

Vivensa Academy Excellence Awards

Guidelines for nominees



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If you require this document in any alternative accessible formats, please contact us at grants@vivensafoundation.org.uk. We will do our very best to assist you.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 OVERVIEW

The [Vivensa Academy](#) is an inclusive network of researchers and community organisations dedicated to advancing ageing-related research, evidence-informed practice and innovation. The aims of the Academy include celebrating achievement and ambition across the ageing-related field, while promoting the [key values](#) that underpin the work of the Academy and the Vivensa Foundation.

Through our [2025-2030 strategic framework](#), we are working with the community to help drive the changes needed for people in the UK to age well. This includes promoting equity, diversity and inclusion, building capacity, fostering connections and expanding opportunities for people from different disciplines, professions, sectors and organisations to work together.

The Vivensa Academy Excellence Awards recognise individuals and teams whose work demonstrates these values and contributes to helping people in the UK to age well. The awards comprise three categories: Rising Star, Senior Leader and Team Achievement. Together, these awards recognise achievement, leadership and collaboration across the ageing-related field.

1.2 CURRENT AWARDEES

Following each round of the Excellence Awards, the awardees are announced at the Foundation's Annual Symposium. Learn more about our past award-winners by reading their spotlight stories linked below:

- **Rising Star Awards**
 - [2024 winner](#) – Dr Jenni Burton (University of Glasgow)
 - [2025 winner](#) – Dr Toby Ellmers (Imperial College London)
 - [2026 winner](#) – Dr Claire McDonald (Newcastle University)
 - [2026 winner](#) – Dr Mahmoud Bukar Maina (University of Sussex)
- **Senior Leader Awards**
 - [2024 winner](#) – Professor Ilaria Bellantuono (University of Sheffield)
 - [2025 winner](#) – Professor Vicki Goodwin (University of Exeter)
 - [2026 winner](#) – Professor Nathan Davies (Queen Mary University of London)
- **Team Achievement Award**
 - [2026 winner](#) - Manchester Urban Ageing Research Group (University of Manchester)

1.3 THE OPPORTUNITY

Three awards of £40k per year for three years (£120k in total per award) will be made to recognise:

- An early to mid-career 'Rising Star' in ageing-related research.
- A 'Senior Leader' in ageing-related research.

- A significant ageing-related ‘Team Achievement’ accomplished for the first time within the last five years.

These awards are open to members of the [Vivensa Academy](#) and Academy members may either self-nominate or nominate another member for an award. Full eligibility criteria are provided in [Section 2](#).

The awards are intended to be flexible and can be used to support ageing-related activities and/or career development – some examples of how the funds can be used are provided in [Section 2.3](#).

Excellence Award-holders will be invited to speak at the Foundation’s 2027 Annual Symposium and will be expected to participate in Academy training and/or other activities from time to time.

2. ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

2.1 WHO CAN APPLY?

Academy members may either self-nominate or nominate another member for an award, and a nominee may only be considered for one award category per round of the Excellence Awards. For more information on becoming an Academy member, please visit the [“Apply to join”](#) page on our website.

RISING STAR AND SENIOR LEADER AWARDS

If you are nominating yourself for the award, then:

- You **must** be an eligible member of the Academy and have a profile on the [member directory](#).
- As part of the nomination form you will be required to upload a statement from yourself and a supporter who **must** also be a member of the Academy. In addition, you will be asked to submit an indicative three-year plan outlining how you would use the £120k Excellence Award if successful. This 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 and/or organisation, and demonstrate a genuine commitment to the Vivensa Foundation’s key values.

If, alternatively, you are nominating somebody else for the award, then:

- Both you and the nominee **must** be eligible members of the Academy and have profiles on the [member directory](#).
- As part of the nomination form you and the nominee will be required to upload a statement each supporting the nomination. In addition, the nominee must submit an indicative three-year plan outlining how the nominee would use the £120k Excellence Award if successful. This should explain how the award would advance the ageing-related field, improve the lives of older adults in the UK, deliver benefits beyond their immediate research group and/or organisation, and demonstrate a genuine commitment to the Vivensa Foundation’s key values.

Nominees must be ageing-related researchers based at a:

- UK university;
- NHS Trust / Hospital / Board or Health and Social Care Trust in Northern Ireland;
- [Research organisation that qualifies under standard eligibility for UK Research and Innovation funding](#).

The Vivensa Foundation has no specific geographical link and we will consider nominees based anywhere within the UK. In addition, nominees do not need to be past / current Vivensa Foundation award-holders to be eligible.

