Job Description
NIHR Academic Clinical Fellow in Multiple Long Term Conditions: Rheumatology, General Practice and Geriatric Medicine
University of Bristol

1. Job title & entry level(s):

Academic Clinical Fellow

Rheumatology: ST1, ST2, ST3, ST4
Geriatric Medicine: ST1, ST2, ST3, ST4
General Practice: ST1, ST2, ST3

Please note that there is also potential for an additional Locally Funded ACF post in General Practice to be awarded as part of this advert.

2. Duration of post:

3 years (FTE)

General Practice only - 4 years (FTE)

Candidates working Less Than Full Time (LTFT) or would like should notify the relevant Local Office/Deanery at point of offer of your intention to work LTFT and this will be considered against the national eligibility criteria.

3. Hospitals in which training will take place:

This training post is based in Severn Deanery. Rotations have not been confirmed at this stage. Should you wish to explore this in more detail, please get in touch with the Training Programme Director.

General Practice: The hospital training (ST1) will mainly take place in either University Hospitals Bristol and Weston NHS Trust or North Bristol NHS Trust. Some rotations, mainly in ST2 may take place in a Community Mental Health trust or other community setting.

4. Research institutions in which training will take place:

University of Bristol - https://www.bristol.ac.uk/medical-school/study/clinical/

Rheumatology: Musculoskeletal Research Unit | Bristol Medical School: Translational Health Sciences | University of Bristol

Geriatric Medicine: Global Health and Ageing Research Unit, University of Bristol (https://globalhealthageing.blogs.bristol.ac.uk/), in collaboration with The Health Research Unit Zimbabwe, Harare (https://www.thruzim.org/) (part of the Biomedical Research and Training Institute)

General Practice: Centre for Academic Primary Care (CAPC), Department of Population Health Sciences, Bristol Medical School, University of Bristol.
Centre for Academic Primary Care | Centre for Academic Primary Care | University of Bristol

5. Timetabling of clinical and research time:

75% clinical 25% research in a flexible way during the working week or months in accordance with pre-agreed arrangements between the clinical and academic supervisors.
General Practice: In ST1 and ST2 the focus is on clinical work. In ST3 and ST4 the split is 50/50 – clinical and research.

6. Description of research component of programme

Rheumatology
Research will be undertaken within either the Musculoskeletal Research Unit at Southmead Hospital or the Rheumatology Research Group in the Department of Life Sciences at the University of Bath, according to the successful applicant's research interests.

University of Bristol
The research will be undertaken at the Musculoskeletal Research Unit which is based at Southmead Hospital, and is part of the School of Translational Health Sciences of Bristol Medical School, Faculty of Health Sciences, University of Bristol.

Research sessions will be within the Academic Rheumatology Group headed by Professor Emma Clark. The appointee will conduct research under the academic supervision of Professor Emma Clark , Associate Professor John Pauling, Dr Philip Hamann (Hon. Clinical Lecturer) and/or Dr Ben Faber (Wellcome Trust post-doctoral fellow). A range of research projects are available related to musculoskeletal disorders including osteoarthritis, osteoporosis, scoliosis, rheumatoid arthritis, Raynaud's phenomenon, systemic sclerosis, vasculitis or myositis. A broad range of clinical, epidemiological (CPRD, UK Biobank and ALSPAC cohorts with strong links with MRC Integrated Epidemiological Unit), genetic , artificial intelligence (AI), qualitative, outcome measure development and big data approaches are used in our research. We have an excellent track record in securing externally funded clinical research fellowships (e.g., MRC Clinical Research Training Fellowships) for our ACFs, who after completing a PhD have been appointed as NIHR Academic Clinical Lecturers and gone on to gain post-doctoral fellowships (e.g., Wellcome Trust Early Career Award).

Research training opportunities in epidemiology, genetic epidemiology, coding, clinical outcome measure development, clinical trial design and statistics will be provided as required, through working with research staff within the unit, other collaborators within the population health theme particularly the MRC IEU and through enrolment in short courses run by the Department of Population Health Sciences. The University of Bristol hosts the Avon Longitudinal Study of Parents and Children (ALSPAC), a world leading birth cohort; one of the largest electronic patient reported outcomes (ePROMs) databases in the UK; and the National Joint Registry. The University is home to the UK's most powerful supercomputer (Isambard) and was voted AI University of the Year 2024. It is a global leader in digital health research and offers opportunities research and collaboration through the Digital Health Research Group.

