



The Children &  
Young People's  
Cancer Association

CCLG research grant scheme:

# Early career researcher VIVO Biobank pilot grants

For biological studies using samples from the VIVO Biobank

Guidance for applicants  
April 2025

**Expertise.  
Progress.  
Community.**

## Early career researcher VIVO Biobank pilot grants

Our VIVO Biobank Pilot Grants are research grants designed to enable short-term funding for a specific, discrete, childhood cancer research project. This grant is for you if you are an early career researcher with an idea for a pilot biological study which will generate preliminary data for a further, larger research project or will generate useful, publishable data.

Grants of up to £15,000 are available to support a defined research project. Grants are available for specific disease areas, where there is both funding, and samples available from the VIVO Biobank to support a study. Funding is available for discrete projects and not as 'top up' funding for existing projects, although funding can be used to support additional specific experiments as part of a wider piece of work (e.g. a PhD study).

Applicants should be supported in their application by a suitable supervisor, who will support their application and the research project.

Proposed projects should have a clear output, i.e. a publication in a peer reviewed journal, be achievable within the project budget, and take 12 months or fewer to complete.

Proposed projects should address one of the Top 10 Research Priorities for Childhood Cancer published by the Children's Cancer Priority Setting Partnership (please note these priorities are broad themes rather than specific research questions, giving plenty of scope for a wide range of research ideas). Further information is given later in this guidance.

The funding from these grants can support costs associated with carrying out the research project (e.g. experimental costs, consumables costs). Applications should be submitted through the CCLG application portal <https://cclg.flexigrant.com/>

The deadline for applications is 5pm, Tuesday 1 July 2025.

## Purpose of this guidance

This guidance explains what we're looking for in an application to our VIVO Biobank Pilot Grants scheme and how to complete an application. If you have any questions, we're here to help – please email the CCLG research team on [research@cclg.org.uk](mailto:research@cclg.org.uk).

## About CCLG: The Children & Young People's Cancer Association

We are CCLG: The Children & Young People's Cancer Association, a charity dedicated to creating a brighter future for children and young people with cancer. Powered by expertise, we unite the children and young people's cancer community, driving collective action and progress.

Research is the key to better treatments, improved care, and potential cures. We fund and lead world-class research, fuelling groundbreaking work led by brilliant minds. Collaboration is at the heart of our approach—bringing together the right people and organisations to drive progress and deliver real impact.

We provide trusted information and guidance for children and young people with cancer, their families, and everyone supporting them. Our expertise helps them navigate the challenges of cancer and its impact, offering reassurance and clarity when it's needed most.

Through our professional membership, we bring together the brightest minds in children and young people's cancer, creating a national network that drives progress. Together, we shape better treatment and care - developing guidelines, sharing knowledge, offering expert advice, leading pioneering research, and creating essential resources and education for professionals. Our collective expertise sets the standard, advocating for excellence at every level—local, national, and global.

## Our research strategy

At CCLG: The Children & Young People's Cancer Association, we know research is at the heart of improving diagnosis, treatment, care, and outcomes for children and young people with cancer. It's why four out of five children now survive their cancer, and it's how we'll build a brighter future. We want to close the gap between cancers with the best and worst outcomes, discover kinder treatments that don't leave lasting impacts, and make sure every child and young person has the right support at every step of their journey.

We are proud to lead the way in shaping research that addresses the unique needs of children and young people with cancer. Effective treatment and care must be built on a deep understanding of their distinct physical, emotional, and psychological needs. Children and young people are not simply smaller versions of adults, and children, teenagers, and young adults each face their own unique challenges. That's why dedicated research is essential to improving outcomes.

By working hand in hand with the children and young people's cancer community to develop our research strategy, we've defined four core ambitions to shape our research efforts and drive meaningful change. These four ambitions represent our ultimate goals, and everything we do will bring us closer to achieving them.

## Our four ambitions for children and young people's cancer research

- A coordinated, collaborative approach to children and young people's cancer research
- Funding the best research, led by the best minds
- Lived experience is at the heart of children and young people's cancer research
- A thriving children and young people's cancer research community

We're committed to funding research that drives meaningful progress in the treatment, care, experience, and outcomes for children and young people with cancer. By focusing on the areas where we can have the biggest impact, we'll ensure every pound we spend works harder for our community. We'll fund the best research, led by the brightest minds, and together, we can make breakthroughs happen.

CCLG funds a wide range of research projects that broaden and deepen knowledge of childhood cancer, assist in transferring research progress to clinical practice, improves patient care, and reduces the long-term effects of treatment.

