



UKRI policy fellowships 2026

Fellowship position

Fellowship title:

DHSC leveraging the power of language capability fellowship

Fellowship type:

Core policy fellowship

Host organisation:

[Department of Health and Social Care](#)

Host team:

Office of the Department of Health and Social care (DHSC), and National Health Service NHS England (NHSE) Regional, Global Public Health and Emergencies

Academic discipline/s:

Public health, health inequalities, humanities and social sciences

Summary:

Opportunity to advise the DHSC Languages Champion and senior leaders across DHSC, NHS England and DHSC's Arm's Length Bodies (ALBs) to develop a new strategic approach for language capability for in-government and national-facing health priorities.

Policy topic:

Health Mission, with a specific focus on three strategic shifts as set in the 10 Year Plan: hospital to community; analogue to digital; sickness to prevention.

Research career stage:

Open to early and mid-career researchers

Fellowship structure

The fellowship is estimated to begin in May 2027. The exact date will be confirmed by the host depending on onboarding and security clearance requirements. The fellowship will have three phases:

- inception: duration is 3 months at 0.4 FTE
- main placement: duration is 12 months at 0.6-1 FTE
- knowledge exchange: duration is 3 months at 0.4 FTE

Work arrangements

Location requirements:

The host team's main location is London.

Hybrid working:

We generally require three days a week office attendance from our staff, but this would depend on overall FTE. We would expect one day a week during the inception phase and two to three during the main placement (subject to discussion with the fellow). Eligible travel and subsistence costs are supported in the main UKRI grant. Please see full call text and guidance for more details.

Security clearance and nationality eligibility criteria:

Basic Personnel Security Standard checks (BPSS), usually takes around 6 weeks. We would expect the successful applicant to start the security clearance application process before the inception phase starts, with support from the host team, as soon as their fellowship has been confirmed by UKRI.

Please see [national security vetting: clearance levels](#) for more information.

Fellowship position description

Leveraging language capability in all its forms is a major government priority. The focus on languages within Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC) complements the vision of the Government Communications Headquarters (GCHQ) -chaired cross-Government Languages Group, of which it is a proactive member: to build a sustainable, collaborative languages community to support a more prosperous and secure Britain.

We are looking for a policy fellow who will co-design and deliver an interdisciplinary research project to shape how DHSC delivers its languages agenda in a transformed and new DHSC, with a focus on one or more of the 10 Year Health Plan three strategic shifts (hospital to community; analogue to digital and sickness to prevention). The choice of the area(s) the fellow makes will be based on their interests and expertise. The exact topics will be determined by the host's priorities during the inception phase, shaped by the fellow's interests and input.

The purpose of this policy fellowship role would be to anchor this agenda in DHSC and its criticality to delivering the Government's Health Mission. The policy fellow will support the DHSC Languages Champion and his team to develop a new strategic approach and programmes of work for language capability for in-government and national-facing health priorities.

It will involve engagement with DHSC, National Health service in England (NHSE) and Arm's Length Bodies (ALB) senior leaders to explore and better understand how language capability (in all its forms) intersects with the government's Health Mission to "Build an NHS Fit for the Future" and three strategic shifts as set in the 10 Year Plan.

Hospital to community:

- this shift will bring care closer to home, launching a new neighbourhood health service with easier and more convenient access to a full range of healthcare services on people's doorsteps, open 12 hours a day, 6 days a week

Analogue to digital:

- this shift will make managing healthcare as easy as online banking, with a transformed NHS app that will become the digital front door to the NHS, where patients book appointments, manage medicines and view their medical records

Sickness to prevention:

- this shift will create a more active state that works with partners to make the healthy choice the easy choice and transition the NHS from a sickness service to a prevention service, reaching patients earlier, catching illness before it spreads, and preventing it in the first place

This work will enable DHSC to build evidence on how language intersects with current domestic and globally-facing policy activities and better understand the policy-academia interface to guide development of DHSC's Areas of Research Interest (ARIs), in coordination with DHSC Science and Research and Evidence leadership. This will support DHSC's engagement with cross-government partners with a clearer understanding of its own needs, utility of languages capability for health priorities and how they are nested in the wider government context. This will allow DHSC to extract more value from across DHSC, its cross-government and cross-Profession interactions, and to further increase its impact by role modelling its approach to languages capability for other audiences.

In particular, DHSC represents the Health family in activity on two key current themes:

- drawing up guiderails for the development and use of technology including AI for translation and interpreting; and
- furthering intelligent relationships between government and academia on languages-related research in support of evidence-based government policy making

This fellowship opportunity presents a unique opportunity to be embedded in a globally renowned and influential public health leader's team to drive a significant cross-cutting government agenda. The fellow will have access to a wide network of policy, public health, operational delivery, analytical specialists and will gain insight into coordination on major policy priorities in a Department of State and cross-government working adhering to strict and necessary security protocols.

The fellow will have an opportunity to co-design, produce and publish original and interdisciplinary research in one or more of the following areas of focus:

- evidence review of the role of languages and its benefits for national health priorities and complex health challenges
- evaluating the impact of language learning schemes on international collaboration among international-facing staff
- through in-depth interviews and workshops, to work within and across DHSC DG groups and Arms Length Bodies (ALBs) to develop a typology of foreign language capability and maturity relevant to the core mission and values of the organisation
- co-developing an academia-policy knowledge exchange events and/or knowledge mobilisation research programme
- understand the application of language AI technologies for health security, health threats and health service delivery, in line with regulatory and patient safety principles
- assess the role of language used by healthcare professionals to deliver safe and effective clinical care
- identifying key facilitators and barriers of NHS App language translation and its impact on patient journeys and policy implications
- supporting DHSC and their health family with wider awareness raising initiatives
- creation of a Neighbourhood Health training manual to support new teams with delivery
- design a clinical guideline framework which can then be fed into commissioning the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) to develop guidelines to support the implementation of this Framework.

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 proven academic track record and subject matter expertise in public health, health inequalities, humanities and social sciences.
- excellent stakeholder manager and a willingness to build new connections and speak to individuals across at different seniority levels about their experiences, requirements, issues and opportunities.
- good verbal and written communication and an ability to synthesise complex information from multiple perspectives into coherent structure

Applicants shortlisted from the panel assessment will be invited to a host led interview. At this stage the host will also take into account the following desirable fellowship-specific requirements.

Desirable criteria:

- an interest in languages although being bilingual or multilingual is not a requirement.
- an interest in government and policy development, although no prior experience required
- good understanding of the health and care landscape

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](#).

Please see the [host's privacy notice](#) and they 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.