

## **HRB Applying Research into Policy & Practice Post-doctoral Fellowships 2018: Pre-Call Announcement**

The HRB will be launching in early October 2017 a call for applications for the **Applying Research into Policy & Practice Postdoctoral Fellowships (ARPP) 2018**.

The overarching aim of the 'Applying Research into Policy & Practice Postdoctoral Fellowship (ARPP)' scheme is to accelerate and enhance the development of talented and skilled health researchers at mid-stage of their research career through a mentored post-doctoral period in a cross-disciplinary and/or cross-sectoral environment. Ultimately, we want to build the capability and leadership potential of talented researchers who can apply and transfer research evidence into improved healthcare and health policy, lessening the gap between research findings, health policy and clinical practice.

The scheme offers two different arms for 1) in-practice healthcare and health policy professionals and 2) academic researchers, in recognition of the two main career gaps identified and the different structures required to support them. It is envisaged that the HRB will award up to 40 fellowships during the strategy with an overall investment of €9m.

The main principles for the scheme have been approved by the HRB Board on 30 June and can be found below. The full call document will be available once the call is launched.

**Please note the call is still at developmental stage and details will be finalised over the summer**

### **What is the timeline for applications to the first call?**

Call Opening: Early/Mid-October 2017  
Call Closing: Mid-January 2018

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## Applying Research into Policy & Practice Postdoctoral Fellowships (ARPP)

*Building the capability and leadership potential in applied health research*

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**Enabler A:** support exceptional researchers, talent and leadership to undertake high quality health research and generate evidence.

**Objective A.2:** Provide opportunities for career development for postdoctoral researchers and emerging investigators.

**Action A.2.1:** Support existing interdisciplinary capacity enhancement awards for postdoctoral researchers in population health and health services research, and expand the scheme to include patient-oriented research and/or translational medicine.

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### Overview

This document describes the rationale and the approach that is being proposed to support mid-stage researchers (post-doctoral) in the conduct of applied health research studies. The HRB is proposing to put in place a new scheme that will support individual fellowships. This will complement secondary capacity building in which postdoctoral researchers are supported through project, programme or team-based awards. The new scheme will replace the Interdisciplinary Capacity Enhancement Awards (ICE).

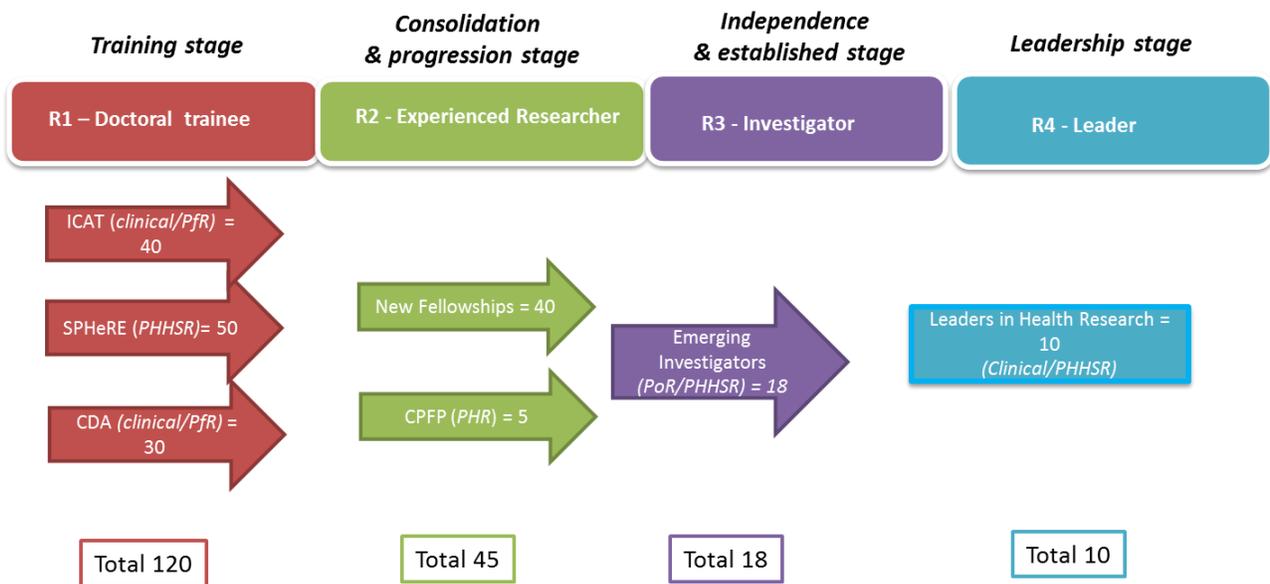
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## Context

