

Cystic Fibrosis Trust Exercise Practitioner Fellowship Guidance for applicants

This exciting opportunity is the first fellowship of its kind, and offers the opportunity for a forward-thinking, dynamic individual to champion the role of exercise practitioners within CF.

An emerging role within the CF multidisciplinary care team is one of the exercise practitioner or exercise scientist, working in partnership with other team members such as medics, physiotherapists, and dietitians to provide support with physical activity and to create exercise programmes for individuals with CF. At present this role varies between centres, and some centres do not have this role at all. CF-specific training and support for this role, and for people wanting to develop into this role, is currently lacking. This role is fairly unique within CF, and this fellowship is an opportunity to influence the role of exercise science and exercise practitioners throughout healthcare.

Purpose:

The Exercise Practitioner fellowship will enable the individual to experience the variety of exercise interventions offered across the CF community, enabling them to develop their own clinical practice. During the fellowship they will lead the development of training resources for exercise practitioners based upon the needs of the CF community, to enable CF specialist physical activity and exercise interventions to be offered to all individuals with CF from within their CF multidisciplinary care teams and create a standardised role of 'exercise practitioner' in CF.

It aims not only to benefit the person undertaking the fellowship but also to help with succession planning and to improve knowledge throughout a multidisciplinary care team about physical activity and cystic fibrosis.

The fellowship will involve:

1. Scoping of the needs of the CF community and CF teams

Electronic surveys will be developed and distributed to individuals with CF canvassing opinions on physical activity and exercise provision, access, and other needs of the community. A further electronic survey will be distributed to every CF unit in the UK asking for details on current physical activity and exercise provision, and specifically the personnel (including exercise practitioner roles) used to deliver exercise services, and what skill development/training requirements they have in order to optimise patient care.

The results of these two surveys will, alongside expert opinion, enable us to identify the requirements of individuals with CF and their care teams and help us to identify the most appropriate individuals to promote physical activity. We will then aim to develop a tailor-made training programme for these individuals, ensuring they have the skills and experience required to best support individuals with CF. Included within this role would be a requirement to establish links with other relevant parties such as the ECFS Exercise Working Group.

2. Creation of Training Programme

A training programme that can be accessed online, with a competency framework, will be designed. It is anticipated that this programme will initially be intended for people working within the field of CF and exercise within CF multidisciplinary care teams to ensure they have skills and understanding of CF, physical activity promotion and exercise prescription. These individuals would then be enabled to create and update personal training programmes based upon every individual's specific needs.

It is intended that this programme, once established, could be adapted and offered to all interested personal trainers, and gym instructors as part of an ongoing programme of education. We will also pursue accreditation for this training programme through a specialist organisation such as the Chartered Society of Physiotherapy or the British Association of Sport and Exercise Sciences (BASES).

3. Physical activity provision

Individuals with CF require different levels of support at different times in their life to ensure physical activity can be integrated into their lifestyle. By having an exercise practitioner within the CF team, they would be able to access this specialist support as and when they need it without the need for referral. Alongside the development of the training programme, we would work to make the exercise practitioner role recognised (via education and sharing of positive experience) across all CF multidisciplinary care teams, and to provide options for how people with CF could access this resource using online platforms or face-to-face appointments. This will be particularly important if the impact of coronavirus continues to be felt, particularly as some people with CF may still feel uncomfortable or anxious about exercising in public places, gyms etc where they may be at greater risk of infection.

The exercise practitioner will be based within their current workplace as a 'home centre' but will complete a tailored education/experience programme involving the following aspects:

- Linking with other organisations - CF and Exercise Network, BASES, ACPCF, ECFS Exercise Working Group, CSP, CF Trust.
- Visits/virtual visits to other CF Centres to discuss and observe practice.
- Completion of the research project.
- Engagement with project supervisors and mentors.
- Presentation at the end of the fellowship to the ACPCF / CF Exercise Network joint study day, and at a Cystic Fibrosis Trust meeting.
- Presentation of findings at relevant conferences and events.
- Attendance at key meetings such as the ECFS, NACFC, the Cystic Fibrosis Trust conference, ACPCF study days, the Brompton course, CPET course.

The successful candidate will have a fellowship supervisor based at their CF Centre and will be supported by their manager to pursue this fellowship. Throughout the fellowship they will have a named mentor and regular supervision sessions and input from the steering group who are individuals from the CF and Exercise Network, experienced exercise practitioners, the Cystic Fibrosis Trust and the ACPCF.

Potential benefits to the person undertaking the fellowship:

- Protected time to develop knowledge, experience and skills focused on exercise and the care of people with CF.
- Budget for CPD exercise training courses and travel to conferences to enhance your knowledge and qualifications.
- Time to visit other centres to gain understanding of the similarities and differences in exercise and care across different centres/networks.
- Practical experience of project management and creation of resources.
- Practical experience in disseminating new knowledge and experiences.
- Guidance and opportunity to establish links with other exercise professionals and experts working in CF via professional organisations and networks.
- Opportunity to pursue professional recognition for the exercise practitioner role and creation of an NHS career pathway.

Who would be eligible?

The fellowship would be aimed at the following staff employed within the NHS:

Any exercise practitioner, therapy assistant or other role with some experience of CF care and an interest in developing the role of exercise practitioners with CF will be eligible to apply. This is open to people working in paediatrics and adults.

Duration:

The fellowship will last for one-year full time.

Information for centres

- It is expected that centres will backfill the role of the successful fellow to ensure there is no impact on physical activity provision in the CF service.
- Fellowship workload including visits and research project will be prioritised, but it is expected that the fellow will be flexible on time for clinical work as appropriate within the project.

Potential benefits to the centre/network hosting the fellowship:

- Development of high-quality exercise practitioners within the centre/network.
- Development of the physiotherapy team and service within the centre/network.
- Dissemination of knowledge, skills and experience through the MDT.
- Strengthening of links between the centre/network and other centres/networks, patient/professional bodies and commissioners.
- Production of training programme to benefit other exercise practitioners.

Potential benefits to the CF physiotherapy / exercise practitioner profession:

- The development of knowledgeable and experienced physical activity practitioners.
- Strengthening of links between exercise practitioners and the wider CF clinical community including patient/professional bodies and commissioners.
- Demonstration of the benefits of fellowships such as this which may assist the development of fellowships in other clinical areas.
- Initiation of creation of a recognised exercise practitioner career pathway and accreditation.

Potential benefits to people with CF and their families:

- Access to exercise specialists with wide knowledge and experience.

- An exercise and wider CF service which is influenced by wide knowledge and experience including experience of other CF services across the UK.
- National policy and practice influenced by knowledgeable and experienced exercise specialists.

Applications:

To apply for the exercise practitioner fellowship please complete and email the attached application form along with your CV to cag@cysticfibrosis.org.uk by Friday 15th October 2021.

For any queries regarding potential applications for this fellowship please email Gemma Stanford (g.stanford@rbht.nhs.uk) for more information.

Applications will be reviewed by the steering group and a representative from the Cystic Fibrosis Trust.