As stated in our [2025-2030 Strategic Framework](#), we fund the remarkable science and radical social change needed for people in the UK to age well. If awarded, any activities supported through the award must directly support and/or benefit people in the UK and/or UK-based organisations. We also seek to

focus our resources where they can add the greatest value, prioritising areas that are comparatively underfunded and not already supported by dedicated national or international charities. Consequently, the Foundation does not fund work with a specific focus on cancer.

According to the [Vivensa Foundation's resubmission policy](#), an unsuccessful nominee from a previous award round can re-apply **once** to the same award, but **must** entirely amend any previously submitted unsuccessful nomination prior to submission (i.e. duplicate submissions, sections of the form and/or letters will **not** be eligible). Previous and current award-holders are **not** eligible to hold multiple Excellence Awards concurrently and/or be nominated for the same award again. However, past 'Rising Star' award-holders may be nominated for the 'Senior Leader' award, and past Team Achievement lead representatives may be nominated for the 'Rising Star' or 'Senior Leader' award, provided their previous award is no longer active and they meet all other eligibility criteria for the relevant award.

If successful, any funds will be paid to the award-holder's university / research organisation to be used at the award-holder's discretion (see [Section 2.3](#) for more details). Should the award-holder move university / research organisation during the lifetime of the award, they will take the award and any remaining funds with them (i.e. their previous university / research organisation will not retain any unspent funds). Furthermore, the award cannot be transferred to another individual¹.

In addition to the above, the following eligibility criteria apply to the two personal awards on offer:

- **For the Rising Star award:** nominees must be researchers **with between three and ten years of postdoctoral research experience at the time of submission** (taking into account any career breaks and/or the impacts of COVID-19). Nominees do not need to have a permanent position but, if successful, award-holders without tenure will need to provide a letter of support from their university / research organisation confirming that their contract extends for at least 12 months from the start of the award in the first instance.
- **For the Senior Leader award:** nominees must be a full Professor and hold a permanent position at their university / research organisation. Honorary Professors will only be considered if they are active members of their research community at an eligible research organisation.

Shortlisted nominees must be available to attend an interview on the date specified for their award category: 13 January 2027 for the Rising Star award and 14 January 2027 for the Senior Leader award. Please see [Section 3](#) for further details of the nomination process and timeline.

If successful, award-holders will be expected to attend and speak at the formal announcement of the awards at the Foundation's 2027 Annual Symposium event. In the case that the award-holder is unable to attend, they may be asked to provide an acceptance video to be used during the event. The award-

¹ If, during the lifetime of the award, the award-holder leaves the academic or clinical environment completely and is no longer attached to a UK university, NHS Trust/Hospital/Board, Health and Social Care Trust in Northern Ireland or other eligible research organisation, any remaining funds from a paid instalment will become repayable and no further instalments will be made.

holder will also be expected to participate, from time to time, in Academy training or other activities, for example panel review within their areas of expertise.

TEAM ACHIEVEMENT AWARD

We want to celebrate those working collaboratively in multidisciplinary and/or multi-professional teams from academia, health and care settings and/or the VCSE sector. In particular, this award recognises an ageing-related ‘Team Achievement’ **accomplished for the first time within the last five years**, which has led to a significant, sustainable and evidenced outcome and/or impact at a local, regional, national or international level. In line with our other awards, no hierarchy is applied based on the systemic scale of the outcome / impact. It’s the responsibility of the nominee and nominator / supporter to articulate the context and significance of their outcome / impact and put forward their best case for the award. By outcome / impact, we mean a tangible positive change that has taken place as a direct result of the team’s achievement within the last five years, which addresses an issue / issues related to ageing well, including but not limited to:

- Advocacy and/or improving working culture.
- Influencing policy and practice
- Advancing research and innovation, such as applying scientific discoveries from laboratory research and preclinical studies to develop new treatments, interventions and diagnostic tools.
- Commercial impact

Each team is expected to have a single named lead / representative (i.e. the nominee). The Vivensa Foundation has no specific geographical link and we will consider teams based anywhere within the UK. In addition, team leads / representatives do not need to be past / current Vivensa Foundation award-holders to be eligible.

As stated in our [2025-2030 Strategic Framework](#), we fund the remarkable science and radical social change needed for people in the UK to age well. If awarded, any activities supported through the award must directly support and/or benefit people in the UK and/or UK-based organisations. We also seek to focus our resources where they can add the greatest value, prioritising areas that are comparatively underfunded and not already supported by dedicated national or international charities. Consequently, the Foundation does not fund work with a specific focus on cancer.

