UKRI policy fellowships 2025: fellowship position

Fellowship title: Cabinet Office NHS Fit for the Future Mission fellowship

Fellowship type: Core policy fellowship

Host organisation: Cabinet Office

Host team: Evaluation Task Force (ETF) and Mission Delivery Unit (MDU)

Summary: opportunity to work at the heart of government supporting evaluation and delivery of the Health Mission, to drive a step change in evidence-based decision-making and public sector reform. Work will cover the breadth of the Health Mission, which is focused on building a health and social care system Fit for the Future

Policy topic: key Mission aims include shortening the amount of time people spend in poor health by ending hospital backlogs, reducing lives lost to the biggest killers and addressing the underlying drivers of ill-health

Research Council: ESRC

Academic discipline(s): public health, health sciences, health policy, social research methods, behavioural science, impact evaluation, specialist evaluation skills preferably in experimental or quasi-experimental methods and complex or multifaceted evaluations

Research career stage: open to early or mid-career researchers

Fellowship structure
Inception phase:

> **Estimated start date**: February 2026. Exact date to be confirmed by the host depending on onboarding and security clearance requirements
> **Duration:** three months
> **FTE:** 0.4 FTE

Main placement phase:

> **Duration:** 12 months
> **FTE:** 0.6 to 1 FTE

Knowledge exchange phase:

> **Duration:** three months
> **FTE:** 0.4 FTE

Work arrangements

Location requirements: fellows will need to regularly work with the ETF and MDU teams at Cabinet Office locations in Westminster

Hybrid working: during the main placement phase, fellows will be expected to attend Cabinet Office buildings in person at 1 Horse Guards Road or 70 Whitehall on average two days per week. During the inception phase, fellows should budget for attending up to six face-to-face meetings in London. Eligible Travel and Subsistence costs are supported in the main UKRI grant. Please see full call text and guidance for more details

Security clearance: fellows will need a minimum of Counter Terrorist Check (CTC) clearance. Security clearance can take up to three months. Please see National security vetting: clearance levels for further information

Fellowship description

The Mission:

The new government has said it will put Missions at the heart of everything it does as it seeks to achieve long-term renewal, focused on tackling complex societal challenges that will make a meaningful difference to people's everyday lives. Achieving these ambitious outcomes requires a new way of doing government, combining the best of policy and evaluation. In support of these aims, this fellowship will be hosted by the ETF and MDU. This opportunity is one of five fellowships that will be hosted by the ETF and MDU, creating a sub-cohort of Mission-led policy fellows working at the centre of government.

The teams:

The ETF is a joint Cabinet Office and HM Treasury (HMT) team working to ensure robust evidence on the effectiveness of policies and programmes sits at the heart of spending decisions.

MDU leads on working with departments on the Health Mission, as well as the other Mission areas. This includes addressing key challenges and blockers for key components of Mission delivery and ensuring that the overall policy package is sufficient for delivering the Mission as a whole.

The work:

Fellows will be embedded in the ETF with dotted line management to MDU colleagues leading work on the Health Mission. Working across these teams, fellows will demonstrate the dynamic new ways of working necessitated by Mission-driven government, combining the best of academia and outside challenge with government planning. While this opportunity is focussed on the Health Mission, there may be opportunities for the successful candidates to work at the intersection of different Missions. Fellows will work with ETF and MDU to codesign potential research projects during the fellowship inception phase.

A critical part of Mission delivery is using data and evidence to target resources and interventions in the most effective way. The Health Mission aims to transform:

1. Elective care: improving productivity and delivering more timely diagnostic test referrals and results

2. Patients' experience of care: embracing technology, improving flexibility and patient choice

3. The model of care: developing a more sustainable approach with an increased focus on prevention

MDU supports the Mission to clarify aims, metrics and trajectories, and develop Theories of Change for how proposed interventions might add up towards Mission outcomes. Underpinning all of this must be a clear understanding of the available evidence of 'what works' so that policy packages are developed with the greatest likelihood of achieving Mission outcomes on time.

