

UKRI policy fellowships 2025: fellowship position

Fellowship title: Centre for Ageing Better bridging the evidence gap in age-friendly environments fellowship

Fellowship type: What Works innovation fellowship

Host organisation: [The Centre for Ageing Better \(CFAB\)](#)

Host team: Localities team

Summary: opportunity to use social science skills to improve policy and decision making on healthy ageing or age-friendly environments across government. A pressing need to better serve an ageing population

Policy topic: healthy ageing

Research Council: ESRC

Academic discipline(s): public health, geography, sociology, gerontology, urban planning or built environment, social policy, social science

Research career stage: open to mid-career and onwards

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: remote working available. Regular travel to London is expected. The post is located in the CFAB's Central London office, near Goodge Street station

Hybrid working: CFAB promotes flexible working and the current hybrid working policy is six office days per month, which will include in-person meetings with the team and wider CFAB colleagues. However, arrangements for minimum office time will be discussed between the fellow and their point of contact. More contact time will be likely in the first three to six months of the placement with an expectation of attendance once a week. The Localities team also hold monthly in-person meetings in their Central London office and we would expect the fellow to attend these meetings throughout the placement. Eligible Travel and Subsistence costs are supported in the main UKRI grant. Please see full call text and guidance for more details

Security clearance: no security clearance is required

Fellowship description

Summary:

The UK's ageing population poses significant challenges for the NHS and the delivery of other public services. Age-friendly environments, as outlined by the World Health Organisation (WHO) are crucial for healthy ageing and for adapting to age-related illnesses and decline. While there is a growing global and UK movement, limitations in the evidence landscape have created a gap between research and policy that this fellowship will seek to bridge.

Detailed description:

CFAB is a What Works Centre tackling inequalities in ageing. We also deliver [the UK Network of Age-friendly Communities](#), which is one of 13 national networks affiliated to WHO. We work with communities to make changes using the WHO's age-friendly framework (which covers eight domains of action). The UK network is made up of over 90 local authority areas that have made a commitment to this work, covering a population of over 29 million people. The network will be a key route to impact for this fellowship.

Age-friendly environments are recognised as a key strategy for promoting healthy ageing and is one of four areas of action within the UN Decade of Healthy Ageing. Despite this, limitations in the evidence landscape can act as barrier to effective decision making. These include limited understanding on what works for whom across the eight domains in practice, as well as gaps in translating research into action across diverse sectors.

The aim of the fellowship is to bridge that gap, working with the CFAB to support decision-makers in understanding 'what works' and how to prioritise investment. Other efforts are underway across the WHO's global network including the WHO undertaking evidence and gap mapping. This includes an evidence 'mega map' being published in Q1 2025/26.

This will be an interesting project that will require pioneering an evidence mobilisation strategy in a diverse landscape. Building on the mega map and other work that has gone before, the fellow will use their understanding of evaluation and evidence synthesis to help create an output or outputs which improves evidence-based decision making in age-friendly environments.

We expect to work closely with the fellow to coproduce what the output(s) will look like and how we will work together to produce them, as well as to develop a programme of work that improves evidence-based decision-making in the context of the limitations identified.

Responsibilities to include:

1. Gaining understanding of the current state of the evidence and what there is to build on, including the WHO's own work and upcoming mega map and other evaluation efforts globally
2. Identify routes or strategies to improving decision making on investments in the context of the limited evidence and what communities are seeking to achieve
3. Develop an output(s) which guide policy action across one or more age-friendly sectors, including health, social care, transport, planning and community development
4. Inform future research and knowledge translation priorities (this may include identifying resource mobilisation opportunities)
5. Identify and strengthen links with, and between, academics contributing to this agenda

Through our affiliate relationship with the WHO and the Global Network of Age-friendly Communities, we will access guidance and input to steer this project, reach and share learning with other academics, affiliates, and communities around the world. We would anticipate some in person and online international exchange, with the likelihood of occasional international travel to engage with WHO and their Global network.

We expect the placement to provide the following benefits to the successful research fellow:

- Unique opportunity to directly influence national and international policy thinking on age friendly environments
- Experience how research and evidence is used and embedded in policymaking
- Access to the UK Network of Age friendly communities covering over 90 local authority areas and 29 million people
- Connection to the WHO's Global network and the UN Decade of Healthy Ageing initiative
- Experience of pioneering evidence mobilisation strategies across diverse sectors
- Opportunity to shape future research priorities and strategies
- Opportunity to publish research with CFAB's approval
- International collaboration and knowledge exchange opportunities through WHO affiliate relationship
- Opportunity to build relationships with key decision makers across health, social care, transport, planning and community development sectors
- Coproduction experience working directly with a What Works Centre on ageing populations, which is of global significance and demands our attention and action

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:

- A strong academic track record (ideally mid-career or established researcher with six or more years post PhD completion) in an academic discipline relevant to the fellowship, such as public health, geography, sociology, gerontology, urban planning or built environment, social policy
- A research interest in a relevant topic such as ageing, older people, healthy ageing, age-friendly environments, health or spatial equity
- A good understanding or experience of evaluation and knowledge translation methods (reviewing, synthesising, and presenting evidence) ideally in relation to intervention effectiveness (such as gap and mega maps)

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:

- Understanding of the context in which organisations are delivering public services locally, ideally through working in some capacity with local or regional government, public health bodies or third sector organisations
- A research interest related to the outcomes or end user of the placement, such as ageing and older adults, healthy ageing, or local government and public service decision-making
- A pragmatic approach, and the ability to make sense of a complex evidence context while remaining focused on end user outcomes
- A collaborative approach and a willingness to share learning iteratively and openly with Ageing Better colleagues, Age Friendly Communities and the wider What Works Network throughout the project

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](#).

CFAB's privacy notice can be found here: [CFAB privacy policy](#). 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.