If you are nominating your own team achievement for the award, then:

- You will act as the team lead / representative (i.e. nominee).
- You **must** be an eligible member of the Academy and have a profile on the [member directory](#).
- As part of the nomination form you will be required to upload a statement from yourself and a supporter who **must not** be a member of the team. If they are eligible, they can also be a member of the Academy. In addition, you will be asked to submit an indicative three-year plan outlining how the team would use the £120k Excellence Award if successful. This should explain how the award would sustain or build on the achievement being recognised, advance the ageing-related field, improve the lives of older adults in the UK, deliver benefits beyond

your immediate team and/or organisation and demonstrate a genuine commitment to the Vivensa Foundation's key values.

If, alternatively, you are nominating another team achievement for the award, then:

- You, as the nominator, **must not** be a member of the team being nominated. If eligible, you can be a member of the Academy.
- The nominee (i.e. team lead / representative) **must** be an eligible member of the Academy and have a profile on the [member directory](#).
- As part of the nomination form you and the nominee will be required to upload a statement each supporting the nomination. In addition, the nominee must also submit an indicative three-year plan outlining how the team would use the £120k Excellence Award if successful. This should explain how the award would sustain or build on the achievement being recognised, advance the ageing-related field, improve the lives of older adults in the UK, deliver benefits beyond their immediate team and/or organisation and demonstrate a genuine commitment to the Vivensa Foundation's key values.

According to the [Vivensa Foundation's resubmission policy](#), an unsuccessful team from a previous award round can re-apply **once** to the same award with the same achievement, but **must** entirely amend any previously submitted unsuccessful nominations prior to submission (i.e. duplicate submissions, sections of the form and/or letters will **not** be eligible). Previous and current team leads / representatives are **not** eligible to hold multiple Excellence Awards concurrently. Previous Team Achievement award-holders, including the team lead / representative and/or a substantially similar team, are **not** eligible to be nominated for the same or a substantially similar achievement again. Current 'Rising Star' and 'Senior Leader' award-holders are **not** eligible to be nominated as the team lead / representative. However, they may be included as members of the wider team, provided their subsidiary role and/or contribution are clearly articulated in the nomination form. Past recipients of the 'Rising Star' or 'Senior Leader' awards are eligible to be nominated as a team lead / representative, provided their awards are no longer active and they meet all other eligibility criteria for the award.

If successful, any funds will be paid to the award-holder's (i.e. team lead / representative's) university / institution / organisation to be used at the award-holder's discretion (see [Section 2.3](#) for more details). The award-holder will serve as the primary point of contact between the awarded team and the Foundation and will be responsible for coordinating the team's planned activities and submitting annual progress updates to the Foundation. Should the award-holder move university / institution / organisation during the lifetime of the award, they will take the award and any remaining funds with them (i.e. their previous university / institution / organisation will not retain any unspent funds), as long as the team's planned activities are maintained in the new university / institution / organisation. If the award-holder leaves the ageing field entirely and/or is no longer affiliated with a UK-based organisation during the lifetime of the award:

- The award may be transferred to another team member (named in the original nomination).
- The university / institution / organisation associated with the team and the original award-holder must support the case for this transfer.

- Assurance must be given that the team's activities will continue as planned.

In addition to the above, the following eligibility criteria apply to the Team Achievement award:

- While nominations must be submitted in the name of a single team lead / representative (i.e. nominee), there is no limit to team size. However, the nomination must clearly outline the specific role(s) / contribution(s) of each team member, as well as clearly demonstrate how the collaborative approach and diverse expertise were pivotal to the success of the work being celebrated.
- The team lead / representative does not need to have a permanent position but, if successful, award-holders without a permanent position will need to provide a letter of support from their university / institution / organisation confirming that their contract extends for at least 12 months from the start of the award in the first instance.
- Teams can include members from within and/or beyond academia, including individuals with lived experience, third-sector, industry and/or government organisations supporting older people to age well.
- Whilst the team's work should primarily focus on supporting people to age well in the UK, we will accept teams with contributions from international team members as long they are fully justified.
- Ideally, teams should be composed of members from different career stages and backgrounds.
- Nominations focusing solely on team leads / representatives, Principal Investigators, single research groups or individual organisations / institutions will **not** be eligible. Nominations involving different departments (or equivalent) from the same organisation / institution may be accepted, but it is the responsibility of the nominee / nominator / supporter to articulate the multidisciplinary and/or multi-professional nature of the work and put forward their best case for the award.
- The team must clearly demonstrate that the achievement being celebrated was accomplished for the first time within the last five years.

Those shortlisted must be available to attend an interview on 12 January 2027 (see [Section 3](#) for further details of the nomination process and timeline). The interview should be attended by the team lead / representative, along with any team member(s) best positioned to speak to the work and its outcome / impact.