A key aim is to support early career researchers, and these pilot grants are targeted at this particular group.

You can find out more about our research strategy at [www.cclg.org.uk](http://www.cclg.org.uk).

## Research that changes lives

To ensure we're focusing where it matters most, we partnered with The James Lind Alliance (JLA) to deliver a Priority Setting Partnership (PSP) for children's cancer research, in collaboration with The Little Princess Trust. This robust process brought together the voices of patients, parents, carers, and professionals to identify the most critical unanswered questions in children's cancer research. The final report of this work, published in 2023, highlights the top priorities and amplifies the perspectives of those who matter most: patients and their families.

Combined with the JLA PSP for Teenagers and Young Adults with Cancer, completed in 2019, we now have a comprehensive understanding of research priorities for children and young people aged 0–25. These priorities go beyond physical care, emphasising psychological and emotional

support, better management of long-term effects, and a holistic approach to treatment and survivorship.

Our aim for all of our research programme is to focus on addressing the priorities identified by the PSP, which reflect the priorities of patients, their families, and the healthcare professionals treating and caring for them. (Please note applications to this grant round can fall under any of these priorities, but given they are likely to be biological studies we would expect they fall under priorities 1, 2, 4 and/or 5.

### Children's Cancer Top 10 Research Priorities (2022)

1. Can we find effective and kinder (less burdensome, more tolerable, with fewer short- and long-term effects) treatments for children with cancer, including relapsed cancer?
2. Why do children develop cancer (including the role that genetics plays) and could it be prevented?
3. Are the psychological, practical, and financial support needs of children with cancer, survivors, and their families being met during treatment and beyond? How can access to this support be improved and what further support would they like?
4. How can we speed up the process of getting diagnosed and starting treatment in the right place?
5. Why do children relapse, how can it be prevented, and what are the best ways to identify relapse earlier?
6. How can we make being in hospital a better experience for children and young people? (like having better food, internet, toys, and open visiting so other family members can be more involved in the child's care)
7. What are the best ways to ensure children and families get and understand the information they need, in order to make informed decisions, around the time of diagnosis, during treatment, at the end of treatment and after treatment has finished?
8. What impact does cancer and treatment have on the lives of children and families after treatment, and in the long-term; what are the best ways to help them to overcome these impacts to thrive and not just survive?
9. How can we make more accessible treatments that are closer to home, in shared care hospitals?
10. What is the relationship between chronic fatigue syndrome, fibromyalgia, chronic pain and treatment for childhood cancer? (Fibromyalgia is a long-term condition that causes pain all over the body.)

[Find out more about the Children's Cancer Top 10 Research Priorities >](#)

## Scheme guidelines

### Eligibility

#### Who can apply?

You can apply for a CCLG VIVO Biobank Pilot Grant if you are an early career researcher based at a UK University, NHS Hospital or Research Institute. We define an early career researcher as a student, or a researcher who received their PhD qualification (or equivalent training) within the last 10 years.

You will need the support of an appropriate supervisor at a UK hospital, university, or research institute.

#### Remit

You can apply for a grant to conduct any type of research that addresses one of the top ten research priorities identified by the Children's Cancer Priority Setting Partnership. Your proposal must use tissue samples (or data) from the VIVO Biobank.

Funding is available for discrete projects and not as 'top up' funding for existing projects, although funding can be used to support additional specific experiments as part of a wider piece of work (e.g. a PhD study).

#### Host institution

The grant can be held by any non-profit research centre of excellence (NHS hospital, university or research institute) within the UK that is able to provide the facilities required for the successful completion of the project.

#### Sample/data access

Prior to starting your application, you **MUST** contact the VIVO Biobank on [enquiries@vivobiobank.org](mailto:enquiries@vivobiobank.org) to confirm that the samples you require for your study are available. Please ensure you make contact with the VIVO Biobank in plenty of time to allow for a response in order to proceed with your application.

### Funding

#### Award term

The proposed research should be completed within 12 months of the award start date i.e. the maximum project duration is 12 months. We are able to be flexible about this if there is good justification.

#### Award value

The maximum award value for this grant round is £15,000.

#### Cancer types

You should indicate the type(s) of cancer your proposal is studying in your application.

### What can be funded?

The funding from these grants can be used to support costs associated with carrying out the research project. Salary costs cannot be funded from this grant. Our grants only fund direct research costs. Indirect costs and overheads etc are not eligible.

More detail on what we will fund is included in the table below. If you are unsure or have any questions, please contact us on [research@cclg.org.uk](mailto:research@cclg.org.uk).

