

DIRECTOR OF RESEARCH

Candidate pack

January 2025

Welcome. I am delighted to introduce you to an exceptional opportunity within our organisation – the position of Director of Research.

Research has been at the centre of our work since we were founded over 30 years ago and we're as passionate about it today as we always have been.

We continue to support research because it is the evidence needed for decisive action and we're on a mission to accelerate our understanding of this devastating disease. We fund research projects to drive breakthrough science. We are a catalyst for genomics research, so we understand the origins and evolution of meningitis pathogens. We bring together the leading minds from around the world to fuel collaboration and innovation at our events. And we use the insights gained from the latest science to influence policy and practice.

Headquartered in the UK and driven by a global ambition, we have a mission to defeat meningitis wherever it exists. 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

Our organisation values creativity, collaboration, and scientific rigor, and we are seeking a visionary leader who can drive our research strategy forward. The Director of Research will play a pivotal role in shaping the future of meningitis research, with the opportunity to impact lives globally.



We can offer a dynamic and supportive work environment where your contributions are valued and your professional growth is encouraged. Our team is composed of passionate and dedicated individuals who are united by a common vision of a world free from meningitis. At Meningitis Research Foundation you will pursue groundbreaking research, collaborate with leading experts, and make tangible advancements in the field.

We believe that with your expertise and our shared vision, we can achieve remarkable progress. I invite you to consider this exciting opportunity and join us in our mission to save lives and improve health outcomes for millions.

Kind regards,



Vinny Smith
CEO, Meningitis Research Foundation

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

2.5 million

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

15–20 million

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

1 in 6



people affected by bacterial meningitis die

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



1 in 5



people surviving bacterial meningitis suffer from a long-lasting disability

16.3 million

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

Several challenges have impeded progress in the fight against meningitis. However, they can be overcome with investment and resources.



Lack of prioritization and cohesive approach

Inadequate surveillance and data

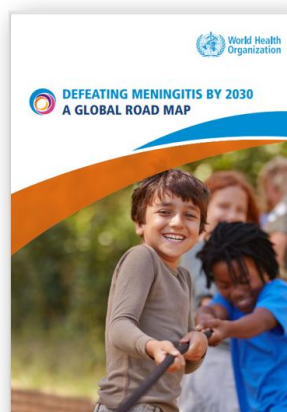
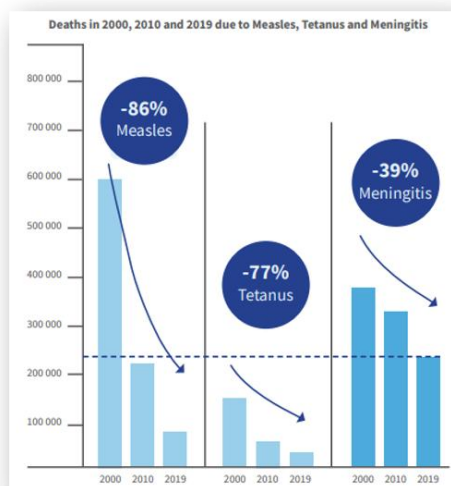
Too low vaccination uptake

Incomplete vaccine portfolio

Suboptimal diagnostic tests

Lack of resources for disease management

Poorly addressed meningitis-associated sequelae and disability



Research is at the heart of what we do

At Meningitis Research Foundation we fund, carry out and partner on [research](#). The Director of Research is pivotal in driving our activities across all these areas.

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 Director of Research leads on all aspects of our 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.



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 affected people and in this role you would be doing that as a member of the Senior Leadership Team regularly reporting to the Board with significant opportunities to shape and guide our future. 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 me as CEO 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.

Job Description: Director of Research, full-time, £65-70,000 p/a, office, home or hybrid working based in the UK.

Position overview

Meningitis Research Foundation (MRF) is seeking an experienced and visionary Director of Research to lead our research initiatives. The ideal candidate will have experience in infectious diseases, a strong background in biomedical research, international collaboration and a proven track record of managing and leading research projects. This is a key leadership role that will drive our efforts to prevent and cure meningitis and septicaemia through innovative research and collaboration. Initially managing a small team, the Director will lead on growing the team to support the new research strategy launching in 2025.

Key responsibilities

Strategy

To develop, lead the implementation and monitor and report on the success of the Directorate strategy and input to organisation wide strategy as part of the Senior Leadership Team (SLT), including a specific approach to research and what this means to MRF.