If successful, at least the team lead / representative will be expected to attend and speak at the formal announcement of the award at the Foundation's 2027 Annual Symposium. In the case that a representative of the team is unable to attend, the team may be asked to provide an acceptance video to be used during the event. The team lead / representative and/or other team member(s) will also be expected to participate, from time to time, in Academy training or other activities that could support shared learning around effective team-based practice.

2.2 OUR STRATEGIC PRIORITIES AND VALUES

Broadly, the awards are intended to recognise and celebrate success, achievement and ambition in ageing-related research, evidence-based practice and/or innovation.

We are looking for nominees that put forward creative and forward-thinking plans for the use of award funds that not only extend beyond their own group(s) / institution(s) / organisation(s), but also demonstrate ambition and a genuine commitment to the Vivensa Foundation's key values. In particular:

- Capacity building and/or mentorship in the ageing-related field, and a meaningful contribution to a positive working culture.
- Promoting the meaningful involvement / engagement of older people and equity, diversity and inclusion (EDI) in their work.
- Demonstrating an understanding of the environmental impact of their work and ways in which this could be reduced.
- Working in multidisciplinary and/or multi-professional teams from academia, health and care settings and/or the VCSE sector to address the needs of older adults. This can include developing and nurturing working relationships, built on openness and shared learning between different disciplines, professions, sectors and/or organisations.
- Influencing ageing-related policy and/or practice at a local, regional, national and/or international level. In line with the Foundation's other awards, no hierarchy is applied based on the geographic and/or systemic scale of the policy and/or activity.

We recognise that some of the above criteria may be more challenging for some depending on the context and/or research area. What matters most is how nominations acknowledge and address any challenges, and how progress has been made by leveraging available resources and opportunities.

For guidance on what makes a good nomination, please refer to last year's feedback for the [Rising Star and Senior Leader awards](#), and the [Team Achievement award](#). Further details on how nominations will be assessed are provided in [Section 5.2](#).

2.3 ELIGIBLE USE OF FUNDS

Nominees will be asked to submit an indicative three-year plan outlining how they intend to use the funds if they are successful.

The awards are intended to be flexible, and some examples of how the funds could be used include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Attending and/or facilitating others to attend relevant conferences and meetings.
- Organising ageing-related conferences, meetings and/or networking events etc.
- Organising and/or attending career / professional development, mentoring and/or training opportunities etc.

- Carrying out activities which promote equity, diversity and inclusion (EDI) and/or increase the involvement / participation of underserved groups.
- Carrying out activities to ensure that older people's views are actively sought, valued, and integrated into their work through meaningful involvement and engagement.
- Providing funded internships / student placements etc.
- Providing small pots of seed funding, pump-priming grants etc.
- Purchasing equipment to support research.
- Supporting cross-sectoral secondments, local, regional and/or national network / partnership-building etc.
- Supporting and sustaining ongoing team activities to maintain and/or build on previous achievements.

The funds are **not** intended to pay and/or back-fill the salary costs of staff members who are already employed. The funds are also **not** intended to extend the contracts of fixed-term postdoctoral researchers. Exceptionally, the Foundation may consider support for a limited contract extension where this is directly related to the delivery of activities funded through the award and a sufficiently strong justification has been provided.

Please note that each award has a total value of £120k over three years, structured as three £40k instalments. At the end of each year, an update from the award-holder that details how the award has been spent to date will be required. Typically, at the end of the three-year award period, any unspent funds will be returned to the Foundation. However, in exceptional circumstances, the Foundation may approve a no-cost extension of up to two years where a sufficiently strong and fully justified case has been provided for the continued use of any remaining funds.

3. NOMINATION PROCESS AND TIMELINE

The nomination and selection process will consist of two stages:

1. Submission of an online nomination form
2. If shortlisted, an interview

The nomination and selection process for the awards will follow the timetable below:

Activity	Date
Nominations open	10 September 2026
Webinar (we aim to make a recording available on the “ Events, recordings and reports ” section of our website following the event)	24 September 2026 (2pm-3pm)
Deadline for nomination forms to be submitted	30 October 2026 (5pm)
Panel review and shortlisting of nominations	November – December 2026
Notification of the outcome of your nomination and, if shortlisted, invitation to attend an interview	18 th December 2026 (at the latest)
Interviews held by our Panel: - Shortlisted nominees must be available on these days, as unfortunately there is no flexibility with these dates and times. - This interview will take place either in London or via Zoom	12 January 2027 (9am–5pm) for Team Achievement nominees 13 January 2027 (9am–5pm) for Rising Star nominees 14 January 2027 (9am–5pm) for Senior Leader nominees
Approval of the Panel’s recommendation as to which nominees should receive the awards – this will take place at the February 2027 meeting of the Foundation’s Research Grants Committee	2 February 2027
Shortlisted nominees notified of the outcome of their interview	Late February 2027
Formal announcement of the awards at the Foundation’s 2027 Annual Symposium event: Please note that the award-holders will be invited to attend and speak at this event. The exact date / time of the event will be confirmed in due course	April 2027

Every effort has been made to provide enough time for the various stages of the process while avoiding public / school holidays. Please note that a letter confirming the award will only be sent after any further requested information has been provided, if necessary. Furthermore, the first instalment cannot be paid until the award offer has been formally accepted.

