



UKRI policy fellowships 2026

Fellowship position

Fellowship title:

DWP patterns of extra costs and need experienced by disabled people fellowship

Fellowship type:

Core policy fellowship

Host organisation:

[Department for Work & Pensions](#)

Host team:

The fellow will be working as part of our Disability Analysis Division (DAD), itself part of the Disability and Health Support Directorate.

Academic discipline/s:

Econometrics, statistics, geospatial analysis

Summary:

An opportunity to build novel evidence on the patterns of extra costs and need experienced by disabled people, utilising a range of data sources including some newly available, or available only within DWP.

Policy topic:

Supporting disabled people to live an independent life. This includes helping them overcome the challenges of ill-health related inactivity, part of the Kickstarting Economic Growth mission.

Research career stage:

Open to all early and mid-career researchers career stages

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 successful applicant could base themselves in or make use of office space in London (Westminster), Sheffield, Leeds, Newcastle or Manchester where DAD analysts are all present. We anticipate that the fellowship can be undertaken effectively with remote working with visits to DWP offices (as appropriate) to meet colleagues and teams.

Hybrid working:

We would expect the successful applicant to combine time working in one of DWP's sites, to benefit from face-to-face interaction with colleagues, with some remote working, as is the case for most DWP employees. The usual expectation for DWP employees is to spend 60% of their time in the office, but the precise arrangements will be negotiated with the successful applicant. During the inception phase we would expect to have around six in person meetings, either in Sheffield or London. 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), expected to take four to six weeks. We expect the successful applicant to start the security clearance application process, with support from the host team, as soon as their fellowship has been confirmed by UKRI. Ideally the security clearance process would be completed before the inception phase begins. Please see [national security vetting: clearance levels](#) for further information.

Fellowship position description

The Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) is seeking to embed a fellow within its Disability Analysis Division, working alongside analysts who are responsible for providing the analytical and research evidence base that underpins the development and implementation of UK government policy on disability and incapacity benefits. These benefits currently account for over £70 billion of annual government spend and as such attract significant political and public interest.

The Timms Review¹ has been set up to explore how Personal Independence Payment (PIP), the main disability benefit, can be fair and fit for the future in a world that has changed significantly since its introduction in 2013. It intends that PIP helps support disabled people to achieve better health, higher living standards and greater independence, including through employment. Alongside this, the Milburn Report² is aiming to understand the drivers of the increase in the number of young people who are Not in Education Employment or Training (NEET) and claiming health and disability benefits, and to investigate the root causes of this rise in economic inactivity among disabled young people and those with health conditions. Both of these exercises are likely to require a significant policy response from DWP and we expect Disability Analysis Division analysts to be central to providing the evidence base for that response.

The fellow will play a crucial role in advancing the government's understanding of the patterns of extra cost and need faced by disabled people. This is vital given that the core purpose of PIP is to contribute towards the additional costs faced by disabled people, yet patterns of extra cost and need aren't greatly understood. This will involve using DWP benefits administrative data, DWP survey data, including the recently completed PIP Areas of Extra Cost (AEC) survey and open-source data such as Understanding Society and the various birth cohort studies. The fellow will also need to develop a knowledge and understanding of the range of qualitative evidence in order to bring a multidisciplinary approach to the development of new evidence. The PIP AEC survey dataset brings a unique and exciting perspective to this area. The survey contains a broad range of rich and detailed data for over 7,000 respondents and has been matched onto

¹ [The Timms Review - GOV.UK](#)

² [Terms of Reference - Report into Young People and Work - GOV.UK](#)

DWP benefits administrative data. The aim is to use this and other data sources to develop novel econometric and geospatial analysis on the additional costs and needs of disabled people.

We would expect the outputs from this analysis will attract strong interest from policy makers and Ministers and would be influential in decisions aimed at improving outcomes for millions of disabled people.

The fellow will have the opportunity to lead and co-design analysis in collaboration with government officials, based on policy needs and their own interests and skills, which are likely to include econometric analysis, data science and data visualisation. We expect the fellow to bring a keen interest in the subject and draw upon wider literature and academic networks to identify potential policy responses to the issues uncovered through their analysis.

The fellow will benefit from:

- the opportunity to influence policy thinking in this vitally important area
- experience of government ways of working and how policy is made, helping to 'land' insightful evidence more effectively
- access during the fellowship to DWP datasets and information not generally available for academic research
- building a network of official contacts in analytical and policy teams within DWP and other government departments

The fellow will also benefit from wider support, networking opportunities, and learning and development available to government analysts, providing a richer experience during the fellowship. They will be supported by the DWP analytical division in the translation, dissemination, and application of their work for policymakers and DWP analysts. This will include knowledge exchange opportunities such as seminars and roundtables, as well as support in developing internal capability to further advance the research in the future—for example, upskilling DWP analysts in any novel analytical techniques, code, or datasets used during the fellowship. The fellow will have the opportunity to produce and publish original research, ensuring that findings contribute to wider scientific and policy discussions, while adhering to necessary security protocols.

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:

- strong quantitative analysis skills
- experience of using broader research findings, including qualitative research, to inform a programme of quantitative analysis
- past experience of investigating disability issues

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:

- experience of or demonstrated potential for working with administrative data
- experience of or demonstrated potential for working with large-scale social survey data (such as the UK Household Longitudinal Study)
- experience of or demonstrated potential for engaging with government officials, local or national, policy or analytical

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 Hosts' [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.