

UKRI policy fellowships 2025: fellowship position

Fellowship title: Environment Agency (EA) resilience and response to natural hazards fellowship

Fellowship type: Natural Hazards and Resilience fellowship

Host organisation: [Environment Agency](#)

Host team: National Social Science team, working with the Incident Management and Resilience Department

Summary: opportunity to apply social and behavioural sciences to improve the effectiveness of delivery of emergency response for diverse communities to a range of natural hazards

Policy topic: national resilience. The EA works on emergency preparation for natural hazards and has a delivery role as a Civil Contingencies Act Category 1 responder directly contributing to the resilience of the nation

Research Council: UKRI

Academic discipline(s): social and behavioural sciences. For example: human geography, psychology, sociology, politics and public administration, anthropology, management and business studies

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: the EA national Social Science team staff are based in the three main Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) Group hubs: Bristol, London and York or Leeds. Other EA offices are available throughout England and would be suitable with travel to one of the main hubs on a once-a-month basis

Hybrid working: hybrid working is available. It is not expected that the fellow would be required to work in an EA Office if home working most of the time is preferred. However, the fellow would benefit from co-location with Social Science team members on a regular (at least monthly) basis and may wish to work more frequently in an EA office to better understand the work of the organisation. It is expected that the fellowship will involve some field work such as in EA incident response rooms, in places and communities impacted by an incident or with businesses impacted by an incident. Some flexibility of when to undertake field work is required as this will be in response to an actual incident or incidents during the fellowship. Eligible Travel and Subsistence costs are supported in the main UKRI grant. Please see full call text and guidance for more details

Security clearance: Basic Personnel Security Standard (BPSS) checks and, if London based, Counter Terrorism Check (CTC). We would ask the person taking up our fellowship opportunity to start the security clearance application process as soon as their fellowship has been confirmed, and so, ideally, before the inception phase begins. Please see [National security vetting: clearance levels](#) for further information

Fellowship description

The EA's corporate plan 'Creating a Better Place' sets out three long term goals: a nation resilient to climate change; healthy air, land and water; and green growth and a sustainable future. The EA delivers this in England through five roles as a: regulator, operator, advisor, responder and research centre. Building resilience and responding to natural hazards are at the heart of the EA's work.

The EA is seeking to embed a Natural Hazards and resilience fellow in the national Social Science team to work closely with our Incident Management and Resilience function. The fellow will explore how social and behavioural sciences can be deployed to improve the effectiveness of preparedness, warning and response activities to natural hazards. Such hazards include droughts, floods and pollution episodes such as algal blooms in lakes and rivers.

The EA faces many social and behavioural challenges in these areas, ranging from water saving during a drought, increasing the effectiveness of community responses to flood warnings, enabling adaptation to the impacts of climate change, through to raising wider understanding of the risks of water recreation during pollution events.

It is envisioned that research activities during the fellowship will include:

- Translating complex academic research to support strategic resilience and emergency management practice decisions
- Identifying, overseeing and delivering evidence briefings of relevance
- Designing, planning and undertaking new and innovative research

Specifically on the last point, the fellow will have the opportunity to design and deliver research during an actual incident or emergency within the fellowship period. For example, the research might examine household, community or business preparedness or response behaviours. This could then lead to an assessment of the effectiveness of EA activities and ideas for improvement.

Other challenges suitable for social and behavioural science research include: supporting the most vulnerable and disadvantaged during an incident; the gap between awareness of a risk, responding and taking action; how to encourage voluntary climate change adaptation in the absence of, or that goes beyond, regulation. These are just some of the opportunities for improvement and the fellowship will be able to codesign both the topic to explore and the research methods to address the issue.

In terms of research outputs, a variety of products are envisaged:

- Internal EA evidence briefing
- A presentation to senior staff in the EA
- An EA branded research report, a peer-reviewed article in an academic journal or both

The role will involve working closely with social scientists in the EA's Social Science Profession including mentoring if desired by the Head of Profession. The fellow will also be part of a 'buddy' team in Incident Management and Resilience so that they can observe and participate in emergency management (both preparation and response) in practice. The national Social Science team has extensive networks across government and academia. These include the Natural Environment Social Research Network with other British environment and nature agencies; participation in the cross-government Social and Behavioural Science Working Group for Emergencies; informal networks with other social researchers in Defra and wider government; the ESRC funded Advancing Capacity for Climate and Environment Social Science ([ACCESS](#)) network. The fellow will have opportunities to join events and contribute to the work of these groups.

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:

- Demonstrated potential to deliver environmental or natural hazards research
- Demonstrated potential to apply relevant theories and a mix of methods (such as qualitative interviews, surveys, and monitoring and evaluation techniques) during the fellowship
- Experience of working collaboratively for example with different stakeholders

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:

- Experience of working with policy or delivery teams to translate research into practice
- Knowledge of Civil Contingencies and National Resilience policies and delivery arrangements
- Expertise in trialling and evaluating social and behavioural interventions

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 EA's privacy notice can be found here: [EA 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.