Connecting communities

VIVENSA ACADEMY

Vivensa Academy Excellence Awards



Agenda

14.00 – 14.05	Welcome and introductions
14.05 – 14.15	Overview of the Excellence Awards guidelines
14.15 – 14.40	Discussion with the panel chair and 2026 award-holders
14.40 – 14.55	Audience Q&A
14.55 – 15.00	Wrap-up and close

Welcome and introductions



Your host

Sanjay Thakrar will open the session, introduces our contributors and chairs the panel discussion and Q&A.



Grants Team

Grants team will walk through the guidelines, eligibility, the nomination form and the assessment process.



Chair and winners

Deborah Dunn-Walters, our Excellence Awards panel chair.



Claire McDonald



Nathan Davies



Tine Buffel

Our aim today: that you leave knowing whether the awards are for you, what we are looking for, and how to put a strong nomination together.

A principle-led award

Principle-led award **not a research grant / project**.

We recognise Academy members and teams whose work embodies the Foundation's key values and strengthens working culture across the ageing field.

Capacity building	Multidisciplinary and collaboration	Equity, diversity and inclusion	Involving older people	Environmental impact
Growing skills, careers and future leaders	Working across fields, sectors and disciplines	Inclusive teams and inclusive ageing-related work	Patients, carers and the public shaping the work	Understanding the impact of your work and how to reduce it

- Vivensa Academy members only: self-nominate or nominate another member, for one category per round
- Rising Star / Senior Leader: Nominee and supporter and/or nominator must be Academy members with a public directory profile
- Team Achievement: self-nomination or be nominated by — the supporter / nominator must not be in the team
- Open to anyone working in ageing in the UK; no need to be a past or current Vivensa Foundation award-holder

SCOPE Supported activity **must benefit people in the UK and/or UK-based organisations**. We prioritise comparatively underfunded areas, and do **not** fund work with a specific focus on cancer.

Award categories

Three ways to be recognised

Rising Star

An early to mid-career rising star showing real promise as a future leader.

CAREER STAGE

Three to ten years of postdoctoral research experience at submission — career breaks and COVID-19 impacts are taken into account.

Senior Leader

An established senior leader whose work has shaped ageing-related research, policy or practice.

ELIGIBILITY

A full Professor in a permanent post. Honorary Professors are considered if active in their research community at an eligible organisation.

Team Achievement

A significant multidisciplinary team achievement, first accomplished within the last five years.

Collaborative teams

Open to teams spanning academia, health and care settings and the voluntary, community and social enterprise sector.

Each award is £40k a year for three years — £120k of flexible funding that backs the person or team.

ELIGIBLE USE OF FUNDS Flexible support for ageing-related activities and career development with focus on **supporting people in the UK and/or UK-based organisations** — examples in Section 2.3 of the guidelines.

The nomination process

How a nomination comes together

1	**Read the guidelines**	Section 2 sets out full eligibility. Unsuccessful nominees may re-apply once, with the nomination entirely amended.
2	**Register on the portal**	Nominations are made only through our online Grants Management Portal.
3	**Complete the form**	Make sure the form does not simply repeat the information presented in the statements and plans
4	**Upload the documents**	Statements from the nominee or team lead, if applicable from a supporter, and the three-year plan (note this is new).
5	**Submit on time**	5pm on 30 October 2026.

NEW THIS YEAR: an indicative three-year plan

Every nomination will be asked to upload an indicative plan for using the £120k over three years, if successful. The panel will look for something well-considered and achievable and should explain how the award would:

- advance the ageing-related field;
- improve the lives of older adults in the UK;
- deliver benefits beyond your immediate research group / team and/or organisation;
- demonstrate a genuine commitment to the Vivensa Foundation's key values (capacity building, multidisciplinary and collaboration, EDI, involvement of older people and understanding of the environmental impact of the work).
- **Please note that this is not a research proposal,** is a plan of flexible support for ageing-related activities and career development (examples in Section 2.3 of the guidelines).