4. ONLINE NOMINATIONS

Nominations will open on Thursday, 10 September 2026 and close at 5pm on Friday, 30 October 2026.

All stages will be administered through our [online Grants Management Portal](#), **only submissions made before the deadline via the online Grants Management Portal will be accepted.**

4.1 BEFORE STARTING A NOMINATION FORM

Please ensure that you have read these guidelines in full and have checked the eligibility criteria for the award. Additionally, we encourage nominees / nominators to review last year's feedback for the [Rising Star and Senior Leader awards](#), and the [Team Achievement award](#). Please also note, according to our:

- [Resubmission policy](#), an unsuccessful nomination from a previous award round can re-apply **once** to the same award, but **must** entirely amend any previously submitted unsuccessful nominations prior to submission (i.e. duplicate submissions, sections of the form and/or letters will **not** be eligible).
- [Policy on use of generative and agentic AI in the grant application process](#), any use of generative or agentic AI tools to prepare a nomination must be disclosed in the nomination form. This applies whether the nomination is prepared by the nominee, a nominator or any other contributor. The disclosure should state which tool(s) were used and for what purpose. Where possible, must include the specific model(s) and software used and specify how the content was generated (including the prompts used). **This information is used for monitoring purposes and will not be used in the assessment process.** We acknowledge that AI tools offer significant potential to enhance productivity and innovation. However, these should be used responsibly and in accordance with relevant legal and ethical standards, including data privacy, where these exist or as they develop. **Therefore, you should never input sensitive or personal data of others (i.e. third parties) into AI tools without consent.** The nominee and, where relevant, the nominator are responsible for ensuring that all information submitted as part of the nomination is accurate, respecting intellectual property rights, and considering potential bias.

FOR THE RISING STAR OR SENIOR LEADER AWARD

- If you are nominating yourself:
 - You and your supporter will both need to [be a member of the Academy](#) before submitting the nomination form.
- If, alternatively, you are nominating another Academy member:
 - You and the nominee will both need to [be a member of the Academy](#) before submitting the nomination form.
 - You **must** make the nominee aware that you are submitting the nomination form on their behalf as:

- They will need to submit a supporting statement and an indicative three-year plan outlining how they intend to use the £120k Excellence Award if successful.
- If shortlisted:
 - They will be required to attend an interview on one of the dates specified in [Section 3](#).
- Please note that both you (the nominator) and the nominee may be approached for any communications related to the initial nomination.
- When making your nomination, it is important that you know the work of the nominee well enough to build a strong case for why they are deserving of the award. The Panel are looking for a compelling account of the significance of the nominee's work, their outstanding achievements, and their commitment to our key values. A good nomination should also describe, as best as possible, the difference the nominee's contribution has made. Consider what distinguishes your nominee from others doing similar work and provide details to support these claims.

FOR THE TEAM ACHIEVEMENT AWARD

- If you are nominating your own team achievement for the award:
 - You will act as the team lead / representative (i.e. nominee).
 - You **must** be an eligible member of the Academy and have a profile on the [member directory](#).
 - Your supporter **must not** be a member of the team, and if they are eligible, they can be a member of the Academy.
- If, alternatively, you are nominating another team achievement for the award:
 - You, as the nominator, **must not** be a member of the team being nominated, and if eligible, you can be a member of the Academy.
 - The nominee (i.e. team lead / representative) **must** be an eligible member of the Academy and have a profile on the [member directory](#).
 - You **must** make the nominee aware that you are submitting the nomination form on their behalf as:
 - They will need to submit a supporting statement and an indicative three-year plan outlining how the team intend to use the £120k Excellence Award if successful.
 - If shortlisted:
 - They will be required to attend an interview on 12 January 2027.
 - Please note that both you (the nominator) and the nominee may be approached for any communications related to the initial nomination.
 - When making your nomination, it is important that you know the work of the team well enough to build a strong case for why they are deserving of the award. The Panel are looking for a compelling account of the significance of the team's work, their outstanding achievement, and their commitment to our key values. A good nomination

should describe, as best as possible, the difference the team's contribution has made. Consider what distinguishes the team from others doing similar work and provide details to support these claims.

