



Biotechnology and  
Biological Sciences  
Research Council



Economic  
and Social  
Research Council



Department of  
**Health**

An Roinn Sláinte

Mánnystrie O Poustie

[www.health-ni.gov.uk](http://www.health-ni.gov.uk)

## **UKRI Policy Fellowships 2023: Fellowship Opportunity Description**

**Fellowship Title:** Department of Health Ageing and Wellbeing Bioscience Fellowship

**Host Organisation:** [Department of Health Northern Ireland](#)

**Host Team:** Chief Pharmaceutical Officer's team, Department of Health

**Summary:** *Opportunity to inform the development of health policy for the prevention and management of non-communicable diseases and the treatment of acute illnesses through community pharmacy based clinical services.*

**Fellowship Theme:** Securing Better Health, Ageing and Well-being. Please see the full call text 'What We Are Looking For' for a detailed summary of the research themes targeted in this call.

**Policy Topic:** Healthcare

**Research Council:** BBSRC

**Academic Discipline/s:** Bioscience, life sciences, pharmacy, medicine

**Research Career Stage:** Open to *early or mid-career researchers*

### **Fellowship Structure**

#### **Inception Phase:**

**Estimated Start Date:** October 2023. *Exact date to be confirmed by the host depending on onboarding and security clearance requirements*

**Duration:** 3 months

**FTE:** 0.4 FTE

#### **Main Placement Phase:**

**Duration:** 12 months

**FTE:** 0.6-1 FTE

#### **Knowledge Exchange Phase:**

**Duration:** 3 months

**FTE:** 0.4 FTE

### **Work Arrangements**

**Location Requirements:** The post is located in Department of Health, Castle Buildings, Stormont, Belfast, BT43SQ.

**Hybrid Working:** The standard hybrid working pattern is two days per week working in the office although this is flexible.

**Security Clearance:** A basic level of security clearance will be required to work within the Department, potential processing, and lead in time of 3 months. The inception phase of the fellowship can begin before the security clearance process is completed, but will be required for the main placement phase

### **Fellowship Opportunity Description**

This project will apply analyses of data, technology, and clinical practice to inform policy to support targeted and effective action to optimise the impact on population health of community pharmacy clinical services involving pharmacist independent prescribers.

The challenges we are seeking to address

- Evidence of excess deaths linked to non-communicable diseases (NCD) including diabetes, heart failure, other cardiovascular disease, and cancer.

- The need to improve primary and secondary prevention including the management of early indicators of disease, screening and management of known risk factors
- Excess demand related to acute illness causing pressure in general practices, out of hours and emergency departments
- Underutilisation of the clinical skills of pharmacists in community pharmacies
- Low level of use of diagnostics and digital technologies in the community pharmacy setting
- The potential to embed pharmacogenomics into patient pathways in community pharmacies

The opportunity:

Regulations to allow pharmacists to prescribe independently came into effect across the UK in 2006. A pharmacist independent prescriber may prescribe autonomously for any condition within their clinical competence. Around 20% of registered pharmacists in Northern Ireland have completed an accredited post graduate course as independent prescribers with the large majority working in hospital or general practice within multi-disciplinary teams. Currently there are very few independent pharmacist prescribers working in community pharmacies in NI.

UK wide changes to the curricula for undergraduate pharmacy courses introduced in September 2022 will lead to all pharmacy graduates entering the professional register as independent prescribers from 2027 onwards. With undergraduate numbers of around 250 students per year and at least a further 150 qualified pharmacists completing post graduate courses, there could be more than 400 independent prescribers registering per year in Northern Ireland alone.

The Department of Health is seeking to ensure that the skills of this new cohort of clinicians are targeted to contribute effectively to health and social care delivery and to optimise their impact on population health outcomes. There is particular interest in opportunities to develop new integrated clinical pathways for NCD and acute illnesses involving community pharmacies making use of developments in point of care diagnostics, digital and other technologies, including pharmacogenomics for the diagnosis, treatment and management of disease.

The research fellow will work with the Chief Pharmaceutical Officer's team on policy development, and this will involve linking with experts in health and life science across the UK and with innovation hubs, including the Medicines Optimisation Innovation Centre and HIRANI.

They will be responsible for developing an evidence base to inform the role of pharmacist independent prescribers in community pharmacy-based services for the prevention and management of non-communicable diseases and the treatment of acute illnesses to support wellbeing and healthy ageing.

The fellow will have the opportunity to co-design clear research tasks in collaboration with officials in government based on policy needs and the fellow's interests/skills during the inception phase of the fellowship.

#### Objectives

- Analysis of population health data to determine areas of highest unmet need and greatest risk to population health in NI
- Analysis of current independent pharmacist practice in community pharmacy settings relating to NCD and acute illness in the UK and relevant countries worldwide
- Analysis of the role of technologies for example point of care diagnostics and digital solutions.
- Analysis of impact of current practices on population health

#### Outcomes

- Identify clinical areas of highest unmet need and populations suitable for community pharmacy services
- Identify the components of good clinical practice in integrated and multidisciplinary patient pathways
- Identify the role of technologies in service delivery
- Inform policy recommendations to develop enhanced clinical services in community pharmacies
- Inform collaborative working between pharmacy and life sciences in the role of technologies in patient pathways
- Publication of research and knowledge exchange opportunities

The fellow will benefit from:

- Support and oversight from the Chief Pharmaceutical Officer and her team
- Support from the Medicines Optimisation Innovation Centre and HIRANI
- Access to a network of health and economic experts and opportunities to engage with other government departments.
- The opportunity to inform and influence government policy on important population health issues.
- Proximity to and experience of key debates in health policy, informing relevance of future research.

## **Person Specification**

Applications will be assessed against the following opportunity-specific requirements in addition to the generic eligibility and call criteria.

### **Essential Criteria:**

- A proven academic track record in pharmacy, public health, pharmacogenomics, or life sciences
- Knowledge of the health and social care sector in Northern Ireland and Great Britain
- Specific skills in evaluation, monitoring, project management, communication, stakeholder engagement and collaboration, analytical, ability to synthesise evidence
- 
- Ability to design and lead on knowledge exchange activity between research, policy and funder communities
- Experience of working with complex teams and diverse stakeholders

### **Desirable Criteria:**

- Previous experience, research and/or demonstrated interest in the relevant policy area
- Experience or insight into working in a governmental context and/or previous involvement in policy development