

# Emerging Leaders Prize 2025

Children and Young  
People's Mental Health

Guidelines for Panel Review

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## Background to the Funder

The Medical Research Foundation is an independent charitable foundation. Formed by the Medical Research Council (MRC), we grow and nurture people and ideas wherever we see research opportunities with great potential. The Medical Research Foundation (and its predecessor charities) have been funding research for over 100 years.

The research in this competition is supported by a gift in will from the estate of Professor Victor Louis Menage and Mrs Johanna Alicia Menage.

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## The Prize

The Medical Research Foundation Emerging Leaders Prize is an annual scheme that aims to recognise outstanding researchers in the early stages of their independent careers who are making an impact in their field and have demonstrated their potential to be the research leaders of the future.

The prize is intended to celebrate the achievements of these individuals and provide them with the resources to elevate them towards becoming an internationally recognised leader in their field.

Prizes are awarded annually with a focus on a different field of scientific research each year. The Emerging Leaders Prizes are intended to have a high impact on the winners.

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## Funding Available

The Medical Research Foundation will award up to £200,000. A top prize of £100,000 will be awarded and smaller prizes of various amounts for second place and highly commended candidates. Applicants may apply for up to £100,000 over 18 months.

Prizes are awarded annually with a focus on a different field of scientific research each year. The Emerging Leaders Prizes are intended to have a high impact on the winners. The prize is not a project grant and winners will be able to use the prize money flexibly to support their professional research career development. Examples of our previous emerging research leaders can be found on our [website](#).

It can be used to support career development activities such as personalised leadership training, collaboration development, and flexible working opportunities. The usual direct costs of research such as salaries of support staff, consumables and equipment can be included; however, applicants are encouraged to think creatively about the use of the prize. The prize cannot be used to pay the salary of the winner, nor can it be used to meet directly allocated or indirect costs of the winner's research.

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## Scientific Theme

The 2025 Emerging Leaders Prize will recognise and celebrate researchers who have made significant contributions to research on the mental health of children and young people. This may include, but is not limited to, developing knowledge or contributing to impact in the following areas:

- Aetiology of mental health outcomes in children and/or young people
- Risk and resilience factors
- Development of effective interventions and preventative strategies

Applications within a broad field of children and/or young people's mental health research are welcomed. However, we particularly encourage applications from eligible researchers working in neglected areas of mental health, including eating disorders, addiction and substance use disorders, and suicide and self-harm.

However, applications including research on all mental health topics in children and young people will be considered. Research on neurodevelopmental disorders must be in the context of, or co-occurring with, mental health outcomes.

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## Who can apply?

The prize is open to anyone at the relevant career stage who is doing research on children and young people's mental health including, but not limited to, clinicians, scientists and allied health professionals. Applicants must be UK-based researchers at eligible institutions (UK HEIs, Research Council research institutes, hospitals, GP practices and other clinics, and other independent research organisations). Applicants must hold a PhD, DPhil or UK MD (or equivalent non-UK clinical research doctorate) and be conducting their research at an eligible institution. Applicants may be a citizen of any country but must already have an employment contract at an eligible institution within the UK that covers the duration of the prize award.

It is expected that applicants will have transitioned to an independent research position. They should demonstrate productivity across their past career and an upward trajectory, as well as be able to demonstrate a track record of leading nationally competitive research, an ability to manage their own independent research group, and have clear plans to develop into an internationally recognised leader in the field.

Applicants should be starting to show evidence of recognition and leadership in the community, have a strong track record of original and productive independent research with impact in the field (for example evidenced by senior author publication(s)), and success at securing research funding (such as previous small/medium project grants or early career/intermediate fellowships) to establish their research niche or independence. Broadly, the impact they have made may include generation of new knowledge, developing capacity in the field, contribution to policy development and implementation or developing new methodologies, interventions and skills for the research and medical community in the field.

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## Integrity of Panel Members: Declarations of Interest

Integrity between the Medical Research Foundation, applicant and reviewer is essential. Panel members are asked to identify any possible conflicts of interest before they begin reviewing an application and to discuss with the Foundation their potential conflicts.

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## Confidentiality

The proposal and any associated papers have been forwarded 'in confidence'. When undertaking to review a proposal, a reviewer commits to keeping all information confidential and never to use, retain or copy the information in the proposal. Reviewers must not make use of the research designs or research findings from a proposal under review and should not allow others to do so.

Reviewers accept and acknowledge that any comments submitted to the Medical Research Foundation may be provided to the applicant, on a confidential basis and in anonymised form, to allow an applicant to respond to issues raised as part of the peer review process and to benefit future proposals. Reviewers should be careful not to include information in their review which compromises their anonymity. Applicants and Panel members are also required to maintain a similar duty of confidence as it is recognised that reviewers may, from time to time refer to ongoing research, either their own or other researchers for the purposes of comparison.