FOR ALL AWARDS ON OFFER

- If successful, as a condition of award the nominee's Head of Department (or an equivalent authority) will need to provide written confirmation that:
 - The nominee's university / institution / organisation will administer the award.
 - If the nominee does not have a permanent / tenured position, the nominee's contract will extend for at least the first 12 months of the award in the first instance.
- Regardless of the nomination route (i.e. self-nomination or nomination by another person), if successful, the nominee will be the primary point-of-contact for any communications and publicity related to the award.

4.2 THE NOMINATION FORM

The nomination form needs to be submitted via our [online Grants Management Portal](#), but you can download a PDF template of the nomination form from our website as a guide.

- If you are nominating yourself or your own team's achievement:
 - For the Rising Star award, please [use this version of the nomination form](#).
 - For the Senior Leader award, please [use this version of the nomination form](#).
 - For the Team Achievement award, please [use this version of the nomination form](#).
- If you are nominating somebody else or another team's achievement:
 - For the Rising Star award, please [use this version of the nomination form](#).
 - For the Senior Leader award, please [use this version of the nomination form](#).
 - For the Team Achievement award, please [use this version of the nomination form](#).

Please note:

- That these PDF versions are only provided for planning purposes – only nominations made before the deadline via the online Grants Management Portal will be accepted.
- For either nomination route, when uploading the letter focussing on our key values – please do **not** to repeat information that has already been provided in the body of the form. The focus of the letter is on the nominee's / team's commitment to our key values, as outlined in these guidelines and the nomination form.
- We will **not** consider the contents of any uploaded letter(s) that have not been expressly requested in the nomination form and/or that exceed the stated word count.

Detailed information on navigating and using the Grants Management Portal is provided in our [“how to” guide](#).

5. ASSESSMENT PROCESS

5.1 THE PANEL

Professor Deborah Dunn-Walters (University of Surrey and Chair of our Board of Trustees) will chair the shortlisting meeting and interviews, and members of staff from the Foundation will act as observers and/or notetakers. In addition, the shortlisting and interview Panel will consist of the following members:

Rising Star award

- Dr Claire Hill (Queen’s University Belfast and Vivensa Foundation Proleptic Fellow)
- Professor Jill Manthorpe (King’s College London and Trustee)
- Dr Toby Ellmers (Imperial College London and 2025 ‘Rising Star’ Excellence Award holder)

Senior Leader award

- Professor Bernard Conway (University of Strathclyde and Trustee)
- Professor Nathan Davies (Queen Mary University of London and 2026 ‘Senior Leader’ Excellence Award holder)
- Professor Dame Louise Robinson (Newcastle University and Research Grants Committee member)

Team Achievement award

- Professor Ala Szczepura (Coventry University and Research Grants Committee member)
- Professor Emma Wolverson (University of West London and Trustee)
- Professor Tine Buffel (University of Manchester and lead ‘Team Achievement’ Excellence Award holder for 2026)

Please note that:

- Panel composition may be subject to change following the submission deadline, particularly in cases where a conflict of interest is identified.
- Panel review / shortlisting and interviews will take place on the dates specified in [Section 3](#).

5.2 ASSESSMENT CRITERIA

Once submitted, the Foundation will conduct an initial review of the nomination form to confirm that it meets the following criteria:

- Eligibility for the award
- Satisfactory completion of the nomination form, including the required uploaded documents

RISING STAR AND SENIOR LEADER AWARDS

Nominations will then be reviewed and shortlisted by the Panel based on the following criteria:

- The nomination clearly articulates / justifies the nominee's status as a rising star **or** senior leader in ageing-related research.
- There is a clear explanation of how the nominee has: i) demonstrated excellence in ageing-related research (commensurate with experience and taking into account the impacts of COVID-19); and ii) contributed to the understanding of the mechanisms of ageing or ageing-related disease, and/or influenced ageing-related policy / practice at a local, regional, national and/or international level.
- There is a clear and compelling demonstration of the nominee's commitment to capacity building and/or mentorship in ageing-related research, and how they have meaningfully contributed to building a positive research culture.
- There is a clear and compelling demonstration of how the nominee has meaningfully promoted patient, carer and/or public involvement and engagement (PPIE) in ageing-related research, and the difference this has made.
- There is a clear and compelling demonstration of how the nominee has meaningfully promoted equity, diversity and inclusion (EDI) in ageing-related research, and the difference this has made.
- There is a clear and compelling demonstration of the nominee's understanding of the environmental impact of their work and ways in which this could be reduced.
- There is a clear and compelling demonstration of how the nominee has worked in multidisciplinary and/or multi-professional teams from academia, health and care settings and/or the VCSE sector to address the needs of older adults.
- There is a clear and compelling demonstration that the nominee has put forward a well-considered and achievable plan for the use of the award, including how the proposed activities would advance the ageing-related field, improve the lives of older adults in the UK, deliver benefits beyond their immediate research group and/or organisation and demonstrate a genuine commitment to the Vivensa Foundation's key values.

