

RESEARCH PROJECTS MANAGER

Candidate pack

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Joining Meningitis Research Foundation means addressing a devastating disease of global importance

About meningitis

Meningitis and septicaemia are serious, life-threatening illnesses. Meningitis is the swelling of the meninges, which is the lining around the brain and spinal cord, caused mainly by germs entering the body. Septicaemia is blood poisoning caused by the same germs that can cause meningitis and this blood poisoning causes sepsis. Meningitis and septicaemia can kill in hours. Anyone, anywhere of any age can get meningitis and septicaemia, although some people are at higher risk than others.

Together, meningitis and neonatal sepsis (sepsis in babies under 1 month old when it is

difficult to distinguish from meningitis) are the world’s second biggest infectious killer of children aged under 5. They kill more under 5’s than malaria as well as being a leading cause of moderate to severe intellectual disability worldwide.

The impact of the disease can be devastating for individuals and families. When we ask them what they want us to do on their behalf, families commonly say “Please make sure no one else has to go through what we have”.

2.5 million

cases of meningitis occurred globally in 2019 – including 1.6 million cases of bacterial meningitis, which caused 240 000 deaths

1 in 6



people affected by bacterial meningitis die

1 in 5



people surviving bacterial meningitis suffer from a long-lasting disability

15–20 million

people were living with meningitis-induced long-lasting disabling sequelae in 2019

Meningitis is the fourth-ranked contributor to neurological disorders burden globally



16.3 million

disability-adjusted life years (DALYs) in 2019 because of bacterial meningitis, with >95% in low- and middle-income countries

Research is at the heart of what we do

At Meningitis Research Foundation we fund, enable, and partner on [research](#). The Research Projects Manager is a key role within our team that will help deliver a range of our activities.

We fund research



Since 1989 we have invested £19.5 million into research and between 2025 and 2030 we currently plan to invest £1 million of new funds into research. We have funded over 160 grants in 25 countries that have resulted in over 350 novel publications, in 130 different scientific and medical journals. Researchers we have supported have then secured over £60 million in follow-on funding.

Our research funding has led to the Meningitis Research Foundation Meningococcal Genome Library at the University of Oxford being set up in 2010 as a world first in providing the genetic information for an entire human disease for a whole country. This subsequently supported the set-up of the Global Meningitis Genome Library in 2019 to provide genome data on the four leading causes of bacterial meningitis on a global scale. Our funded research has also provided vital evidence that has informed the NICE guidelines for meningitis and meningococcal septicaemia and raised awareness of the 'red flag' symptoms of the disease to increase early recognition and diagnosis among health professionals.

We carry out research in-house

We have a track record of spotting gaps in the research landscape so we can make a real world impact on meningitis prevention, diagnosis and support. Throughout our next strategy cycle, we want to do this again, examining the long term impacts of meningitis. For example, in 2015 we identified

that existing research did not fully explain the epidemiological global burden of meningitis and that there were real challenges that made this difficult to achieve. Research we conducted in house was able to demonstrate that at the time the latest data estimated that meningitis and neonatal sepsis combined were the second largest infectious killers of children under 5 globally. The research was later published in the journal [Microorganisms](#) and used to support the case for a new global road map for meningitis.

In the next five years we have identified the need for us to conduct more research into the lifetime impact of meningitis in different settings and further work on describing the epidemiological burden of meningitis due to 'all causes'.

We partner on research

We helped establish the Global Meningitis Genome Partnership and now provide the secretariat for the international collaboration. The partnership has an expert steering group, which includes representatives from the, Institut Pasteur, MRC Unit The Gambia at LSHTM, Norwegian Institute of Public Health, UK Health Security Agency, University College London, University of Oxford, US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) Wellcome Sanger Institute and the World Health Organization. The partnership has been instrumental in developing a research project that has recently received a £1 million grant from Wellcome to assess the use of meningitis pathogen genome sequences and their use for public health policy. Meningitis Research Foundation is the Co-Principal Investigator with Centre Suisse de Recherches Scientifiques (CSRS) on the grant and provides oversight project management for four work packages. The new Director of Research will lead our work on this grant.

