



UK Research and Innovation Equality Impact Assessment Form

About your activity

Title of your activity

Early Independence: BBSRC Fellowship, 2026

Council or business area

BBSRC

Aims and objectives

The aim of this fellowship is to support talented early career researchers to:

- lead their own research plans to establish their own research niche
- make the first step-change towards independence

This EIA considers the entire application and peer review process of this award, with the exception of the institutional selection stage, which has been considered in a dedicated EIA also available on the BBSRC Fellowships 2026 funding finder page.

Who is affected?

Applicants

Research office staff

External reviewers

BBSRC Committee E (who assess fellowships)

UKRI-BBSRC employees working on the call



What data and consultation have you used?

Evidence:

- Annual application numbers to the BBSRC Fellowships programme
- Historical protected characteristics data (age, gender, ethnicity and disability) for BBSRC fellowships applicants and awardees

Consultation with:

- the UKRI-BBSRC events management team to ensure that the interviews allow attendance and participation from as diverse a range of individuals as possible
- meeting attendees (including staff and those assessing applications) to understand potential barriers and act, where possible, to enable attendance and full participation
- UKRI-BBSRC's Equality and Inclusion Policy Group to review the EIA

Impact on specific groups

Are there general impacts on multiple groups?

There is potential that some groups may not be well represented in committee membership. UKRI-BBSRC is proactive in increasing the diversity of our reviewers and committee members. The committee membership is published on the UKRI-BBSRC website.

UKRI-BBSRC is dedicated to ensuring that the processes for this Fellowships funding opportunity are open and inclusive. Those engaged in the processes endeavour to conduct each stage in a fair manner and without prejudice or bias. In line with this we adopt the following principles:

For applicants:

- The opportunity is advertised widely to reach the largest possible audience
- The opportunity call text and guidance clearly state the eligibility and assessment criteria
- The UKRI-BBSRC website conforms to accessibility requirements for websites, including the ability to adjust the text size or use a text reader on the page
- UKRI-BBSRC supports applicants as much as possible, both before and after submission, to assist them in the application and assessment process.
- The awards can be held on a part-time or flexible basis, down to 0.5 FTE.

For external reviewers:

- Reviewers are drawn from as wide a pool as possible
- The guidance clearly states the expectations of reviewers
- UKRI-BBSRC provides support to reviewers as much as possible, to assist them in the assessment process.

For committee members:



- Everyone involved in the decision-making process has had training in Unconscious Bias to raise awareness of conditions that may impact on their decision-making
- UKRI-BBSRC is committed to enabling participation for people with alternative work patterns, including reduced working hours
- UKRI-BBSRC provides a geographic spread of meeting locations as much as possible when face-to-face meetings are held, rather than virtual meetings
- Committee members are asked to inform UKRI-BBSRC if they have any additional needs to enable attendance or participation
- UKRI-BBSRC consults with committee members on a regular basis regarding business improvements including an opportunity at each meeting for feedback
- UKRI-BBSRC provides regular training and guidance on new or revised ways of working.

Impact on protected characteristics

Complete the table for all characteristics. You only need to add details if there is a positive or negative impact.

Protected characteristic	Impact (positive, negative, none or unknown)	Details of impact	Actions to reduce negative or increase positive impact
Age	Negative	<p>Potential for unintentional bias, especially for older age brackets, given the scheme is aimed at early career individuals who are typically in younger age brackets.</p> <p>Around 70% of prior applicants were in the 30-39 age bracket.</p> <p>Potential for younger applicants to be overlooked due to having less quantifiable experience (e.g. publications) than older applicants.</p>	<p>Career breaks, career stage, changes of career and other factors are considered by assessors throughout the process to ensure applicants are not penalised for following alternative career paths or for being at an early career stage.</p> <p>BBSRC use narrative CVs to assess applicants and their skills, not just simple metrics</p> <p>Applicants are given the opportunity to provide information on career breaks within the additional information section of their R4RI.</p> <p>The scheme is open to those without PhDs or due to complete PhDs by the award start date.</p> <p>Committee E is comprised of a diverse range of ages, including prior BBSRC fellows</p>