Keep it ambitious but realistic. The proposed activities must benefit people in the UK and/or UK-based organisations; we prioritise underfunded areas and do **not** fund work focused specifically on cancer.

What we look for

What we look for, and how it is assessed

WHAT THE PANEL SCORES

The case for recognition
Standing as a rising star or senior leader, or a team achievement of the last five years, clearly justified.

Excellence
Excellence in ageing-related work, and influence on understanding, policy, practice or services.

Capacity building
Contribution to capacity building, mentoring and a positive working culture.

Involvement
Involvement of older people, carers and the public — and the difference it made.

Inclusion and teamwork
EDI promoted across the work, and multidisciplinary working — for teams, roles and composition.

Environment
Understanding of the environmental impact of the work and how it could be reduced.

HOW NOMINATIONS ARE ASSESSED

Where reviewers look
The case for recognition and evidence of excellence come from the form; the values and the plan mainly from the uploaded letters. Form, statements and plan should complement each other, not repeat the same material.

Evidence, not assertion
Every criterion needs concrete examples: who was involved, what changed, and the nominee's or team's specific role.

Context is taken into account
Some criteria are harder in some fields. What matters is acknowledging the challenge and showing progress with the resources available.

THE PLAN IS SCORED TOO Panels look for a well-considered, achievable plan: how the activities would advance ageing-related work, improve the lives of older adults in the UK, create benefit beyond your own group, team or organisation, and reflect genuine commitment to our key values — for teams, how it builds on the achievement being recognised.

Learning from panel feedback

What makes a stronger nomination

Four rounds of published panel feedback point to the same six things — use them as a checklist.

REMEMBER This is an award, not a project or research grant. The panel is assessing the person or team and their track record — not a research proposal.

1 Tell one cohesive story

Connect achievements into one thread. Panels look for sustained, deliberate commitment to ageing-related work, not a career summary.

2 Go deep, not wide

Fewer, well-developed examples beat long lists. When highlighting an activity always explain why it mattered.

3 Show impact

Say what changed in ageing-related field, policy, practice, services or people's lives — and the nominee's specific role in making it happen.

4 Evidence the principles

Capacity building, multidisciplinarity, EDI and involvement need concrete evidence: who was supported, how, and with what result.

5 Be accurate, not modest or inflated

Let the excellence / achievement speak: back claims with evidence rather than superlatives, and don't downplay a real contribution.

6 Teams: highlight a clear achievement

What was achieved, when, why it was distinctive — and how the last five years differ from earlier work.

We publish panel feedback on our website after every round so please take a look: 2023/24 · 2024/25 · 2025/26 Rising Star and Senior Leader · 2025/26 Team Achievement

Timeline and key dates

From nomination to award

Open now	**Nominations open** Guidelines and the nomination forms are available on our Grants Management Portal.
24 Sep 2026	**This webinar** Slides and a recording are shared afterwards for anyone who cannot join live.
5pm, 30 Oct 2026	**Nominations close** The portal closes — late or incomplete nominations cannot be accepted.
Nov - Dec 2026	**Panel review and shortlisting** All eligible nominations are assessed; nominees are told whether they are invited to interview.
12–14 Jan 2027	**Interviews** Shortlisted nominees and teams are interviewed on 12, 13 or 14 January.
Spring 2027	**Awards announced** Award-holders are celebrated and speak at our Annual Symposium.

PLAN AHEAD Leave time for your nominator or supporter to complete their part before 5pm on 30 October 2026.

Over to the panel

Next: insights from our Excellence Awards panel chair and 2026 award-holders on what makes a clear, credible and compelling nomination — followed by your questions.



Deborah Dunn-Walters

Excellence Awards Panel chair



Claire McDonald

2026 Rising Star



Nathan Davies

2026 Senior Leader



Tine Buffel

2026 Team lead

Questions about the awards

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Questions about the Vivensa Academy

academy@vivensafoundation.org.uk

AWARD GUIDELINES

Scan for the award guidelines

Q&A session



Funding for the future of ageing well

VIVENSA FOUNDATION

Thank you for attending

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