University of Bath

The Rheumatology Research Group at the University of Bath is based within the Department of Life Sciences and is led by Professor Neil McHugh. The group have an established track record of supporting Academic Clinical Fellows and Clinical Lecturers to secure competitive doctoral and postdoctoral funding. The post offers an excellent opportunity for an Academic Clinical Fellow (ACF) to develop research skills within a supportive, multidisciplinary and internationally recognised research environment.

ACFs receive tailored mentorship and have access to a broad range of research and teaching opportunities, together with training in key academic skills, including grant writing, scientific communication, epidemiology, biostatistics, causal inference methods and machine learning. The programme is designed to help ACFs develop a competitive research portfolio and prepare strong applications for externally funded doctoral fellowships.

Research opportunities span the spectrum of musculoskeletal and autoimmune rheumatic diseases, including psoriatic arthritis, axial spondyloarthritis, lupus, vasculitis and myositis. Projects are available under the supervision of experienced clinical academics, including Dr William Tillett and Dr Sarah Tansley, and can be tailored to the successful candidate's interests and career aspirations.

The successful candidate will have the opportunity to develop expertise across a diverse range of research methodologies. Laboratory-based projects include autoimmune serology, autoantibody discovery, biomarker development and translational immunology. Epidemiological and data-driven research utilises large real-world datasets, including the Clinical Practice Research Datalink (CPRD), in addition to Royal National Hospital for Rheumatic Diseases longitudinal cohorts and biobanks.

The University of Bath provides a vibrant interdisciplinary research environment with close links to the Royal National Hospital for Rheumatic Diseases and collaborators across academia, industry and international rheumatology research networks. These partnerships provide outstanding opportunities for multidisciplinary collaboration, enabling ACFs to develop the research skills, experience and professional networks needed to secure doctoral fellowship funding and build a successful academic career.

Geriatric Medicine at the University of Bristol

The ACF would join the NIHR funded Global Health and Ageing Research Unit (GHARU) within Bristol Medical School. The Unit has a longstanding collaboration with The Health Research Unit Zimbabwe (THRU-ZIM; thruzim.org), a unit within the Biomedical Research and Training Institute (BRTI) in Harare. The ACF would join this multi-disciplinary international team and embed their research within the Unit’s research portfolio.

As the scope of the Unit’s work is multi-disciplinary, there would be flexibility to work on quantitative or qualitative research, or mixed-methods, depending upon the scope of interest and skills of the ACF. One of the largest studies underway, led by Prof Gregson, which provides a framework for embedding an ACF project, is the NIHR and MRC funded KOSHESAI study - **K**eeping **O**lder people healthy: de**S**igning and evaluating effective **HE**alth **S**ervices to maintain functional **A**b**I**lity. This is a hybrid effectiveness-intervention study with a mixed-methods process and cost evaluation of a co-designed healthy ageing check for community-dwelling older people in Zimbabwe. The study aims to co-develop and implement an evidence-based clinical framework for non-specialist assessment and management of multiple long-term conditions of ageing which impact functional ability, to improve health and wellbeing of older people living in Zimbabwe. The evidence-based clinical framework builds on the principles set out in the World Health Organization (WHO) Integrated Care for Older People (ICOPE) focusing on mobility, malnutrition, cognition, depression, vision, hearing, and to which we have added continence. The dataset is novel and extensive, including detailed data on >1400 people age ≥65 years, with plenty of scope for the ACF to carve out their own analysis in their area of interest.

Another avenue for ACF research relates to musculoskeletal ageing – osteoporosis, sarcopenia, osteoarthritis – and multimorbidity. Prof Gregson leads the Fractures in Sub-Saharan Africa: epidemiology, economic impact and ethnography (Fractures-E^3) study, a Wellcome-funded mixed-methods research programme investigating the epidemiology, economic impact, and

treatment provision for fracture and, through additional MRC funding, wider musculoskeletal and ageing health, in The Gambia, South Africa and Zimbabwe. We have collected the largest dataset on musculoskeletal health in older adults in Africa, with many long-term conditions phenotyped, and these data are available for secondary analyses, including application of novel AI methods to an extensive library of radiographic imaging data.