Research

- Lead on all aspects of MRF's Association of Medical Research Charities (AMRC) accredited grant awards and management process including research funding rounds; grant awards; grant management and all aspects of reporting for the research portfolio and impact of projects funded by MRF.
- Lead on the recruitment, development and management of MRFs [Scientific Advisory Panel](#) and their participation in the grant awards process.
- Lead on all aspects of *externally funded research projects* including concept development, partner identification, writing, developing and where necessary producing peer-reviewed academic papers of relevance to MRFs strategy and shorter briefing documents and presentations as required.
- Lead on all aspects of MRF's *in-house research* including concept development, writing, developing and produce peer-reviewed academic papers of relevance to MRFs strategy and shorter briefing documents and presentations as required.
- Identify suitable academic partners for collaborative research projects in accordance with the research strategy.
- Lead on all aspects of research environment horizon scanning and use this to appropriately brief internal teams on new developments in the field that are relevant to their work.
- Lead MRF's secretariat of the Global Meningitis Genome Partnership (GMGP).
- Represent MRF as a collaborative patient representative partner on external academic research projects and panels.

Conferences and Meetings

- Working with external experts, lead on the development and agreement of suitable agenda, speakers and formats for the MRF Scientific Research conference and other research or clinically focused symposia hosted by MRF; and promote meetings through extensive networks.

- Represent MRF as the senior representative at key research conferences and events, including seeking opportunities to present latest in-house research and projects.
- Oversee the development and coordination of new opportunistic key events and meetings that support our goals.

Policy integration

Work with the Head of Health Insights and Policy to ensure latest research evidence is fully integrated into MRFs policy strategy, framework and activities by effectively briefing internal colleagues on potential relevance of research for policy.

Consultations

Lead on responding to external consultations that are focused on research and the research environment with relevance to meningitis.

External senior stakeholder relationship management

Represent MRF on relevant sector bodies and working groups; present to high level external stakeholders about our work; represent beneficiaries of our work to various bodies including national and international health bodies; industry; researchers, public health officials and civil society representatives; deputising for CEO as required.

Media

Support communications teams on research content for media use; represent MRF in the media as required; liaise with stakeholders such as public health professionals like the UK Health Security Agency and international organisations like the World Health Organization to ensure alignment of research and media activity.

Team recruitment and development

Recruit, retain and develop a high-performing team in accordance with the strategy, operating plans and values of the organisation.

Governance and Reporting

Report quarterly to CEO on performance of the Directorate and prepare papers and presentations as required for committee and full Board meetings; represent the Directorate at the Board meetings as required; report monthly to the SLT on the performance of the Directorate against agreed Key Performance Indicators.

Finances and Budgets

Develop and recommend an annual budget and operating plan for the Directorate to the CEO ; monitor and report on implementation throughout the year; liaise with the Director of Finance and Administration to ensure accurate and timely production of management accounts; inputs to development of other departments; and uphold the financial policies and procedures of the charity.

Internal senior stakeholder relationship management

Be an active member of the senior leadership team, supporting other departments and teams to achieve their goals and helping to communicate progress of the charity with staff and volunteers.

Experience

- Published researcher or research management in health or scientific environment/field.
- Research grant management and portfolio oversight.
- Presented multiple times at international research conferences.
- Extensive relevant networks in research and academic community.
- Recent experience of being an organisation's spokesperson on research activities, including to the media.
- Have represented a research unit or equivalent body on inter-organisational working groups of relevance to public health.
- Extensive experience leading teams including budget setting and strategic planning.
- Strategy development and implementation.
- Senior external stakeholder management.
- Representation or accreditation with or on a professional body relevant to the area of subject expertise.
- Budget management experience relevant to Directorate scale and strategy.
- Have presented to Boards/Senior stakeholders internally and externally on multiple occasions.
- Lead, developed and managed a team/department/organisation/operation >10 people.
- A PhD in a relevant discipline or relevant equivalent life experience.
- A second European language, ideally French, desirable.

Key competencies for this role

In addition to the key competencies for all Directors at MRF, this role needs to be competent in all aspects of the research process to a high standard.

Key Competencies for all Directors at MRF

Leadership behaviours

- Strategy: Develops and executes strategic plans within directorate.
- Leadership: Leads and aligns directorate goals with organisational objectives.
- Management: Monitors and enhances directorate performance.
- Finances: Develops, recommends and optimizes directorate budgets.
- Supervision: Guides and mentors heads of departments & wider teams.
- Team contribution: Ensures directorate operates as a highly effective team aligned to values.
- Communicating progress: Regularly reports progress to the CEO, SLT and board.

Values

- Evidence-led: Bases directorate strategies on data and research.
- Integrity: Upholds ethical practices within directorate.
- Determination: Steadfast in achieving directorate goals.
- Passionate Advocate: Promotes the mission of the charity confidently to internal and external stakeholders with conviction.
- Collaboration: Identifies partnership opportunities; encourages cross-directorate and departmental cooperation.
- Compassion: Role models compassion for beneficiaries and staff within directorate.

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.

First 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.

Successful candidates will be invited to a second interview with the CEO and two members of the Trustee Board 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.