The HRB has identified training, career development and support of exceptional researchers, talent and leadership as a key enabler (Enabler A) of *Research. Evidence. Action*. In order to implement a coherent programme of activities, a framework and action plan to support Health Research Careers was developed and published<sup>1</sup>. It describes the HRB’s vision and guiding principles in this area, and a coherent model for a research career path along with the actions needed to effectively develop and deliver training, support and career development between now and 2020. Overall, this will contribute to the development of a skilled workforce engaged in health research in Ireland.

In order to put the new initiative in the overall context of the Enabler A, we describe below some of the current or planned instruments for supporting, training and upskilling researchers during the strategy. This is also summarised in figure 1.



**Figure 1: Estimated number of individuals who will be supported by the HRB along the health research careers path during the period 2016-2020, with commitments until 2024.**

### R1 - Doctoral trainees/early stage researchers through doctoral well-structured and mentored programmes

- Collaborative Doctoral Awards in Patient-focused Research (CDA) aims to support up to 30 trainees through two calls
- Wellcome-HRB Irish Clinical Academic Programme (ICAT) aims to train up to 40 medical doctors by 2024.
- Structured Population and Health-services Research Education (SPHeRE) Programme aims to train approximately 100 PhD graduates (inclusive of scholars HRB-fully funded, self-funded or with alternative funding) in conducting PHHSR of high relevance for the Irish health system in the period 2013- 2024 (inclusive of Phase II funding currently under negotiation and approval).

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.hrb.ie/index.php?id=1049>

## **R2 Experienced/mid-stage researchers through individual personal fellowships to support a mentored research period**

- Proposed Applying Research into Policy & Practice Postdoctoral Fellowships (ARPP) aims to fund up to 40 new fellows through two calls.
- Cancer Prevention Fellowship Programme (CPFP) in partnership with the National Cancer Institute in the US. We award an average of one fellowship per year so up to 5 awards by 2020.

## **R2-R3 transition to independence and investigator stage through awards which combine the career development element with an investigator-led project one**

- Emerging Investigators Awards for Health (EIA) aim to support up to 18 new investigators who are ready to transition to independence level through two calls.

## **R4 Leaders**

- Building on the success of previous investments (10 Research Leaders in PHHSR and 12 Clinician Scientists funded between 2011-2015), the HRB plans to develop a new initiative which will support up to 10 new leaders in health research through two calls later in the strategy (2019 and 2020).

In the current Strategy as described in objective A2 and action A.2.1, the HRB states its intention to continue supporting mid-stage researchers during the consolidation and progression<sup>2</sup> phase (Figure 2) working in PHHSR and in PoR generally or – more focussed – in translational medicine.

After internal discussions on the most significant workforce and capacity gaps at mid-career stage across the HRB strategic portfolio were identified as follows:

1. Individuals who are currently working in the management or delivery of health and social care services (also referred to as professionals<sup>3</sup>), who struggle to find further opportunities to advance their research activities/career after completion of a PhD (or equivalent) and need protected research time while remaining within the services.
2. Academic researchers particularly during their progression stage (e.g. at least two years postdoc experience)

## **Applied Research into Policy and Practice Postdoctoral Fellowships (ARPP)**

We propose to address these two gaps through the **ARPP fellowship scheme**. Given that the HRB has limited resources compared to the potential demand for post-doctoral funding in health research from those groups, we intend to focus on building the capability and leadership potential of talented researchers who can apply and transfer research evidence into improved healthcare and health policy, lessening the gap between research

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<sup>2</sup> An **experienced or mid stage researcher** is a PhD holder or equivalent during consolidation and progression phases who aims to increase the breadth of his/her research knowledge, skills, methodologies and capabilities as well as establishing strong cross-border collaborations and networks. Some researchers at this stage might aim to transition towards becoming independent researchers.

<sup>3</sup> **Professionals** are individuals in health-related professions or roles who are generally involved in health service delivery, organisational activities, health policy or financing. They include clinicians and other healthcare professionals, healthcare personnel, health system personnel, health policy-makers and others.

findings, health policy and clinical practice. A detailed rationale for following a fellowship model is described in Appendix I.