Disability	Negative	<p>Impact varies depending on types of disability which may include neurological, visual, auditory, or other physical disability. Provided below are some examples of potential impacts but BBSRC acknowledge this may not cover the full spectrum of disability.</p> <p>Neurodivergent applicants, reviewers, and committee members may find it difficult to access and view electronic documentation or experience difficulties with concentration.</p> <p>When considering the neurodiversity of participants, it is recognised that some people may feel more comfortable engaging in different ways or in an adjusted environment.</p> <p>Individuals with visual disabilities may find it difficult to access and view electronic documentation.</p> <p>Committee members and interviewees with physical disabilities may find it difficult to access a physical meeting venue or participate in the</p>	<p>Given the spectrum of disability, it is not expected that all impacts and mitigations can be considered in advance. Therefore, BBSRC encourage all individuals engaged in the process to raise concerns with the BBSRC office so that reasonable adjustments can be considered. The office can be contacted via: postdoc.fellowships@bbsrc.ukri.org</p> <p>BBSRC will respond to individual support needs on a case-by-case basis.</p> <p>Some specific examples of mitigations are provided below.</p> <p>Use a virtual sift meeting format</p> <p>Ensure that electronic information is accessible to all participants (for example, using good colour contrasts, readable font sizes, inclusive language and designing for use with screen readers)</p> <p>Ensure that plenty of breaks are built into agendas</p> <p>Enable use of screen readers for participants who are visually impaired</p> <p>Ensure that colours chosen, and other visual stimuli, do not trigger migraines or affect those with colour blindness</p> <p>Ensure that locations and venues for interviews are accessible and adapted for those with limited mobility and are supportive of individuals with cognitive impairment. Video conferencing can also be used at the interview stage if necessary.</p> <p>Ensure meeting rooms are comfortable, light, and well-ventilated and meetings timetabled to allow for adequate breaks.</p> <p>At interview stage, ensure committee members follow best practice in taking positive steps to safeguard funding decisions and are annually refreshed</p>
------------	----------	--	---



		<p>meeting if the assessment venue cannot cater for their needs.</p> <p>Individuals with disabilities may find it difficult to engage with online platforms and virtual assessments both as applicants and the committee members.</p>	<p>regarding the conditions that can result in unintentional bias.</p> <p>Provide training and documentation to help with using online platforms to ensure that all individuals are comfortable if online assessments and interviews are required.</p> <p>Fellowships can be pursued on a part-time basis (0.5 FTE minimum)</p>
Gender reassignment	Negative	Risk of misgendering individuals	<p>At sift, applications will only be referred to by reference number</p> <p>At interview, candidates will be referred to by surname only</p> <p>If they wish to do so, we encourage our assessors to display their preferred pronouns alongside their name in Microsoft Teams</p>
Marriage or civil partnership			
Pregnancy and maternity	Negative	<p>Applicants and committee members who are pregnant, on maternity or paternity leave may find it difficult to access venues or participate in the process.</p> <p>Applicants may be on parental leave whilst the opportunity is open, potentially affecting their awareness of this opportunity and ability to participate.</p> <p>Career breaks in an applicant's track record</p>	<p>The call timeline is published ahead of time to increase opportunities for participation.</p> <p>The opportunity is recurring on an annual basis enabling individuals to apply to subsequent rounds.</p> <p>UKRI-BBSRC will use a virtual meeting format for the application sift meeting</p> <p>Adjustments are made throughout the assessment process where appropriate. For example, regarding interview attendance to assist individual applicants. This may include flexibility in the timing of interview or the use of video conferencing. Please contact the BBSRC office as soon</p>



		<p>due to parental leave or caring responsibilities may be seen as negative.</p>	<p>as possible to allow time for alternative arrangements to be made.</p> <p>Guidance is provided to the committee to ensure appropriate assessment of applicant track record without bias against career breaks due to parental leave or caring responsibilities</p> <p>At interview, UKRI-BBSRC allows applicants and committee members to claim expenses for reasonable childcare costs during the meeting</p> <p>UKRI-BBSRC committee membership period is extended if maternity leave is taken during their appointment</p> <p>Fellowships can be pursued on a part-time basis (0.5 FTE minimum)</p>
Race	Negative	<p>Risk that Committee E membership is not reflective of the broader research and innovation or applicant community</p>	<p>UKRI-BBSRC will monitor the diversity of Committee E members to ensure representation of the community and a diversity of opinion</p>
Religion or belief	Negative	<p>The funding opportunity may coincide with a religious holiday.</p> <p>Participants may be unable to take part in committee meetings or interviews due to religious observances.</p> <p>Participants may have specific dietary requirements due to religious beliefs.</p>	<p>UKRI-BBSRC ensures that religious observances are considered as much as possible when timetabling major activities.</p> <p>If catering is provided it should allow for religious observances. All participants will be asked to provide any details of dietary requirements ahead of time.</p>
Sex	Negative	<p>Risk that Committee E membership is not reflective of the broader research and innovation or applicant community</p>	<p>UKRI-BBSRC will monitor the diversity of Committee E members to ensure representation of the community and a diversity of opinion</p>



Sexual orientation			
--------------------	--	--	--

Impact on additional characteristics

Complete the table for all characteristics. You only need to add details if there is a positive or negative impact.

