

## **UKRI policy fellowships 2025: fellowship position**

**Fellowship title:** Cabinet Office resilience communications and citizen preparedness fellowship

**Fellowship type:** Natural Hazards and Resilience fellowship

**Organisation:** [Cabinet Office](#)

**Host team:** National Security Secretariat

**Summary:** a unique opportunity to use behavioural and social science skills and evidence to design and test resilience communications, with the aim of improving citizen preparedness for national risks such as: health risks (including infectious disease) and extreme weather events

**Policy topic:** the public are a key part of the UK's 'whole of society' approach to resilience. This project aims to improve public preparedness for, and resilience to, national risks via effective communications and other interventions

**Research Council:** UKRI

**Academic discipline(s):** social and behavioural sciences

**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:** 0.8 to 1 FTE

### **Knowledge exchange phase:**

**Duration:** three months

**FTE:** 0.4 FTE

## **Work arrangements**

**Location requirements:** fellow can be based anywhere in the UK, however the team hosting the fellow are based in an office on Whitehall in Westminster, London. If the fellow lives outside of London, some travel to London offices will be required

**Hybrid working:** the Cabinet Office has a three days a week minimum office working requirement. However, we would be content for minimum one day a week in the main placement phase. The rest of the time the fellow can work from home. In the inception phase, up to six face-to-face meetings would be required. Eligible Travel and Subsistence costs are supported in the main UKRI grant. Please see full call text and guidance for more details

**Security clearance:** a minimum of Security Check (SC) is required for this role. It is expected to take eight to ten weeks although this can vary. To obtain SC clearance, five years' UK residency in the past five years is normally required. Please see [National security vetting: clearance levels](#) for more information

## **Fellowship description**

Overview of the policy challenge:

In May 2024, the Cabinet Office launched the [GOV.UK/Prepare](https://www.gov.uk/prepared) website, containing advice for individuals, households and communities on preparing for emergencies. The UK has more work to do to normalise talking about preparedness with the public, to motivate those who can take action to do so and to support those in society who are most likely to be disproportionately impacted by emergencies. Although we can look at the approaches used by other countries, the UK has a unique historical and social context, and we lack evidence on what are likely to be the most effective approaches with a UK population.

Activities expected to be undertaken:

A review of the relevant academic literature and evidence from previous approaches to civil defence or disaster education both in the UK and internationally will be required (scope will be narrowed based on priorities). Original research will be codesigned with the fellow in the inception phase, informed by the policy priorities at the time and with a focus on designing research that will have impact. It could involve quantitative, qualitative or mixed methods. The fellow will also have the opportunity to support other relevant areas of work within the team to build knowledge and skills. We cannot be too specific about the research questions at this stage as this is a fast-moving policy area and priorities can change. However, we are keen to work with the fellow to design research on public preparedness that will lead to impact. Some examples of questions currently being considered are:

- Is concern about the impacts of climate change a motivating factor for individual or household emergency preparedness?
- Would the public disaster education approaches used by other countries be successful in the UK?
- How do we encourage those who are able to prepare for emergencies to support those are less able to take action themselves?

Expected outcomes: through the fellowship, we seek to gain a greater understanding of methods and tools to strengthen public preparedness for risks, directly impacting national policy, communications and training on this topic.

Expected outputs: evidence summaries, message or intervention design, recommendations for new research, identification of interventions and tools and a final report. Working with policymakers and communications teams to support effective policy development or content for future communications campaigns.

Benefits to the fellow:

- Original research: opportunity to codesign and lead the delivery of research in a critical area that impacts everyone in the UK, as well as the work of the research community. Although the specific research questions will be directed by departmental priorities in 2026, there will be options within these and the specific studies can be refined with input from the fellow. The fellow's interests and skills will also be taken into account when shaping the research
- Experience working at the heart of government: working in the Cabinet Office you will have the opportunity to connect with a wide range of government departments such as the Government Office for Science, the Department for Energy Security and Net Zero, the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs and the UK Health Security Agency, as well as teams within the Cabinet Office, such as within the Cabinet Office Briefing Rooms (COBR) Unit
- Networking opportunities: building a network of contacts in government policy, analytical and communications teams as well as the opportunity to present research findings to local resilience practitioners
- Learning and development: access to a broad range of civil service training, Learning and Development (L&D), and networking opportunities, including through to the new UK Resilience Academy (UKRA)
- Policy influence and impact: the team hosting the fellow have responsibility for preparedness communications, therefore the research has the potential to inform immediate changes to communications or other interventions. In addition, via UKRA there is the potential for the findings of the research to inform training content, and the chance for the fellow to share the findings of the research with the UKRA academic and practitioner community
- Publications: opportunities to publish research findings (outputs will need to be cleared by Cabinet Office)

### **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:**

- Expertise in social or behavioural sciences
- Experience of quantitative and qualitative research methods

- Ability to synthesise multiple types of evidence to identify gaps and make recommendations

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:**

- Previous research involving under-represented or seldom-heard communities
- Previous experience working on research focused on any of these topics: public behaviours, attitudes or communication needs in relation to risks, emergencies, crises, disaster education or civil defence education
- Previous experience of designing, testing or evaluating communications, guidance or interventions
- Expertise in conducting systematic reviews
- Experience of writing reports or other publications aimed at a non-academic audience

**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's 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.