The ACF appointed to this post would be expected to be an active member of this international team, being sensitive to cultural contexts, supporting junior colleagues in their own learning, as well as pursuing their own career objectives. The GHAR Unit team in Bristol includes post-doctoral researchers with expertise in social science, epidemiology, biostatistics, physiotherapy and nursing, who will be able to support ACF learning and skills development. The ACF would be encouraged to visit THRU-Zim during training programme. The ACF would be able to analyse data, present their work at conferences, write up manuscripts for publication, apply initially for their own smaller grant funding, before then applying for a PhD Fellowship within the scope of Global Health and Ageing.

The ACF would have access to a range of research training opportunities in epidemiology, statistics, study design, qualitative methods as required, through working with research staff within the unit, other collaborators within the population health theme particularly the MRC IEU and through enrolment in short courses run by the Department of Population Health Sciences.

General Practice:

The ACF will be supported to undertake research in a topic area of their choosing, within the overarching theme of multiple long-term conditions. The first 2 years comprise 12 months in hospital or community posts and 12 months in an integrated training post that includes 6 months in a local practice during which trainees have an academic supervisor from CAPC as well as their clinical and educational supervisors. Although there are no formal timetabled academic sessions, trainees are encouraged to attend relevant academic meetings, courses and conferences during the first 2 years. The research component mainly takes place in ST3 and ST4 when trainees spend half their time in CAPC; the time is split flexibly 50/50 between CAPC and the training practice. Their academic and educational supervisors will ensure that they have realistic goals and the means to achieve them, especially the MRCGP.

The ACF will be supported by Dr Rachel Johnson, whose research interests are in multiple long-term conditions, cardiovascular conditions and the organization and delivery of care, with a focus on engaging under-served communities in research. ACFs are encouraged to join a current research project, or to develop their particular interest, supported by the breadth of clinical and methodological expertise in CAPC. Projects may be based on a range of methodologies, including systematic reviews, qualitative methods, epidemiology and “big data”, translational clinical research, or trials. The ACF will gain skills in the design, set up and delivery of studies, and will be supported to present their work at national and international meetings as well as preparing work for publication in high impact, peer reviewed journals.

Areas the ACF may wish to pursue in line with the current interests of the research group include:

- How care is organized for people with MLTC to improve patient experience, efficiency and health outcomes
- Exploring the utility of MLTC-relevant metrics (including treatment burden, continuity or care, co-ordination of care) in a range of populations
- Development and testing of interventions to improve the quality of care for people with MLTC, including specific groups for whom MLTC is most relevant (for example people with heart failure).
- How best to support the mental health needs of people with MLTC, including cardiometabolic MLTC

- Supporting shared decision making in MLTC

CAPC is part of the NIHR School for Primary Care Research, has a very high national and international profile in academic primary care and an excellent track record in developing academic GPs. CAPC's impactful multiple long term conditions research includes the largest ever randomised controlled trial of an intervention to improve care for patients with multimorbidity. We are supported by world-class expertise within the Faculty of Health Sciences, including the Bristol NIHR Biomedical Research Centre and the Bristol Trials Centre.

ACFs develop research skills either by undertaking an MSc and/or courses available through the School of Clinical Academic Training at Severn Postgraduate Medical Education. ACFs will be able and encouraged to attend the highly regarded research methodology short courses run by the Bristol Medical School (www.bristol.ac.uk/medical-school/study/short-courses/). The ultimate aim is to prepare a higher degree application. All trainees will be members of the Clinical Academic Training school at Health Education HEE Southwest (Severn) as well as the Severn Primary Care school and are part of a supportive peer group. For more information see http://www.bristol.ac.uk/primaryhealthcare

7. Description of clinical training component of programme

Rheumatology

Successful applicants will be expected to continue with the clinical training programme within the Severn Deanery appropriate to their stage of training (Higher Specialty Rheumatology training with entry level at ST4) including completion of curriculum competencies. They will however have 25% dedicated research time as part of the ACF. Candidates will continue to be supported as per non-ACF trainees with a named Educational and Clinical supervisors and will have access to all of the educational resources and training activities that are available to non-ACF trainees. They will be expected to continue through the usual Annual Review of Competence Progression process.

Whilst within the ACF programme trainees will be considered supernumerary to the established regional training posts allowing them to undertake the 3 years of the programme in their chosen centre where possible this may be subject to restrictions if still within the IMT programme at the discretion of the IMT Training Programme Directors. On exiting the ACF programme they will continue with higher specialty training within the Severn Deanery rotations with the intention of proceeding to obtaining a Certificate of Completion of Training for Rheumatology.

