



# Commissioned research funding brief: attitudes towards MS prevention

September 2024

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## 1. Background and context

Our James Lind Alliance (JLA) Priority Setting Partnership in 2013 identified the 10 highest priority unanswered research questions for people affected by MS, their carers and health care professionals. The second question was ‘how can MS be prevented?’.

- [Read about our JLA research priorities on our website.](#)

Risk reduction and prevention is one of the six themes in our current Research Strategy. Ultimately our goal here is to prevent MS for future generations. But research into MS prevention has been largely underfunded for decades. A recent landscape analysis found only 8% of current global investment to MS research focuses on risk reduction or prevention<sup>1</sup>.

- [Download our 2023-2024 Research Strategy Extension from our website.](#)

In December 2023, we established a UK MS Prevention Taskforce to boost MS prevention research. This brings together a small group of researchers from MS and related disease areas and people affected by MS to discuss the role of research in accelerating progress towards the prevention of MS. Their purpose is to develop an action plan enabling progress towards MS risk reduction. And ultimately primary prevention.

## 2. Summary of the call

The Taskforce has identified a need for research exploring attitudes towards MS risk and prevention. We need to better understand what people’s views are on these topics so we can develop appropriate information resources. And understand how to communicate about risk and prevention in the most effective, ethical and sensitive way. Including in the context of prevention research.

We’re therefore inviting applications for a short-term qualitative research project exploring perceptions and attitudes towards MS risk and prevention in two populations:

1. People living with MS
2. First degree relatives of people with MS, who don’t have a diagnosis of MS themselves (i.e. those who may be at greater risk of developing MS)

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<sup>1</sup> Bebo B, Coetzee T, Gray E, et al. (2024). The first global landscape analysis of multiple sclerosis research funding. *Multiple Sclerosis Journal*. doi: [10.1177/13524585241265961](https://doi.org/10.1177/13524585241265961)

We intend to fund **one** project through this commissioned call. And we expect that the successful project will:

- Provide insight into the perceptions and attitudes towards MS risk and prevention in those already living with MS, and those who may be at increased risk of MS compared to the general population (first degree relatives). And the similarities and differences between these two groups.
- Use these insights to develop recommendations to support communication around MS risk. And strategies and approaches that may be most effective to support involvement and participation in MS prevention research.

The key deliverable will be a summary report of the research findings and recommendations.

### **Timescale**

The project should start by April 2025, and can be up to a maximum of 9 months in duration.

### **Budget**

Up to £60,000. This can include salary costs, equipment and consumable costs. Examples of consumable costs are researcher and participant travel for data collection, transcription, participant reimbursement, PPI costs. All costs requested must be fully justified in your application. And they must all be directly incurred costs of the project.

### **Who's eligible to apply?**

This is an open call, so any eligible UK-based researcher can apply.

You must be based at a UK university or NHS institution and be the Principal Investigator (PI) of the project. Your application must include an applicant with a tenured position for the duration of the Award. This doesn't have to be the lead applicant.

Established researchers or more junior/early career researchers can apply. If you're an early career researcher, you must demonstrate that you have the skills and experience necessary to lead this project. The expertise and suitability of the Lead Applicant (PI) and other members of the project team will be assessed as part of the review process.

The project team must include somebody with experience of undertaking MS research. And/or an MS clinician. This is in addition to involvement of people affected by MS. Inclusion of people affected by MS as co-applicants or advisers is strongly encouraged, but not a requirement. At a minimum your proposal must have clear and robust patient and public involvement plans.

## **3. Application process**

- Applications open: early October 2024
- Deadline for applications: 12 noon on Tuesday 12 November 2024

Your application must be submitted through [CC Grant Tracker](#). Before submitting your application you must carefully read our 'Attitudes towards MS prevention applicant guidance'. This will be available to [download from the funding page of our website](#) once we've opened for applications.

## Patient and public involvement in your research

Patient and public involvement (PPI) in research is when people with personal experience of health conditions work in active partnership with researchers. Or with research funders like us.

Involvement isn't the same as recruiting participants to your study or sharing information with people through public engagement events. Involvement is about working in partnership with people affected by MS to shape, design and oversee a project.

We expect applications to this funding call to have strong PPI plans. And in your application you'll be asked to describe:

1. How people affected by MS have been involved in the development of your proposal (pre-application involvement)
2. How you plan to involve people affected by MS in your ongoing study, if funded.

We can support you to plan and budget for your public involvement, connect you with people affected by MS and to carry out activities. [Get in touch with us by emailing researchnetwork@mssociety.org.uk](mailto:researchnetwork@mssociety.org.uk).

## 4. Review process

Your application will be assessed on the quality of science. And the suitability and relevance to this call. The feasibility of completing the project within the timeframe and budget will also be a key consideration. Applications will be reviewed and scored by researchers with relevant expertise. And by people affected by MS (lay review).

We recommend writing in Plain English throughout your application as this improves accessibility. And means that all reviewers can fully engage with and understand your proposal.

## 5. Contact us

Please let us know if you have any questions or need help. You can [email us at research@mssociety.org.uk](mailto:research@mssociety.org.uk) or call us on 020 8438 0822.

**Thank you for your interest in our research funding.**

**We're the MS Society.**  
Our community is here for  
you through the highs, lows  
and everything in between.  
We understand what life's  
like with MS.

Together, we are strong  
enough to stop MS.  
[mssociety.org.uk](http://mssociety.org.uk)

**Contact us**

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**Multiple Sclerosis Society**

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