We bring together the research community

It's impossible to overstate the importance to us of the community of researchers we're privileged to work alongside in our collective efforts to defeat meningitis. The role of Research Projects Manager will work in close collaboration with them in many forms.

Our most high profile research event is our flagship Research Conference that takes place

every two years and we bring as many researchers as possible to share their work over two days in the UK. In the past we have attracted over 300 researchers from around the world.

In intervening years we host an online research webinar that is free to attend and last year attracted over 250 viewers.



The Value Chain: the current flagship project to be managed by this role

A groundbreaking three-year collaborative research project (Unlocking genomic capabilities to defeat meningitis), funded by a £1 million grant from Wellcome, will significantly strengthen meningitis surveillance. It aims to harness the power of whole genome sequencing to improve meningitis control efforts across the world.

Coordinated by Meningitis Research Foundation and Centre Suisse de Recherches Scientifiques in Cote D'Ivoire, Unlocking genomic capabilities to defeat meningitis brings together work across multiple countries and organisations, with global scientific experts at Institut Pasteur, Nigeria Centre for Disease Control and Prevention, the World Health Organization, University College London, Liverpool School of Tropical Medicine, Centre Hospitalier Universitaire de Référence Nationale, Chad and the University of Cambridge collaborating on it.

At the heart of the project is the application and validation of the 'Meningitis Value Chain Framework', a concept to help systematically map out and assess the entire journey of genome sequencing, from when a person is first affected to ensuring that valuable genome data gathered from meningitis-causing bacteria is readily accessible. Doing this can, and should, inform evidence-based public health action.

Unlocking genomic capabilities to defeat meningitis comprehensive approach includes:

Research Stream 1: Led by Dr. Kanny Diallo and Dr. Gilbert Fokou of Centre Suisse de Recherches Scientifiques, this stream assesses the barriers and opportunities for use of whole genome sequencing for bacterial meningitis in low- and middle-income countries. The insights gained will feed directly into validating the Meningitis Value Chain Framework.

Research Stream 2: Under Dr. Kanny Diallo, Centre Suisse de Recherches Scientifiques and Professor Caroline Trotter, University of Cambridge, this stream enables greater knowledge of the barriers and opportunities to

generating genomic data and support increased understanding and use of existing meningitis genome collections.

Training will be developed on genome sequencing for public health scientists in the 26 countries which experience the largest number of meningitis cases in the world (commonly referred to as the African 'meningitis belt'). Alongside this, the existing scientific knowledge on how genome sequence data has been used to inform public health responses to meningitis will be examined and assessed.

Research Stream 3: Led by a team at the Institut Pasteur, Paris, this stream aims to establish global standards for the collection and sharing of meningitis-specific metadata, providing vital contextual information when genome data is being analysed. These standards will facilitate international collaboration and data comparison, ultimately advancing the aims of the World Health Organization's (WHO) Global Road Map to Defeat Meningitis by 2030.

Research stream 4: Steered by Meningitis Research Foundation in collaboration with the Centre Suisse de Recherches Scientifiques communication team, this stream increases knowledge and understanding of the project, so people can see the benefits of investing in, and enabling, meningitis genomics in low- and middle-income countries.

Ultimately this will tell the story of why it is important to advocate for equity, so countries with the least resources can benefit from the advances to be found in the application of genomic sequencing, an approach which will benefit diseases beyond meningitis.

Our ultimate goal is to democratise access to genomic surveillance capabilities, particularly in resource-constrained settings. This initiative not only aims to improve disease tracking and outbreak response but also to accelerate progress towards the WHO's target of defeating meningitis as a public health threat by 2030.

