

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 [Research Strategy](#), we will invest at least £70m in research into rare and complex paediatric diseases between 2023 and 2028.

Lift Off Grants: Discovery Research Overview

Our 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 have two streams: Discovery Research and Patient Focussed Research. The Discovery Research stream is open to applications for projects that involve laboratory- or data-based research. The Patient Focussed stream is open to applications for clinical research where the hospital and its patient population are the focus.

This scheme guidance is specific to the Lift Off Grants: Discovery Research stream.

Remit

Lift Off Grants: Discovery Research provide early-stage research funding to give early support for new research projects. This scheme supports research across the spectrum of rare and complex medical conditions affecting the foetus, neonates, and children, as well as pregnancy disorders that directly 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, early 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 Grant Funding 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.

Eligibility

For the 2026 Lift Off Grants, applicants must be employed by GOSH or UCL GOS ICH or have an honorary 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.

Generally, the salary of the Principal Investigator is not eligible for funding through this scheme. However, exemptions can be applied for a proportion of Early Career Researchers' (ECR) salaries, if the work is being undertaken by themselves to deliver the aims and objectives of the grant. We would consider an ECR as someone who holds a PhD (or equivalent), who has received no more than £250K in total grant income as PI across their career (excluding income for their own salary such as fellowships) and who does not hold a tenured academic position. ECR PI salary costs will only be permitted where applicants have contacted the Grant Funding Team (grants@gosh.org) to confirm their eligibility. Note that any requested salary should be proportionate to the time spent on the grant. These awards are not intended to cover the PI's full salary.

Lift Off Grants cannot be used for bridge funding, add-on funding or PhD project extensions. Projects must investigate a new research question.

Applications from clinical or academic researchers, doctors, pharmacists and other non-medical 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. Please contact the Grant Funding Team if you are unsure if you require a research mentor.

Researchers may only submit one application as lead applicant, but they can be named a co-applicant on other applications to the same call, provided they would be able to deliver against both projects if they were funded.

Funding Available

A total of £450,000 is available for Lift Off Grants: Discovery Research stream in 2026. From this, we expect to award 6 grants, each with a value of up to £75,000 and a duration of up to 18 months. Applicants who feel they have a strong case for applying for more than £75,000 or longer than 18 months should contact the Grant Funding Team (grants@gosh.org) to discuss their application. This will only be approved in exceptional circumstances.

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.) Please note that due to the small scale and early-stage nature of these grants, we do not expect to cover a full-time salary across an 18-month period. Staffing costs should only be requested to the level required to deliver the project.
- Consumables costs.
- Animal costs.
- Equipment costs for items essential to the project. Please note that single equipment items costing more than £5,000 should be discussed with the Grants Team prior to submission.
- Patient and public involvement, engagement and participation.

Travel and conference fees are not eligible for this funding scheme.

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.

Overheads

Researchers based at ICH can request overheads costs from the Charity only if these costs have not been agreed to be waived by their host institution. Please ensure you have discussed with your Head of Department and the relevant institution Grants and Finance teams to confirm if overheads costs will be charged for your application before submitting your costing. Overheads will not be charged by ICH for certain applicants, such as ECRs. Overheads will not be charged by GOSH for applications from GOSH staff.

If overheads costs are not waived by the host organisation, overheads costs of up to 15% of the total grant value can be included in the proposal in addition to the project costs. This is on top of the £75,000 project budget.

Application Process

Before You Apply

Before submitting an application, applicants must engage with the GOSH and GOS ICH joint research office (Grants.Advice@gosh.nhs.uk). Applicants need to register with the GOSH and GOS ICH joint research office at least 15 working days prior to submission.

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

Applicants requiring any reasonable adjustments to support completion of their application are encouraged to contact the Grants Team at (grants@gosh.org), as early as possible.

Applications

Applications will open in the week commencing Monday 2 March 2026 and must be submitted by **3pm on Thursday 23 April 2026**. 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 23 April 2026, 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.

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 Research Patient Insight Panel. These Panels each have a different role to play in the assessment process, as summarised below.

Discovery Research Scientific Assessment Panel

The role of this Panel 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 relevant to the scheme.

The Scientific Assessment Panel are responsible for making the final funding recommendations. The Panel meeting will take place in early June 2026.

Research Patient Insight Panel

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

Lived experience experts will assess specific parts of applications for the Lift Off Grants, namely the lay summaries and PPIE sections. Their scores will feed into the scientific review by the Scientific Assessment Panel, who will make the final funding recommendations. Feedback given by the Research Patient Insight 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 Director of Impact & Charitable Programmes in July 2026 for final approval. Applicants will be informed of their application outcome only after the Director of Impact & Charitable Programmes has made their decision.

Applicants can expect to be informed of the outcome of their application in July 2026.

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.