The overarching aim of the (ARPP) scheme is to accelerate and enhance the research development of talented and skilled health researchers at mid-stage of their research career in applied health research through a mentored post-doctoral period in a cross-disciplinary and/or cross-sectoral environment. It is expected that during this period the researchers will strengthen their research experience, broaden their horizons, establish new collaborations and partnerships and manage an award on their own rights. Whilst researchers based in practice will spend time in academic environments, academic researchers are expected to spend a percentage of their time in an agency/organisation delivering and/or managing health care through work placements relevant to the research project.

The call will be focussed on the conduct of applied health research in areas of strategic importance at local, community, national or international level (as opposed to fully investigator-led research). This may include patient-oriented, population health or health services research; however the case for the selection of a particular research topic will need to be justified by demonstrating a need (e.g. reference to the recent Oireachtas Committee report on the Future of Health Care<sup>4</sup>, strategies for specific disease or policy areas etc.) and by demonstrating the ability to bring together a team that has the potential to influence policy and/or practice in this area (e.g. one or more of the team members should be an innovator<sup>5</sup> as defined in the Framework for the Health Research Careers). The selection of a mentor, who can demonstrate expertise in applied research, capacity building and coaching, will be crucial in this respect.

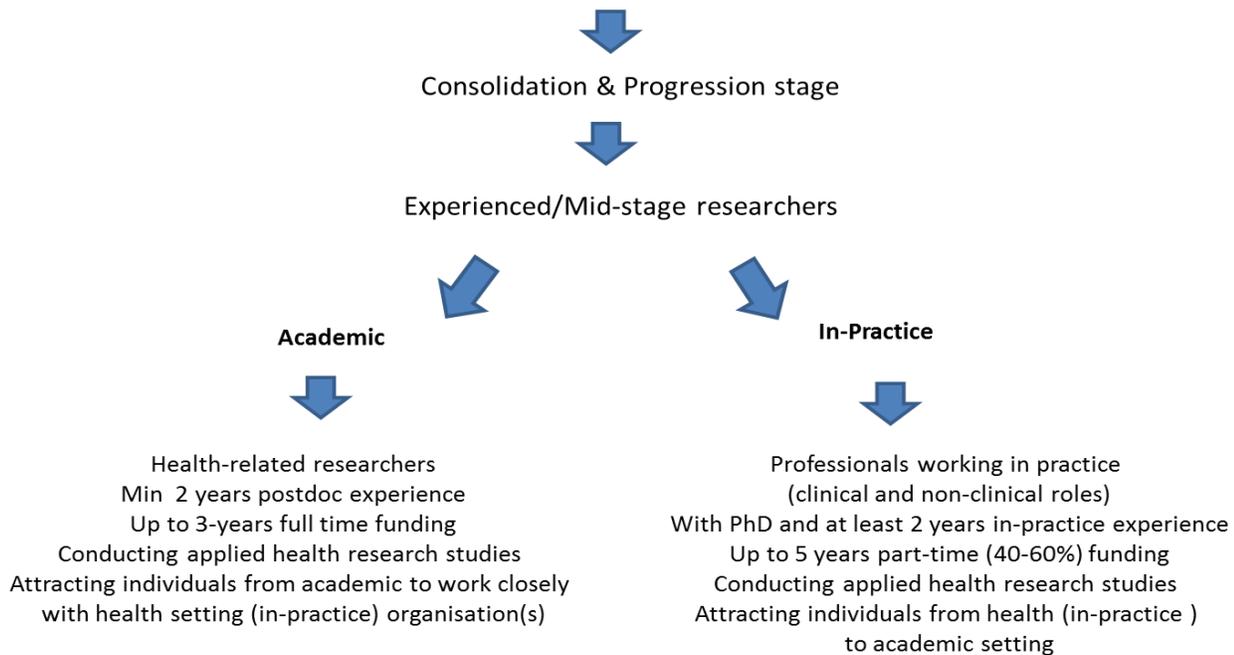
The scheme will have **two different arms** for 1) in-practice healthcare and health policy professionals and 2) academic researchers, in recognition of the two main career gaps identified and the different structures required to support them. **Figure 3** below summarises the two arms and their key characteristics. Additional details of the two arms are described in Appendix I.