Category	Details
Salaries for grant staff	Salary contributions cannot be funded from this grant type
Costs associated with carrying out research projects	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Laboratory expenses (if applicable)</li><li>• Equipment purchase costs (where equipment is specific to the grant)</li><li>• Equipment access costs</li><li>• Other costs associated with undertaking the proposed research project</li><li>• Where justified, personal computing costs for the lead applicant to work specifically on the grant (capped at £1,000). Standard per-unit IT charges are not acceptable.</li></ul>
Indirect costs and overheads	We do not fund indirect costs. These are non-specific costs charged across all research projects for underpinning resources. Indirect costs are diverse, and examples include estates, facilities, shared IT and administration, university HR costs, and library services.

## How we fund research

CCLG is a member of the Association of Medical Research Charities (AMRC). CCLG's process of awarding new research grants is based on guidance from the AMRC. This provides CCLG with a consistent process for all competitive research applications. At the heart of this process is a rigorous system for peer review, ensuring that all new research funded by CCLG has been subject to independent scrutiny by those with expertise (peers) in paediatric oncology. It is the advice of independent experts about the scientific quality of research that informs decisions about which proposals are funded. The aim of this process is to draw from leading insight from across the paediatric oncology to help guide the most effective use of CCLG's resources to help maximise the impact of funding. This helps to enact CCLG's research strategy to facilitate much needed change in the management of children with cancer, by developing better, kinder treatments.

## Our process for awarding new grants

CCLG's process for awarding new research grants is based on the steps recommended by the AMRC meaning that independent external peer review is steering the process.

- Grant round defined & advertised
- Internal Triage
- Peer review
- Research Advisory Group\*
- Charity Trustees
- Engagement & Dissemination

\* For this round of grants, in partnership with VIVO Biobank, the CCLG Research Advisory Group will lead on the peer review and make recommendations as to which projects should be funded. The VIVO Biobank Access Committee will approve the release of samples (and/or data) for your project. Once a project has been recommended for funding, this will only be awarded where the VIVO Biobank Access Committee has also approved the release of the materials required for the study.

If there are more high quality submissions than we are able to fund, it might be the case that the VIVO Biobank Access Committee is able to approve sample (and/or data) release, pending your project successfully applying for funding from another source.

## Assessment criteria

Applications will be judged on:

- Research need and scope
- Hypothesis
- Design of proposed study
- Expertise of research team/support available for applicant
- Justification of resources.

More information about what we are looking for in each category can be found below. These are



the criteria that our peer reviewers and Research Advisory Group are asked to score applications against.

#### Research need and scope

- How important is the question being asked or the knowledge gap being addressed? (Does it address one of the Top 10 Children's Cancer PSP Research Priorities?)
- Is this research situated in an area of relevant clinical need for children's cancer?
- Does the application demonstrate an awareness and understanding of previous relevant literature/research in its area?
- To what extent might the proposed research add distinct value or provide an advance to what is already known in the field?
- Does the research have the potential (including through further research) to demonstrate benefit to paediatric cancer patients (even if these only represent small number of potential patients)?
- In what timescale would you estimate potential clinical impact as a result of this research (assuming success of the research)?

#### Hypothesis

- Overall, is the proposal's hypothesis adequately supported by background information/ preliminary evidence?

#### Design of proposed study

- Is the proposed research of high quality and likely to achieve the stated objectives?
- Is the design and methodology well defined? Are they appropriate for the level of study being proposed (e.g. pilot study, proof of principle, data analysis, literature review)?
- Is this research within the applicants' capabilities, and do you base your opinion on background evidence/ preliminary data, track record, or both?
- Is the research feasible within the timeframe and resources requested?
- What are the strengths and weaknesses of the research design as proposed?
- Do you have any comments or suggestions for how the proposed research might be improved? If so, please indicate whether you see these as critical factors.
- Will demonstrable benefits to patients arise from this study, or follow-up projects?

#### Expertise of research team/support available for applicant

- Is the applicant/supervisor familiar with the methodologies outlined in their application?
- Is the applicant/supervisor well qualified to undertake the proposed work on the basis of track record in the disease and/or expertise?
- Do you think there is appropriate expertise within the listed research team to deliver all elements of the proposed research study?

#### Justification of resources

- Are the resources required for this research, including staffing, clearly justified? Are they essential for the work proposed?
- Do you consider the amount of funding being requested appropriate for the level of study being proposed (e.g. pilot grant, proof of principle study, full project, clinical study)?
- Taking into account the expected benefits of the work proposed and the level of resources

- requested, does this application represent good value for money?
- Do the work plan and project management arrangements give confidence that the research will be completed in the specified time frame?