We work hard to make MRF a great place to work

You'll know you're making a difference in the world

The single most important benefit of working for MRF is knowing every day that you're helping to defeat meningitis. This is a devastating disease that affects more than 2 million people each year around the world, killing over 200,000 and leaving 20,000 with life-long after-effects. This can include deafness and neurological impairment. Working for MRF means you're helping to prevent new cases, save lives and support people affected. You are doing something very valuable you can be proud of. We strive to ensure everyone who works for us understands the true impact of meningitis, ensuring opportunities to hear from and build connections with those whose lives have been directly affected by meningitis at every available opportunity.

You'll be close to your team and the people affected

Whatever team or department you work in, you'll have the chance to directly meet with the individuals and families we work for. Many of our team talk to and meet families every day. Everyone gets the chance to be with families at least once a year. We're a close-knit organisation who meet virtually on a regular basis as a whole team, so you'll always hear what's going on in other teams and receive regular in-depth briefings from project leads who are passionate about their work.

You'll receive a competitive salary

Within the charity sector and compared to charities of similar size, similar funds, and similar scope we work hard to make sure our salaries are competitive. We do this by benchmarking every role to available sector data. We use this to inform our salary bands that have lower and upper levels that are updated annually to account for market conditions and inflation. We publish these bands and make sure all staff know what they are.

You'll receive career development support

Your development starts the minute you join us. You will receive a comprehensive induction to our work and your colleagues, supported

with a suite of online resources and training. Your probation goals will show the support you will need from your manager and wider organisation so you settle in quickly and can be up to speed as fast as possible. From that point on you will receive regular contact time with your manager every week who will discuss your ongoing work and development priorities.

Your development will be a continuous, year-round process. Though more formal development conversations take place at least twice each year, this is an ongoing conversation.

In your annual appraisal you will describe and set your personal development plan for the year within a wider discussion with me about your career ambitions. This discussion will also show the training support you need. We believe this works best when staff drive their career development and help research and recommend training and support needed. The more you drive this, the more ownership over your own direction you have. Halfway through the year you will have a mid-year check-in to see how your plan is going.

At Meningitis Research Foundation we believe development can take place within a role, through training, through exposure to working with colleagues in other teams, and through trying new experiences that build skills and confidence beyond the norm. This can be within your existing team or by taking the opportunity to get involved in cross-team projects. You will be given the opportunity to try all of these should you choose.

To support this, we provide a dedicated training and development budget per person, per year. In addition, via our 'Great Place to Work' Sharepoint site we provide easy access to free online training and resources that can be used at any time.

You'll design your work-life balance

We're deeply passionate about our mission and our work. But not at the cost of your wellbeing. Work is very important to us - but so are you. That's why we want you to have as much control as possible over how you work and where you work so that when you are

working you can deliver to the very best of your capabilities.

To support this before you start you will be asked where you want to work. We have staff who work at home, in the office or a mixture of the two. We have staff who choose one of these and then change their patterns. What we want are great, happy people. The roof that's over their head isn't what we measure people by.

Depending on the needs of your role, when you've chosen where you work within the UK, we can discuss how you work on a more regular basis. We have staff who work full-time or part-time though this is set by the job they applied for. We have staff who work 9-5, Monday to Friday. In fact, lots of us still choose to do that. But we also have staff working compressed hours on 4-day weeks.

And in the circumstances where there is no other choice but to pull all the stops out to make something happen and you've needed to work some extra hours you can claim it back to get the rest you need. There's a simple online form to fill in for Time off in Lieu (TOIL). That's so we can see if you need to do this too often, in which case we need to look at hiring more people or reduce your workload.