We recognise that some of these criteria may be more challenging for some depending on the research area. What matters most is how nominations acknowledge and address any challenges, and how progress has been made by leveraging available resources and opportunities.

Shortlisted nominees will be invited to interview on one of the dates specified in [Section 3](#). As part of the interview, nominees will be asked to give a 5-minute presentation to:

- Briefly outline why they are a suitable candidate for the award and how it will benefit them and others in their network.
- Explain how they intend to engage with / act as an ambassador for the [Academy](#) and wider Foundation, if successful.

The interview will be an opportunity for the Panel to raise any queries arising from the nomination form / presentation and explore these in more detail. If relevant, the nominee may be provided with specific feedback following the shortlisting meeting and asked to address this at interview. It is anticipated that the interview will be no longer than 1 hour.

Recognising the impacts of COVID-19 on research activity: we are aware that COVID-19 has resulted in disruptions to research activities for many researchers. As a result, the impacts of COVID-19 will be taken into account when assessing nominees' research record and career progression and we will be providing guidance on this matter to the Panel.

TEAM ACHIEVEMENT AWARD

Nominations for this award will be reviewed and shortlisted by the Panel based on the following criteria:

- The nomination clearly articulates an ageing-related 'Team Achievement' delivered for the first time within the last five years, which has led to a significant, sustainable and evidenced outcome and/or impact at a local, regional, national or international level.
- There is a clear explanation of how / why / when the team was formed and how else it has demonstrated excellence in the ageing-related field (beyond the nominated achievement).
- There is a clear and compelling demonstration of the ageing-related achievement involving a multidisciplinary and/or multi-professional team (e.g. from academia, health and care settings and/or the VCSE sector, involving different disciplines, professions, sectors and/or organisations). There is also a clear explanation of the specific role(s) / contribution(s) of each team member, and how the collaborative approach and diverse expertise were pivotal to the success of the achievement being celebrated.
- There is a clear and compelling demonstration of the team's commitment to capacity building and/or mentorship in their ageing-related work, and how they have meaningfully contributed to building a positive working culture.
- There is a clear and compelling demonstration of how the team has meaningfully promoted the involvement and engagement of older people in their ageing-related work, and the difference this has made.
- There is a clear and compelling demonstration of how the team has meaningfully promoted equity, diversity and inclusion (EDI) in their formation and ageing-related work, as well as the difference this has made.

- There is a clear and compelling demonstration of the team's understanding of the environmental impact of their ageing-related work and ways in which this could be reduced.
- There is a clear and compelling demonstration that the team has put forward a well-considered and achievable plan for the use of the award, including how the proposed activities would sustain or build on the achievement being recognised, advance the ageing-related field, improve the lives of older adults in the UK, deliver benefits beyond the immediate team and/or organisation and demonstrate a genuine commitment to the Vivensa Foundation's key values.

We recognise that some of these criteria may be more challenging for some depending on the area of work. What matters most is how nominations acknowledge and address any challenges, and how progress has been made by leveraging available resources and opportunities.

Shortlisted teams will be invited to interview on 12 January 2027. The interview should be attended by the nominee (i.e. the team lead / representative), along with any team member(s) best-placed to speak to the work and its outcome / impact. As part of the interview, nominees and any additional team members will be asked to give a 10-minute presentation to:

- Briefly outline why their team is suitable for the award and how it will benefit them and others in their network.
- Explain how the achievement being celebrated will be maintained or built upon.
- Explain how they intend to engage with / act as an ambassador for the [Academy](#) and wider Foundation, if successful.

The interview will be an opportunity for the Panel to raise any queries arising from the nomination form / presentation and explore these in more detail. If relevant, the team may be provided with specific feedback following the shortlisting meeting and asked to address this at interview. Interviews are expected to last up to 90 minutes, to ensure that all team members have an opportunity to contribute to the discussion.

Recognising the impacts of COVID-19: we are aware that COVID-19 has resulted in disruptions to work across many fields. As a result, the impacts of COVID-19 will be taken into account when assessing the team's achievement(s), and we will be providing guidance on this matter to the Panel.