## The application process

You will need to complete your application alongside your nominated supervisor, who should be listed on your application. You should also inform your host institution that you intend to apply, as they will be required to approve your application.

You'll need to submit your application online using our grant management system, FlexiGrant via <https://cclg.flexigrant.com/>. The system is straightforward to use, but if you have any questions or problems using Flexigrant, please contact us on [research@cclg.org.uk](mailto:research@cclg.org.uk).

## Timescales

The closing date for applications is 5pm, Tuesday 1 July 2025. We would expect final decisions to be made by December 2025 and so your proposed start date for the research should reflect this.

## Terms used in Flexigrant

- **Participants:** Other people you can invite to view/edit your application form. Participants include your Administration/Finance Officer, Head of Department, and Proposed Supervisor.
- **Lead applicant:** You - the person leading the research project and the individual whose work is funded by this grant.
- **Supervisor:** An individual with the skills, knowledge, ability and time to support your application and your subsequent research project.
- **Head of Department:** The Head of Department in your institution who will confirm that the research will be accommodated and administered in your institution and that you will be given the protected research time to carry out the project.
- **Administration/Finance Officer:** The individual in your institution (usually in the Research Finance Officer or similar) who will help you complete your proposal budget, accept the grant if awarded, and confirms that costings are correct.

## Completing the application form

On the 'Participants' tab of your application, you should invite:

- Your proposed supervisor
- Your head of department
- The Administration/Finance Officer who will be responsible for administering any grant which may be awarded

Your proposed supervisor will be able to view and help edit your application. The Head of Department and Admin/Finance Officer will be able to view your application. All three must

complete a declaration as part of the application process, and you will be unable to submit your application until these have been completed. Please ensure you complete your application ahead of the deadline, to allow these Participants to complete their declarations prior to the submission deadline. Your institution will be able to advise further on the timescales needed for this to happen.

Once you have registered with Flexigrant and started an application, you will need to complete the online application form, which is split into the following sections:

#### Contact details

Contact details for the Lead Applicant should pre-populate from your Flexigrant profile and can be edited here. You should give your proposed research study a title. Complete the other sections including uploading contact details for your proposed supervisor. You will also need to upload a CV for yourself and your proposed supervisor, which should be compiled into a single document and uploaded as a pdf.

#### Project details

This section asks some basic questions about the nature of the research you are proposing, including the overall cost, proposed timetable, and the type of research.

#### Other sources of funding

This section asks about whether previous research relevant to this study has been funded (by CCLG or elsewhere), whether you are submitting this application (or a related application) to another funder, and whether your project relies on other funding being obtained.

#### Exploitation

This section asks about potential development of intellectual property, and is a standard question we ask all applicants.

#### External reviewers

This section asks you to suggest potential peer reviewers for your research to help us identify suitable people to approach. You can also ask us not to send this to particular people, if there is good reason.

#### Plain English summary

This helps lay reviewers and readers (for example CCLG staff including our marketing team, patient/parent reviewers who may review your application for us) to understand your proposal.

#### Proposed research summary

This section is where you should describe your proposed research study. You should ensure you describe the study as fully as possible, and refer to the above assessment criteria, as this is the main section our expert peer reviewers will use to understand and assess your project's suitability for funding. You can only enter text, but can upload a file containing any figures or references. As this is a pilot grant, we're also asking for you to tell us a little about any future plans for building on the outputs/outcomes of this pilot grant.

### Sample requirements

This section is information required by the VIVO Biobank to authorise the release of samples for your research, if your application is successful.

### Project budget

You should download the budget template spreadsheet, complete this and upload the finished version. Your institution's research finance department (or similar) should help you to complete this.

### Collaborators

Collaborators are not compulsory for this round of grants. However, if the viability of the project is dependent on collaborators, you should complete this section.

### Head of Department declaration

The Head of Department (whom you have invited to this application) will complete their declaration. Your application cannot be submitted until this is complete.

### Financial/Administrative Officer declaration

The Financial/Administrative Officer in your host institution (whom you have invited to this application) will complete their declaration. Your application cannot be submitted until this is complete.

### Supervisor declaration

Your proposed supervisor for the project must complete this declaration. Your application cannot be submitted until this is complete.

Once you have completed each section of your application, each section should appear as 'Complete' and change to a green colour. When all sections are 'Complete', the 'Submit' button will appear on the summary page. Once you are happy with your application, click this button to submit it to CCLG.

**Good luck with your application! If you have any questions, please contact us on [research@cclg.org.uk](mailto:research@cclg.org.uk).**