have a positive impact on children with rare or complex health conditions. Clinical need, PPIE activities, and opportunities for downstream development are all considered under this metric.

3. **Deliverability.** We need to ensure that all the research we fund can be successfully delivered. We expect applications to have clearly defined project plans, timelines and milestones with defined risks and plans for their mitigation. We consider whether the requested costs are appropriate and sufficient to deliver the research. Finally, we consider sustainability and whether applicants have clear plans for continuing to take the work through the research pipeline to clinical delivery.

In order to be funded, applications will need to score sufficiently highly against each of these three metrics.

Applications will be assessed by two key groups: GOSH Charity’s Lift Off Grants: Discovery Research Scientific Assessment Panel and the Patient Benefit Panel. They both have a different role to play in the assessment process, as summarised below.
Discovery Research Scientific Assessment Panel
This is a new GOSH Charity Panel whose role is to assess research funding applications for the Lift Off Grants: Discovery Research stream and provide recommendations on which proposals are of the highest scientific quality, with the greatest potential for patient benefit and alignment with the Charity's Research Strategy. It includes around 12 clinician or scientist members who are external to GOSH, GOS ICH, or GOSH Charity, and whose expertise covers a wide spread of clinical and paediatric health areas.

The Scientific Assessment Panel are responsible for making the final funding recommendations. The Panel meeting will take place in mid-May 2024.

Patient Benefit Panel
GOSH Charity has a network of lay panel members whose role is to provide perspective based on lived experience of paediatric healthcare. They help the Charity ensure we fund research which has or will have the maximum benefit on patients with rare or complex health conditions, and that the research is suitably described for sharing with the public.

Lay panel members will assess specific parts of applications for the Lift Off Grants, namely the lay summaries and PPIE sections, in May 2024. Their scores will feed into the scientific review by the Panel, who will make the final funding recommendation. Feedback given by the Patient Benefit Panel may dictate conditions of award, which applicants will need to act on to receive an award.

Funding Outcomes
Following the Scientific Assessment Panel meeting, funding recommendations will be submitted to the Charity's Grants and Impact Committee in June 2024 for final approval. Applicants will be informed of their application outcome only after the Grants and Impact Committee have made their decision.

Applicants can expect to be informed of the outcome of their application in late June 2024.

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 applicants' 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 the GOSH Charity Grants Team at grants@gosh.org.