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## AI in Peer Review

As members of the AMRC we support its position statement on the use of AI in grant funding applications and assessment:

*“Maintaining confidentiality is essential for safeguarding the exchange of scientific opinions and assessments. As such, our peer reviewers must not input content from our confidential funding applications or reviews into, or use, generative AI tools to develop their peer review critiques or applicant responses to critiques. Our peer reviewers are selected for their expertise and experience in their field and we value their unique perspectives.”*

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## Review Process

Our online grant management system, Flexi-Grant will be used by Panel to complete reviews and access documents required for Panel meetings (where appropriate). You will receive a link to this via email. Once you have clicked the link, you will be prompted to create an account should you not already have one.

### **For written review:**

You will then be assigned and directed to the online review form and the applications you have been assigned to review. Please ensure that you check the synopsis of each application for any conflicts of interest before commencing your reviews.

### **Committee Workspace for Panel Meetings:**

If you are attending the Panel meetings, you will be able to view the full applications with reviews beforehand on our online system unless a conflict of interest has been identified. Upon logging in using the following link <https://medicalresearchfoundation.flexigrant.com/default.aspx> , please click on Committee Meetings at the top of the page to access the meeting documents and applications.

**Important Note:** Please ensure that when you access applications, you **download the full PDF** of the application, rather than viewing it online, as the applicant’s CV will only be visible in the PDF version. Ensure that you take note of the documents attached to the application, which will appear at the **end of the PDF**. Once your Panel Review commitments have come to an end, please ensure you destroy any downloaded documents.

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## Assessment Form and Criteria

Assessment forms have been provided for the applications to be reviewed. Panel members are asked to provide comments on the applications under the three assessment criteria listed:

- Applicant’s Contribution to Research Field
- Applicant’s Potential as an Emerging Research Leader
- Plans for use of the Prize funds

A breakdown of the criteria details can be found below:

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### **Applicant’s Contribution to Research Field**

- Scientific quality of work
  - Track record of nationally competitive research.
  - Evidence of building and developing excellent national and international collaborations within/between/across disciplines to drive research.
  - Strong track record of original and productive independent research with impact in the field (e.g. senior author publications).

- Significance and impact of the applicant's research on the field and/or for patients
  - Has the outcome from their research led to a paradigm shift (a new way of thinking/a new technique?)
  - Has it or could it lead to significant advancements in the field (details of how piece of research might impact field/patients in future).
  - Has the research impacted on a national/international scale?
- The role of the applicant in the research
  - Have they personally driven the work, to what extent?
  - What is unique and/or novel about their contributions?

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### Applicant's Potential as an Emerging Leader

**Please note:** The Medical Research Foundation has not assessed the eligibility of or removed applicants based on their career stage. Please ensure that you assess whether the applicant is at the appropriate career stage for this award, and is currently an *emerging* leader, rather than having already firmly established research independence and international leadership in the field. Please contact the Medical Research Foundation team for further guidance if required.

- Demonstration of transition to research leadership
- Success at securing personal/research funding
- Invitations to present at conferences or on national/international platforms
- Track record of management of laboratory staff or research team
  - Maximising potential in others/training and development of staff and or junior team members
  - Supervisory role for PhD, Masters, or undergraduate students
- Dissemination /communication of research outcomes to different audiences within and outside of the research communities.
- Advice or influence of the research agenda
  - Development of research standards or guidelines/committee membership.

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### Plans for use of Prize funds

- Will the funds be used to develop the applicant as a researcher?
- Will the funds help to inject even greater momentum into their career or to further progress the research they have highlighted?
- Will they use of the prize funds to underpin their future work?
- Will they use the funds to pursue research training opportunities that broaden their development and develop their leaderships skills and/or seek new opportunities to develop their career?
- For example: professional development such as management and leadership training
- Have they thought carefully about the potential impact of these prize funds on their research career trajectory?
- Do their plans for using these funds further demonstrate their leadership potential the future?
- Will their plans for using the prize funds make a contribution to advancing research in the mental health of children and young people in the UK?

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### Scoring Range for Panel Members

Using the Scoring Range on the next page, the Panel is asked to provide scoring for the selection of applications between 0-10 and state whether each applicant should be invited to interview or not.

These scores will be discussed in the shortlisting meeting on Thursday 3 July 2025. Following shortlisting, the top-ranking applicants will be invited to interview on Wednesday 17 September 2025.