You'll experience diverse perspectives in person

We love flexibility *and* we love commitment. You'll meet people virtually every day through MSTeams, Zoom or similar platform, but being humans we need to meet other people in person too. That's why wherever you work, our minimum commitment is that you meet your manager and team in person at least once a quarter. You'll meet everyone at MRF for a whole staff meeting twice each year, where we put just as much emphasis on ensuring you can connect with your colleagues as we do on updating, and getting your input, on our key strategic priorities. It's expected that, where practical, teams meet at HQ in person for complex problem solving, celebrating success and working on culture and behaviours that support our success. In these circumstances, the diversity of our knowledge, experience and talents is better shared in person than can ever be recreated online.

You'll have great office facilities & location

We believe that great people need to work in a great environment. If you work from home, your décor is your own business, but we will ensure you have the right equipment including a suitable desk and chair alongside IT. When you come to work in the office, you'll find somewhere with a high-quality communal meet-and-greet area; access to great coffee and fridges that work; a cycle store and showers; touch screens in modern spec meetings rooms; and video conferencing facilities.

You'll get expert advice and support when you need it

Every member of staff and their immediate family (which includes spouse/partners and children aged 16 to 24 in full-time education, living in the same household) has access to a 24 hours/day, 365 days/year Employee Assistance Programme run by a company called Health Assured. This is a confidential employee benefit designed to help you deal with personal and professional problems that could be affecting your home life or work life, health, and general wellbeing. The service includes:

- Life support: Access to counselling for emotional problems and a pathway to structured therapy sessions (employees only) at your convenience.
- Legal information: For issues that cause anxiety or distress including debt management, consumer, property or neighbour disputes (employees only).
- Bereavement support: Health Assured offers qualified and experienced counsellors who can help with grief plus legal advisors to help with related legal matters.
- Medical information: Qualified nurses are on hand to offer support on a range of medical or health-related issues offering practical information and advice.
- Online Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT): We recognise the value of self-help tools in dealing with a range of issues, which is why we have a range of CBT self-help modules, informative fact sheets and invaluable advice videos from leading qualified counsellors.

We work with an outsourced specialist HR provider called Peninsula who can provide any

member of staff with confidential HR advice. As part of this service, you will receive access to an online platform called BrightHR which enables you to book holiday, TOIL and record sickness in one place. Alongside this, you will have direct access to Bright Safe which is a free online suite of training courses. We also have a nominated in-house mental health first aid member of staff you can go to any time.

We work with an outsourced IT provider called Cascade that supplies a support service for all our IT needs through a service centre, including all software, hardware and telephony given we run entirely through Microsoft Teams and Microsoft 365.

You'll be working sustainably

We're proud of our environmental sustainability policy and network of green champions embedded within every team. It's not just words – we've divested all funds from companies associated with oil and gas. Next we're reviewing all banking and pensions too. We have no one that drives to work regularly. Our suppliers and partners need to show their commitment to working sustainably, or we won't be working with them.

You'll be helping us get better all the time

We're proud to work at MRF, but we know we can always do better. This year we're working on a Great Place to Work Project that helps to support people to attract, recruit, onboard, develop and keep great people even more effectively. We have systems and processes for these already but it's time to make them a standout great experience.

About Meningitis Research Foundation (MRF)

Over the past 30 years MRF has developed into the world's leading meningitis charity working both in the UK and internationally to defeat meningitis wherever it exists.

Our vision is of a world free from meningitis. A world where effective vaccinations can protect everyone. A world where people who do get the diseases get the most effective diagnosis and treatments possible. A world where people affected and their families have the best support and information.

To achieve this, we bring together people and expertise, linking patient experience, research, policy and practice.

We do this by supporting research into effective vaccines, diagnostics and treatments.

We share results of the research with the public, health care professionals and research networks to raise awareness of what they can do to increase personal, family and community protection, optimise treatments and strengthen health systems.

We provide direct support to people and families affected.

We believe that working in partnership, the knowledge, experience, skills and finance available from the private sector are essential

to achieving long term and sustainable impacts. We fundraise, inform and educate.