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<sup>4</sup><http://www.oireachtas.ie/parliament/mediazone/pressreleases/2017/name-42326-en.html>

<sup>5</sup> **Innovators** are individuals who have the skills, competencies and specific authority to bring together ideas – new, old or a combination of both – and translate these ideas into practical applications and/or solutions. They may be health researchers, health professionals, health policy managers, decision-makers or other knowledge users. <http://www.hrb.ie/health-research-careers/>

## Applying Research into Policy & Practice Postdoctoral Fellowships (ARPP)



## Conclusions

In summary, the HRB is aiming to increase the capability and leadership potential of talented researchers who can apply and transfer research evidence and knowledge into improved health and healthcare and lessen the gap between evidence, health policy and clinical practice. It is expected that after completing their fellowship many individuals will be more competitive in other schemes, such as the HRB's EIA, ILP, DIFA and APA schemes, as well as schemes funded through other agencies nationally or internationally (e.g. Wellcome). Importantly, the initiative will support both expected outcomes of the Enabler A, which are:

- Strategic and coordinated approach to the production of a highly skilled research workforce to ensure that research and evidence are integrated into policy and practice.
- More people working in a healthcare setting are trained and active in research, resulting in better quality care and outcomes and a more attractive work environment.

The HRB propose two calls for this scheme during the strategy, one in 2017/2018 and the second in 2019/2020 with an overall investment of €9m and up to 40 fellowship awards.

**Proposed timeline for 2018 call**

- ✓ July 2017 – Pre-call announcement
- ✓ Late September 2017 - Board approval of call document
- ✓ Early/Mid October 2017 – launch of the call

Key Dates	
Early/mid-October2017	Call opening
Mid-January 2018	Call closing for applications
Early June	Panel interview meeting
Late June 2018	Board Approval
October 2018 onwards	Start of awards

## Appendix I

### Overview of the two strands of the proposed ARPP Fellowship Scheme

#### A) Applied Research into Policy & Practice Postdoctoral Fellowships – In-practice (ARPP-P)

*Aimed at individuals who are currently working in the management or delivery of health and social care services (also referred as professionals<sup>6</sup>)*

#### Rationale

The HRB is the main funding agency supporting the training and research leadership among healthcare professionals. During the period 2009-2016 96 medical doctors and other healthcare professionals were trained and supported through two main fellowship schemes HPF and NSAFP. More recent investments (HRB-Wellcome Irish Clinical Academic Programme (ICAT) and the newly launched Collaborative Doctoral Awards in Patient-focused Research (CDA)) will further train clinicians and other healthcare professionals in clinical and patient-focused research with an estimated 70 new doctoral graduates by 2024. Please note that the HRB's definition of clinical roles includes all healthcare professionals with direct patient contact across a variety of professional backgrounds. At the same time, the HRB have a strong track record in providing protected research time and additional research support to clinician scientists in order to allow them to build their research programmes, increase capacity in their research area and establish themselves as international leaders. It is envisaged that a new leadership call will be advertised in 2018. The limited support of in-practice professionals means many of them may be completely reabsorbed in clinical or non-clinical roles after their doctoral studies in health setting or academic organisations with no protect time for research or are forced abroad to continue their research training.

The HRB recognises that until recently there was a gap in the support at mid-stage and during the transition to independence and future leadership along the research career path. The latter stage has been recently addressed by the Emerging Investigator Awards for Health scheme.

We strongly believe that by supporting in-practice professionals during this stage of their research career we can now provide a coherent research pathway progressing from doctoral training to leadership stages. It will ultimately foster a research culture within our health and social care services and ensure that research is conducted and led by well-trained researchers therein. This fellowship scheme is about enabling these individuals to remain in service while at the same time conducting research relevant, timely and responsive to their clinical or non-clinical roles and the health environment where they are currently working.

#### Details

The **'in-practice' fellowships** will target individuals who are currently working in the management or delivery of health and social care services in the Irish health system who have a PhD (or equivalent) and at least 2 years of in-practice relevant experience.

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<sup>6</sup> **Professionals** are individuals in health-related professions or roles who are generally involved in health service delivery, organisational activities, health policy or financing. They include clinicians and other healthcare professionals, healthcare personnel, health system personnel, health policy-makers and others.