10	Exceptional
9	Excellent
8	Very High Quality
7	High Quality
6	Very Good Quality
5	Good Quality
4	Good with minor weaknesses
3	Good with major weaknesses
2	Poor quality
1	Unacceptable quality
0	Ineligible for funding/outside scope or remit

### Scoring Range for Panel Review

Score Indicators	Score
<b>Exceptional research leadership potential, exceptional contribution to research field</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Applicant’s contribution to research field               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Exceptionally high achiever with a profound significance and impact on field of research</li> <li>- Leading involvement in design and delivery of work</li> <li>- Leading national and international contribution</li> </ul> </li> <li>■ Applicant’s potential as an emerging research leader               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Excellent leadership potential</li> <li>- Very high likelihood of national and international leadership</li> </ul> </li> <li>■ Plans for use of the prize funds               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Excellent plans with very high likelihood of impacting on candidate’s career trajectory</li> <li>- Very high likelihood of successful delivery</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<b>10</b>
<b>Excellent research leadership potential, competitive and excellent contribution to research field</b>	

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Applicant's contribution to research field <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Very high achiever with very high impact on field of research</li> <li>- Very high involvement in design and delivery of work</li> <li>- Very high national and/or international impact</li> </ul> </li> <li>■ Applicant's potential as an emerging research leader <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Very good leadership experience</li> <li>- Significant potential to become an internationally competitive research leader</li> <li>- High likelihood of national and international leadership</li> </ul> </li> <li>■ Plans for use of the prize funds <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- High likelihood of impacting candidate's career trajectory</li> <li>- High likelihood of successful delivery</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<b>9</b>
<b>Very High Quality – Very high research leadership potential, very high contribution to research field</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Applicant's contribution to research field <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- High achiever with high impact on field of research</li> <li>- High involvement in design and delivery of work</li> <li>- High national impact and some international impact</li> </ul> </li> <li>■ Applicant's potential as an emerging research leader <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Good leadership experience</li> <li>- Good likelihood of national and international leadership</li> </ul> </li> <li>■ Plans for use of the prize funds <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Good likelihood of impacting on candidate's career trajectory</li> <li>- Good likelihood of successful delivery</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<b>8</b>
<b>High Quality – High research leadership potential, high contribution to research field</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Applicant's contribution to research field <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Good level of impact on field of research for career stage</li> <li>- Good involvement in design and delivery of work</li> <li>- National impact, low or no international impact</li> </ul> </li> <li>■ Applicant's potential as an emerging research leader <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Appropriate leadership experience</li> <li>- Good likelihood of national leadership</li> </ul> </li> <li>■ Plans for use of the prize funds <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Likelihood of successful delivery</li> <li>- Likelihood of impacting on candidate's career trajectory</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<b>7</b>
<b>Very good Quality – Very good research leadership potential, very good contribution to research field</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Applicant's contribution to research field <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Some contribution to research field</li> <li>- Some involvement in design and delivery of work</li> </ul> </li> <li>■ Applicant's potential as an emerging research leader <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Some leadership experience</li> <li>- Some potential of national leadership</li> </ul> </li> <li>■ Plans for use of the prize funds <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Potential to impact on candidate's career trajectory</li> <li>- Potential for successful delivery</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<b>6</b>
<b>Good Quality – Good research leadership potential, good contribution to research field</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Applicant's contribution to research field <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Some contribution to research field</li> <li>- Involvement in design and delivery of work</li> </ul> </li> <li>■ Applicant's potential as an emerging research leader <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Some leadership potential, but not yet fully demonstrated</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<b>5</b>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Plans for use of the prize funds <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Potential to impact on candidate's career trajectory</li> <li>- Potential for adequate delivery</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	
<b>Potentially useful: with minor weaknesses – some research leadership potential</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Applicant's contribution to research field <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Limited contribution to research field</li> <li>- Limited involvement in design and delivery of work</li> </ul> </li> <li>■ Applicant's potential as an emerging research leader <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Leadership potential not demonstrated, but possibility of potential</li> </ul> </li> <li>■ Plans for use of the prize funds <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Some potential for adequate delivery</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<b>4</b>
<b>Potentially useful: with major weaknesses - low research leadership potential</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Applicant's contribution to research field <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Limited contribution to research field</li> <li>- Limited involvement in design and delivery of work</li> </ul> </li> <li>■ Applicant's potential as an emerging research leader <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Leadership potential not demonstrated</li> </ul> </li> <li>■ Plans for use of the prize funds <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Little/no potential for adequate delivery</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<b>3</b>
<b>Poor quality – bordering on unacceptable</b>	
Candidate has not demonstrated leadership potential or impact on the research field	<b>2</b>
<b>Unacceptable quality</b>	
Application is of an unacceptable quality	<b>1</b>
<b>Ineligible for funding</b>	
Candidate is not at the appropriate career stage for the emerging leaders prize scheme and is ineligible	<b>0</b>