Our flagship work includes:

- Being a member of the WHO Technical Task Force to [defeat meningitis by 2030](#).
- Running the [Confederation of Meningitis Organisations](#) (CoMO) which represents over 125 like-minded members in more than 50 countries.
- Hosting a one-stop-shop for the best data for modelled estimates on burden of meningitis called the [Meningitis Progress Tracker](#), now used over 50,000 times in more than 100 countries.
- Co-leading on the advocacy and engagement pillar of the new global road map with UNICEF.
- Providing a secretariat support function for the [Global Meningitis Genome Partnership](#) building on the establishment of the Global Meningitis Genome Library.
- Delivering an internationally renowned [research conference](#) every 2 years showcasing latest cutting-edge research on meningitis from around the world.
- [Funding research](#) into meningitis, especially related to genomics and the lifetime impact of meningitis.
- Providing a world class website and support service that has over 2 million uses each year.

Our values

Our values are extremely important to us and mean far more to us than words on a page.

We are evidence-led.

We pride ourselves on being grounded in facts. Research and evidence are at our core and remain essential to our work today – guided by our panel of scientific advisors and disease specialists. This approach ensures we provide considered responses to the challenges brought about by the disease, wherever they may be found.

We operate with integrity.

To the people we support and work with, we are a trusted source of information and learning. We weigh all of the evidence and operate with openness and transparency to exceed expectations and deliver the

best services and responses - be that helping a family or working with health organisations around the world.

We pursue our goals with determination.

We will not stop until we defeat meningitis. We will relentlessly seek answers, work tirelessly with purpose and are driven by those we help. Our dedication enables the best modern science, research and on-the-ground learning to work in the positive interests of individuals, families and communities impacted by meningitis and septicaemia, both here in the UK and in communities around the world

We are a passionate advocate.

We are a united voice against meningitis and septicaemia and a dedicated champion for those it affects. We exist to ensure that the voices of our members, supporters and those impacted by meningitis and septicaemia in the UK and around the world, are heard and not forgotten. We are highly focused in our work and inform and advise health policy and practice, driven to make a contribution to reducing the burden of the disease and its aftermath.

We collaborate to make progress.

We believe in partnership and collaboration. Whether we are supporting individuals and families who have been impacted by the disease, working with international funding partners or supporting on-the-ground health teams working in challenging environments, we combine resources and expertise to deliver the very best results. We share the knowledge we've gained through more than 30 years of work to support and enable those impacted by or battling to defeat the disease.

We act with compassion.

We are driven by the stories of those we work for and with. We care deeply, listen and take the best action for each unique circumstance. Whether it's providing direct support, finding the right information, or campaigning for the change that will make a real difference.

More information can be found on the MRF [website here](#).

Job Description: Research Projects Manager, full time, £35,000-£39,999 p/a, office, home or hybrid working based in the UK

Organisation overview

Meningitis Research Foundation is an international health charity headquartered in the UK, driven by a passionate mission to prevent the devastating impact of meningitis. Founded by individuals whose lives were profoundly affected by meningitis, we are dedicated to enabling positive change by uniting people and knowledge to save lives. The Confederation of Meningitis Organisations (CoMO) is our worldwide network of people and groups who are driven by a shared purpose to defeat meningitis. By coming together to share their diverse experience and expertise, they are a formidable global force against this life-threatening condition.

Role purpose

A key role in our Research team, the Research Projects Manager will be responsible for developing and managing our research projects and grants programme, in alignment with our new research strategy. As part of this, you will manage our genomics programme of research, which includes an exciting multi-stakeholder, international project, designed to understand barriers and opportunities to use of whole genome sequencing in low- and middle-income countries.

Reporting

This role reports to the Director of Research.

Key Responsibilities

Research project management

- Manage our internally driven research projects including scoping, planning, designing, budgeting and reporting on activity to internal and external stakeholders.
- Liaise with research partners and funders on research project development and activity.
- Connect research projects to colleagues working on related activities in Insights and Policy, and Communications and Engagement.
- Brief Fundraising teams on research projects and progress.