Key activities, fellows will:

- Work on a dynamic mix of short-term activities, tackling emerging issues in Mission delivery and evaluation, and longer-term projects directly engaging with policy or analytical specialists in departments
- Use their knowledge of Mission areas and evaluation expertise to problem solve delivery and evaluation challenges related to government Missions
- Work to ensure our understanding of Mission areas is informed by the best available evidence, that data and research evidence is used to support Mission delivery, and ensure Missions generate data to enable robust impact evaluations
- Contribute academic expertise to the delivery and evaluation of government Missions through both their technical evaluation skills and their specialist policy knowledge of the Health Mission area. This can include expertise in specific elements within Health policy rather than expertise across the Mission such as in reducing health inequalities or improving NHS productivity
- Support development and implementation of robust evaluation of government programmes by providing technical advice to departments on complex evaluations and reviewing evaluation plans
- Engage academic networks to collate and share relevant learning between academic and government communities to support Mission delivery and evaluation
- Assist the delivery of Health Mission through supporting with aspects of delivery planning, such as constructing Theories of Change, interrogating analysis from departments to check coherence and alignment with evidence, and providing strategic advice or challenge to senior officials and ministers
- Support the delivery of the Health Mission through identifying blockers to delivery and helping develop novel solutions to overcoming these challenges in a manner that supports the government's other Missions (such as Clean Energy and Opportunities)
- Undertake original research and analysis to support delivery and evaluation of the Health Mission

Benefits to the fellow:

- A unique opportunity to inform the design, delivery and evaluation of the highest priority government policies
- Gaining an understanding of policymaking from the heart of government, as well as the analysis, data and funding decisions that support this
- The opportunity to build their network of policy and analytical professionals within government, from key central departments (No10, Cabinet Office, HMT) and Mission relevant departments and arms-length bodies, including but not limited to, the Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC), NHS England, the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, the Department for Education, the Home Office, the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, the Department for Culture, Media and Sport and the Department for Work and Pensions
- Peer mentoring from ETF Evaluation Leads and MDU delivery professionals, all of whom are handpicked experts in their field who make up our small but highly effective central units
- Opportunity to apply academic knowledge and research expertise in the delivery of government Missions
- Opportunity to publish academic outputs (where data and security requirements allow)
- Potential to access new and novel data related to Mission delivery

Example activities and outputs the fellow will be expected to undertake or deliver include:

- Rapid review of policy documents or research evidence to feed into delivery and evaluation planning
- Research into and communication of 'what works' evidence to policy and delivery teams working on the NHS Fit for the Future Mission such as on improving patient outcomes and healthcare system delivery
- Analysis and interrogation of data to provide insights to support problem identification and policy development, for example data on delivery of care and patient satisfaction
- Rapid scrutiny of evaluation plans attached to business cases submitted to HMT spending teams
- Advising and supporting DHSC and other health service organisations on the design and delivery of robust, proportionate evaluation
- Communicating research and evaluation findings to ensuring they are fed back into decisions made by departments and spending teams
- Support development of ministerial advice to ensure that evidence of 'what works' is clearly presented and communicated

Person specification

Applications will be assessed by UKRI panel assessment against the following essential opportunity-specific requirements in addition to the generic eligibility and call criteria:

Essential criteria:

- Subject matter expertise in specific topics related to the Health Mission, for example health inequalities, health service productivity, public health, prevention

- Experience of design and delivery of experimental or quasi-experimental impact evaluation, complex theory-based or contribution analysis evaluation

- Subject matter expertise in social research methodology, impact evaluation and process evaluation

- Experience of working with policy or practice stakeholders to develop and refine research, monitoring or evaluation plan

- Understanding of or experience in operational delivery or the levers needed to turn good policy into good delivery

Applicants shortlisted from the panel assessment will be assessed at the host led interview selection process against the following desirable opportunity-specific requirements:

Desirable criteria:

- Ability to synthesise existing evidence and make recommendations about policy development and implementation

- Background in or awareness of behavioural science

- Background in or awareness of value for money evaluation or assessment

- Background in or experience of applied quantitative research methods

Processing personal data

If applicants are shortlisted by the UKRI assessment panel UKRI will need to share the application and any personal information that it contains with the host for the host led interview selection process.

Your personal data will be handled in line with UK data protection legislation and managed securely. If you would like to know more, including how to exercise your Rights, please see the UKRI [privacy notice](#).

The Cabinet Office privacy notice can be found here: [Cabinet Office Personal Information Charter](#). Hosts will delete your data at the end of the selection process unless you are successful, in which case we will retain your data as an independent data controller.