



MHP Partnership Fund Assessment Criteria

The MHP Partnership Fund provides support for early career researchers (ECRs) to deliver short-term, high-impact activities that strengthen partnerships, advance career development, and maximise the translational potential of their mental health research.

Applications are assessed through a transparent, structured process, focusing on partnership strength, translational potential, cross-Hub collaboration, and capacity building.

Assessment Panel Composition

Each application will be assessed by:

- Director of the MHP
- 2–3 Hub representatives (Lead, Co-Lead, or researcher level)
- PPIE representatives, where relevant (expected for proposals with patient/public impact)
- Independent representatives (e.g. industry, healthcare partners), where relevant

Decision making:

Decisions are made by majority agreement of the panel.

Outcomes:

1. Fund in full
2. Fund with conditions/modifications
3. Not funded

All decisions are shared with the MHP Leadership Team (LT) and PPIE Steering Group (SG) for oversight.

Resubmission:

Applicants may submit up to three applications in total and hold only one active award at a time. One resubmission is permitted per unsuccessful proposal, which must clearly address prior feedback.

Assessment Criteria and Scoring

The following assessment criteria and scoring will be utilised by the assessment panel:

Category	Weight	Assessment Questions / Criteria
Partnership quality & strategic value	35%	• Clear aims and appropriate project planning. • Meaningful and proportionate PPIE activities. • Feasible timeline and budget • Strength and credibility of the partner organisation (e.g. industry, third sector, healthcare, MDC-type partners) • Clarity of <i>why this partner</i> is needed <i>now</i> (specific skills, facilities, pipelines, regulatory insight, routes to impact) • Evidence the partnership goes beyond “networking” (co-design, shadowing, embedded activity, secondment, joint problem framing)

		• Quality of partner commitment: • Named partner contact • Clear contribution (time, access, expertise, facilities, data, mentorship) • Likelihood the relationship will continue beyond the funded activity • Appropriateness of in-person engagement (clear justification for travel/secondment/workshops)
Translational & real-world impact	25%	• Clear translational pathway (e.g. towards industry adoption, clinical pathway, diagnostics, digital health, policy, services) • Alignment with real-world problems faced by partners (industry- and/or lived experience- challenge framing encouraged) • Likelihood of tangible next steps post-award: ◦ Follow-on funding bids ◦ Joint grant or commercial proposals ◦ Co-developed pilot projects ◦ New translational pipelines ◦ Potential benefit to patients, publics, services, or healthcare systems ◦ Appropriateness for short-term, catalytic funding (is this the right intervention at the right moment?)
Cross-Hub integration & added value	20%	• Involvement of 2+ Hubs, where applicable, with clearly distinct and complementary expertise • Evidence of genuine integration (shared problem framing, joint activities, co-learning) • Added value of genuine cross-Hub working • Potential to seed longer-term cross-Hub initiatives, grants, or platforms • Contribution to MHP community building and culture of collaboration
Capacity building & leadership	20%	• Clear personal development gains or capacity building for researchers (including ECRs and those with lived experience) / Associate members / people with lived experience • Acquisition of <i>non-academic translational skills</i> (e.g. regulatory, product development, IP awareness, industry workflows) • Opportunities for leadership, visibility, and network expansion

		• Mentorship and support structures in place (including from partners) • Potential to shift career trajectory or open new translational pathways
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Scoring and Funding Decision Framework

Each application will be scored from 1 (poor) to 5 (excellent) across all criteria using a scoring form and weighted according to the scheme. The overall weighted score may be utilised as a guidance to determine the funding recommendation:

- 4.0 – 5.0: Fund in full
Strong across all criteria, with no major weaknesses and only minor clarifications required
- 3.0 – 3.9: Fund with conditions/modifications
Good proposal but with clear, fixable issues (e.g. budget adjustments, unclear partner roles, limited cross-Hub integration, or overstated outcomes)
- Below 3.0: Not funded
Significant weaknesses, such as poor partnership justification, lack of a clear translational pathway, or misalignment with the fund's purpose

Numerical scores are used to guide funding recommendations; However, final decisions are made by panel consensus, with overall judgement taking precedence over strict score thresholds.

Applications may still be rejected regardless of their score if they do not meet essential criteria, such as credible partnerships, clear translational relevance, or eligibility requirements. Additionally, final funding decisions may also take into account strategic fit, portfolio balance, and the available budget.

What to expect after you apply

If your application is successful

The MHP Coordinating team, in collaboration with the University of Edinburgh Research office, will issue a MHP Subaward to the ECR's host institution for signature. The project is expected to start within six months of the decision being made and within one month of the subaward letter being signed. Funding will be administered directly by the MHP Coordinating Team, with all expenditure required to align with your approved budget and supported by appropriate documentation. You may be asked to provide financial records during the award period.

Before your project/activity begins, you must ensure that any necessary collaboration agreements with external partners are in place. All funded activities must comply with MHP

values and relevant UKRI/MRC policies, including data sharing and intellectual property requirements.

As an award holder, you are responsible for delivering the project/activity as agreed, using funds appropriately, and notifying the Coordinating Team of any significant changes or underspend. You will also be required to acknowledge MHP funding in outputs and submit a short report within three months of project completion.

Please note that MHP reserves the right to amend or withdraw funding if award conditions are not met or if there are significant changes to the project. A template award letter is available to applicants upon request.

If your application is unsuccessful

You will be notified by the MHP Coordinating Team. Due to the competitive and rolling nature of the fund, detailed feedback may not always be provided.

Applicants may revise and resubmit their application once, incorporating any feedback provided, subject to the availability of funds.