Research grants

- Project Manage the launch of grants rounds and co-ordination of peer review procedures, in alignment with the UK Association of Medical Research Charities (AMRC) requirements.
- Lead on the development and maintenance of all application, peer review and grant management procedures.
- Project Manage administering post award processing, monitoring, reporting and governance of successful grant applications.

Research collaboration

- Support the Director of Research to identify and respond to relevant meningitis research consultations in the UK and internationally.
- Work with Director of Research to identify, monitor and respond to developments in the UK and international research funding environment and help draft grant applications.
- Collaborate with Health Insights and Policy colleagues, to enable research to inform MRF's policy positions.

Research strategy

- In collaboration with the Head of Research, support implementation of our research strategy.

Build an approach to strengthen involvement of those with lived experience in research

- Identify and develop opportunities for those with lived experience with MRF funded and externally funded research
- Work with the Director of Research to develop a Patient and Public Involvement strategy.

Qualifications & Experience

- A degree in relevant biomedical science or equivalent.
- Previous experience of performing peer review and grant management, ideally in line with Association of Medical Research Charity (AMRC) requirements.
- Strong knowledge of UK research funding environment.
- Demonstrable management skills or a professional project management qualification.
- Project Budget management experience.
- Strong organisational and time management skills, with the ability to manage multiple priorities and deadlines.
- Ability to work independently
- Excellent time management skills and ability to prioritise competing demands

Key competencies

Leadership behaviours

- Strategy: Aligns team goals with organizational strategy.
- Leadership: Motivates and leads team members.
- Management: Manages day-to-day operations and projects.
- Finances: Monitors and manages team budget expenditure.
- Supervision: Supervises senior executives and executives.
- Team contribution: Promotes team engagement and productivity
- Communicating progress: Reports team progress to senior manager or Director.

Values

- Evidence-led: Uses evidence to inform team activities.
- Integrity: Practices honesty and ethical behaviour.
- Determination: Committed to achieving team goals.
- Passionate Advocate: Advocates for the Foundation's vision and mission.
- Collaboration: Encourages team collaboration and support.
- Compassion: Ensures a supportive environment for patients and team members.

Annual salary

£35,000 to £39,999 per annum, depending on qualifications and experience, including 2% employee pension contribution + 6% employer pension contribution. Salary is paid in arrears on or around 25th of each month.

Contract Type

2-year fixed term contract

Hours of Work

36.25 hours between 8.00 am to 6.00 pm Monday to Friday. Occasional unsociable hours.

Annual Leave

25 days annual leave and statutory & public holidays. The Charity's holiday year runs from 1st April to 31st March.

Application Process

Interested candidates are invited to submit their CV with a cover letter detailing their relevant experience and interest in the position. CV's sent through without a covering letter will not be considered.

Applications should be sent to Kate Gill kateg@meningitis.org by 5pm on Friday 21st February 2025.

Candidates wishing to have an informal exploratory conversation before applying can also contact Kate to set up a call with Vinny Smith.

Candidates that have been shortlisted for interview will be notified by Friday 28th February.

Interviews will take place with the CEO and a member of the SLT in w/c 10th March. The interview will include a presentation from candidates and questions and answers.

A second interview may be held in w/c 17th March. There will be no presentations at second interview.

The successful candidate will be offered a position by 5pm on Friday 21st March.

A preference is for all interviews to take place in person in Bristol or London. Where this cannot be arranged, interviews may take place via MSTeams.

Equal Opportunities

Applications are particularly encouraged from candidates that may previously have, or feel like they have, experienced being excluded from generally advertised roles due to their gender, ethnicity, disability status or sexual orientation.

Safeguarding

Meningitis Research Foundation is committed to safeguarding, and any advertised role will require references, confirmation of your identity and your right to work in the UK. Following receipt of satisfactory references, the successful candidate will be able to start work soon after receiving their offer of employment.