Additional characteristics	Impact (positive, negative, none or unknown)	Details of impact	Actions to reduce negative or increase positive impact
Geographical location and place	Negative	<p>Individuals located throughout the UK may need to travel considerable distances to participate at in-person events.</p> <p>Applicants and committee members may be living in areas of the UK with less efficient internet infrastructure (digital/bandwidth inequality), such as rural areas. This could affect their ability to engage virtually during meetings.</p>	<p>In-person meetings will be held in central and/or accessible regions of the country (with strong rail/flight connections), usually London or Birmingham.</p> <p>Where it is appropriate, meetings will be held virtually.</p> <p>In the case of interviews, in exceptional circumstances these may be conducted virtually.</p> <p>Expectations and dates for in-person interviews are set out as far in advance as possible, allowing for preparation for participants.</p> <p>BBSRC staff will avoid starting in-person meetings at 9am and if necessary, offer accommodation for the previous evening. BBSRC also offer accommodation for the evening following the meeting if necessary.</p> <p>Ensure travel and accommodation can be expensed for in-person</p>



			<p>meetings to encourage participation.</p> <p>Ensure the application process does not require any programmes or software that depend on fast broadband.</p> <p>UKRI-BBSRC will make adjustments where participants are unable to personally attend interview due to ongoing industrial action in public transport sectors.</p>
Socio-economic status	Negative	Applicants and panel members may be unable to rely on post-meeting reimbursement of expenses to fund their travel and accommodation due to their personal financial resources.	Instances where individuals are unable to pay for their own travel and accommodation (before expenses can be made) will be assessed on a case by-case basis.
Education background	Negative	Risk of perception that a PhD, or otherwise traditional academic career pathway, is required to apply for the programme.	BBSRC welcomes applications from various educational background and makes this clear in the application text, welcoming applications from different career paths. For example, we welcome international applicants and those who do not hold a PhD.
Parent or guardian responsibilities	Negative	Applicants and committee members with child or other caring responsibilities may be cautious about committing to attend meetings that may conflict with these responsibilities (for example, school holidays) or incur additional costs for additional care	<p>UKRI-BBSRC will ensure that UKRI best practice and policy is followed when determining how long the submission period is when falling over school holidays.</p> <p>UKRI-BBSRC consults with participants to understand and cater for their requirements for participation</p> <p>UKRI-BBSRC ensures that school holidays are considered where possible when timetabling application and assessment.</p>



			<p>Expectations and dates for all aspects of the process are set out as far in advance as possible, allowing participants to prepare cover for any caring responsibilities.</p> <p>Where possible, UKRI-BBSRC aims to schedule meetings in standard working hours.</p> <p>UKRI-BBSRC will pay the cost of additional caring responsibilities incurred while on UKRI BBSRC business.</p>
Carer responsibilities	Negative	Applicants and committee members with child or other caring responsibilities may be cautious about committing to attend meetings that may conflict with these responsibilities (for example, school holidays) or incur additional costs for additional care	<p>UKRI-BBSRC consults with participants to understand and cater for their requirements for participation</p> <p>Expectations and dates for all aspects of the process are set out as far in advance as possible, allowing participants to prepare cover for any caring responsibilities.</p> <p>Where possible, UKRI-BBSRC aims to schedule meetings in standard working hours.</p> <p>UKRI-BBSRC will pay the cost of additional caring responsibilities incurred while on UKRI BBSRC business.</p>
Political opinion (Northern Ireland only)			
Other characteristics	Negative	Applicants and panel members who do not have English as their first language may experience challenges participating.	<p>Meetings held virtually will have closed captioning enabled.</p> <p>All acronyms used will be fully explained in the relevant meeting or documentation.</p>



			For hybrid meetings, suitable AV equipment will be used to ensure poor audio quality does not exacerbate language barriers.
--	--	--	---

Final decision

Make a decision on whether to proceed with the activity

Adapt or change the activity in a way which will eliminate negative impact or promote equality

Review and sign off

How will you monitor and review the impact of your activity?

Through regular review of this EIA.

Through ongoing monitoring of the diversity (age, sex, race, disability) of our applicant and awardee pools.

Consulting committee members, particularly inviting reflection on the call process post-interview.

An open invite for any affected or concerned parties to contact us at postdoc.fellowships@bbsrc.ukri.org for further consultation

What is the EIA review date?

April 2027

Contact

Postdoc.fellowships@bbsrc.ukri.org



Will the EIA be published?

Yes

Who has this been signed off by?

Aidan Grimsley, Senior Portfolio Manager for Fellowships and Early Career Researchers
(17/06/26)

Change log

Include changes as you've reviewed the EIA. For example, based on input received from x at the announcement of opportunity stage, x was added

Name	Date	Version	Change
	17/06/2026	1	Version 1
		2	
		3	