FEEDBACK ON ALL NOMINATIONS

Unfortunately, we are unable to provide individual feedback to each nominee or team. However, we will be providing general feedback on the [news section of our website](#), which will highlight the common themes that distinguished stronger nominees or teams, as well as noting areas that could have been improved. We will also be providing information on the eventual success rate for the awards at a later date. For example, please see last year's feedback for the [Rising Star and Senior Leader awards, and the Team Achievement award](#) for your interest and information.

5.3 CHECKLIST

Before submitting your nomination, please ensure that you have completed all of the relevant steps below:

- ☐ Have you read these guidelines fully and checked the eligibility criteria for the award?
- ☐ If self-nominating for the Rising Star or Senior Leader award, are you and your supporter both members of the Academy with a profile on the [member directory](#)?
- ☐ If you are nominating somebody else for the Rising Star or Senior Leader award:
 - Are you and the nominee members of the Academy with a profile on the [member directory](#)?
 - Is the nominee aware that you are submitting a nomination on their behalf and that, if shortlisted, they will be required to attend an interview on one of the specified dates?
- ☐ If you are nominating your own team for the Team Achievement award:
 - Are you an eligible member of the Academy with a profile on the [member directory](#)?
 - Is your supporter aware that they cannot be a member of your team? If eligible, they can be a member of the Academy.
- ☐ If you are nominating another team for the Team Achievement award:
 - Are you aware that you cannot be a member of the team being nominated? If eligible, you can be a member of the Academy.
 - Is the nominee (i.e. team lead / representative) an eligible member of the Academy with a profile on the [member directory](#)?
 - Is the nominee (i.e. team lead / representative) aware that you are submitting a nomination on their behalf and that, if shortlisted, they will be required to attend an interview on the specified date?
- ☐ Have you provided detailed and relevant answers to all mandatory questions in the nomination form?
- ☐ Have you uploaded any required documents (e.g. a statement from yourself / your supporter, outline of your plan for the award etc.) alongside the nomination form?

6. SUPPORT AND FURTHER INFORMATION

6.1 SUPPORT FROM THE FOUNDATION

- Join our webinar on 24 September 2026 (2 to 3pm) to hear more about the awards and take part in a Q&A session – [register on Eventbrite](#):
 - Following the webinar, we aim to make the recording available on the “[Events, recordings and reports](#)” section of our website.
- You can download the following PDF template nomination forms to help plan your submission. However, please note that these PDF versions are only provided for planning purposes – only nominations made before the deadline via the online Grants Management Portal will be accepted:
 - If you are nominating yourself or your own team’s achievement:
 - For the Rising Star award, please [use this version of the nomination form](#).
 - For the Senior Leader award, please [use this version of the nomination form](#).
 - For the Team Achievement award, please [use this version of the nomination form](#).
 - If you are nominating somebody else or another team’s achievement:
 - For the Rising Star award, please [use this version of the nomination form](#).
 - For the Senior Leader award, please [use this version of the nomination form](#).
 - For the Team Achievement award, please [use this version of the nomination form](#).
- Join the [Vivensa Academy](#), which aims to:
 - Facilitate better understanding and foster relationships between academic and clinical researchers, as well as community organisations, working with older people.
 - Create a supportive place to find new collaborators, mentors and advisors and to sustain nascent networks for the longer term.
- Read our [2025-30 Strategic Framework](#), which highlights our values and research priorities.
- Read our [annual report and action plan](#) for the Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers.
- For guidance on what made a good nomination in previous years, read last year's feedback for the [Rising Star and Senior Leader awards](#), and the [Team Achievement award](#).
- For guidance on navigating and using the Grants Management Portal, please see our [“how to” guide](#).

6.2 EXTERNAL GUIDANCE

- For information regarding Patient, carer and Public Involvement (PPI) in research, please do visit the [National Institute for Health and Care Research \(NIHR\) website for various PPI resources](#). You may also wish to look at the [UK Standards for Public Involvement](#), a framework for what good public involvement in research looks like. There is also this [practical guide to PPI in lab-based research](#).

- For more information on including under-served groups in research, you might be interested in a website hosted by the [INCLUDE initiative from the NIHR](#) which provides guidance for ensuring health research is inclusive. NHS England has also created [a document that provides practical insights for researchers on how to engage more diverse participants in health research](#).
- For more information on improving the integration of sex and gender in biomedical, health and care research, please visit the [MESSAGE \(Medical Science Sex and Gender Equity\) project website](#).

6.3 CONTACT INFORMATION

If you have any queries related to the Academy, please contact academy@vivensafoundation.org.uk.

For any queries regarding the nomination process and awards, including if you need any alternative accessible formats, please contact grants@vivensafoundation.org.uk. We will do our very best to assist you.