Bristol

The Bristol Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust rheumatology service, led by nine consultants with expertise in the full range of rheumatological conditions, is based at Southmead Hospital, with satellite clinics in Cossham Hospital and Yate Health Centre. Largely out-patient based, it also has patients who regularly attend as day cases, provides a consultative input to in-patients at Southmead Hospital on request, runs the North Bristol NHS trust DXA service, and provides a musculoskeletal ultrasound service. North Bristol Trust is a leader in developing innovative care pathways including using smartphone apps, remote monitoring and telemedicine clinics.

It is expected that the post holder will undertake regular general rheumatology and sub-specialty outpatient clinics, as well as day case assessments and ward referrals as required. Clinics will be a mixture of general rheumatology and sub-specialist clinics (eg osteoporosis, myositis, systemic sclerosis, connective tissue disease, nailfold capillaroscopy tailored to the candidates research interests). Participation is expected in clinical audit, and weekly postgraduate teaching

activities. There are also opportunities to develop skills in musculoskeletal ultrasound and nailfold capillaroscopy.

Bath

Rheumatology services in Bath are based at the Royal National Hospital for Rheumatic Diseases within the Royal United Hospitals and is led by 11 Consultant Rheumatologists. The post will offer excellent clinical training in all aspects of Rheumatology and will offer specialist training in Autoimmune Connective Tissue Disorders, Psoriatic Arthritis, Early arthritis, Spondyloarthritis and Osteoporosis. Rheumatology training will include regular exposure to general and subspecialty outpatient clinics as well as experience working as part of the Acute Rheumatology Team who undertake day-case and inpatient reviews of acute rheumatology referrals. The clinics rotate every 4 months to allow exposure to all aspects of specialist and general Rheumatology (https://www.ruh.nhs.uk/RNHRD/patients/services/rheumatology/team_consultants.asp?menu_id=10)

General Practice: The clinical training is part of the high-quality Severn GP training scheme based in Bristol practices chosen for their involvement in research and education. The first year (ST1) comprises 3 x 4 month or 2 x 6-month hospital posts. ST2 USUALLY comprises a 12-month integrated GP post with specialties such as ENT, ophthalmology, or a community post such as frailty. Each of the final two years are based 50% in clinical general practice and 50% in the CAPC. Regular clinical teaching occurs throughout the programme. The Bristol vocational training scheme is one of the most competitive within the Severn School for Primary Care. All recent ACF trainees have taken and passed the MRCGP.Academic GP Training - Severn Primary Care

8. Academic Supervisor / Academic Programme Director:

Integrated Academic Training Lead(s):

- Professor Shelley Potter (shelley.potter@bristol.ac.uk)
- Dr Helen Winter (helen.winter@uhbw.nhs.uk)

Academic Leads:

- Rheumatology: Dr John Pauling and Dr Sarah Tansley (John.Pauling@nbt.nhs.uk and slt32@bath.ac.uk)
- General Practice: Associate Professor Rachel Johnson (rachel.johnson@bristol.ac.uk) and Professor Debbie Sharp (Debbie.sharp@bristol.ac.uk)
- Geriatric Medicine: Professor Celia Gregson (Celia.Gregson@bristol.ac.uk)

9. Clinical Training Programme Director:

- Rheumatology:
  - Core (IMT): Dr Abiramy Jeyabalan and Dr Tina Mehta (Abiramy.jeyabalan@nbt.nhs.uk; tmehta@nhs.net)
  - Higher: Dr Andrew Allard (andrew.allard@nhs.net)

- General Practice:
  - Dr Daniela Hall (daniela.hall3@nhs.net)

- Geriatric Medicine:
  - Core (IMT): Dr Abiramy Jeyabalan and Dr Tina Mehta (Abiramy.jeyabalan@nbt.nhs.uk; tmehta@nhs.net)
  - Higher: Dr Debbie Finch (debbie.finch1@nhs.net)

10. Deanery contact for further information:

Recruitment Hotline: 01454 252 610
Recruitment Inbox: England.acfrecruitment.sw@nhs.net

11. Useful websites for further information:

NIHR Integrated Academic Training Website: http://www.nihr.ac.uk/IAT

BMA Junior Doctor Pay Scales (link to latest pay Circular): https://www.bma.org.uk/pay-and-contracts/pay/junior-doctors-pay-scales/pay-scales-for-junior-doctors-in-england

University Clinical Academic Training website: https://www.bristol.ac.uk/medical-school/study/clinical/

This job description was prepared July 2026