The fellowship will provide protected and mentored research time (40-60% FTE) for up to five years to enable fellows to conduct research studies that address research questions which are relevant and responsive to the professional activities and environment where they are currently working. Additionally, research studies should have high potential to bridge the gap between the acquisition of new knowledge from research and its application and transfer into improved health and healthcare at a local, community, national or international level.

Ultimately, we want to foster a culture of research within our health and social care services and a high quality, well trained cadre of individuals therein.

### Eligibility of Applicants

- ❖ Applicants must have a PhD or equivalent and be mid-stage researchers<sup>7</sup>
- ❖ Applicants should currently be employed in a practice-based role with a public, private or not-for-profit health-related organisation/agency currently delivering or organising healthcare.
- ❖ Applicants must be able to demonstrate at least 24 months whole time equivalent (WTE) relevant experience in their professional role (clinical or non-clinical) in a health-related organisation/agency prior the deadline for applications
- ❖ Applicants must devote at least 40% and max 60% of their time to research and have a written commitment from their employer to protect this time.
- ❖ During their non-fellowship time, applicants must be employed by an agency/organisation in the health sector currently delivering or organising healthcare, including applicants who are self-employed practitioners in private practice. As usual, awards will be made to an academic host institution, which is expected to provide a part-time contract of employment rather than the in-practice employer.
- ❖ Health and social care professionals, applicants must provide proof of eligibility to practice.

### Funding

Funding will support:

- Salary and related costs pro rata at a maximum value 60% of Level 3 point 4 of the IUA scale
- Research running costs
- Dissemination and knowledge exchange costs
- Training and Development allowance
- Research Experience Abroad

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<sup>7</sup> An **experienced or mid stage researcher** is a PhD holder or equivalent during consolidation and progression phases who aims to increase the breadth of his/her research knowledge, skills, methodologies and capabilities as well as establishing strong cross-border collaborations and networks. Some researchers at this stage might aim to transition towards becoming independent researchers.

## **B) Applied Research into Policy & Practice Postdoctoral Fellowships – Academic (ARPP-A)**

*Aimed at academic researchers particularly during their progression stage (e.g. at least two years postdoc experience)*

### **Rationale**

The fellowship for academic researchers will address a long-standing gap in the HRB's career portfolio, since we have not offered direct funding for academic-based post-doctoral researchers for some time. The coordinated approach we are adopting to develop the health research careers portfolio (set out in page 2-3) describes how we support and develop individuals who can generate research ideas and drive the integration of research and evidence into policy and practice. Through this we aim to improve decision-making and, ultimately, health outcomes, creating a wider impact in society.

We think is important and timely to support and further develop researchers with the skills and expertise to drive research informed by policy and practice and to play a role in applying and transfer research knowledge into practical solution and effective changes. Ultimately, it will provide a new generation of researchers for the succession management in our academic institutions and can also make a difference in practice (primarily in this context non-clinical), in service or in policy roles into the future.

### **Details**

The '**Academic' fellowship** will support health researchers in full time academic positions with a PhD or equivalent and with at least 2-year postdoctoral experience. This minimum requirement allows demonstration of ownership of the research project and a better assessment of the applicant's potential for future independence. It also recognises existing indirect support mechanism for very early stage postdocs. The fellowship will support individuals typically for up to 3 years full time (unless justified for personal reasons) in the conduct of research projects in areas of local, community, national or international importance (as opposed to fully investigator-led research)that can reduce the gap between research findings, health policy and clinical practice and ultimately health outcomes.

Through the support of a mentor, researchers will be expected to closely collaborate with organisations/agencies delivering or managing health and social care in Ireland. Additionally they are expected to spend a percentage of their time during the fellowship in an agency/organisation delivering and/or managing health care through work placements relevant to the research project in order to expose these researchers to experiential learning in a health setting (how health system and related organisations work, how decisions are made, and how research and analytic skills can contribute to an organisation's performance).

### **Eligibility of Applicants**

- ❖ Applicants must have a PhD or equivalent experience (at least 4 years full-time research experience post-primary degree)
- ❖ Applicants must have a minimum of 2 year postdoctoral experience

## **Funding**

Funding will support:

- Salary and related costs at a maximum level of research fellow in the IUA scale (Level 3 point 4 – research fellow) as justified by the research experience of the individual to date and his/her current salary.
- Research running costs
- Dissemination and knowledge exchange
- Training and Development allowance
- Research Experience Abroad