



# UKRI policy fellowships 2026

## Fellowship position

### Fellowship title:

DfT transport poverty fellowship

### Fellowship type:

Core policy fellowship

### Host organisation:

[Department for Transport](#)

### Host team:

Local Regional Transport Analysis (LRTA), working collaboratively with the Opportunity Mission and Public Transport Integration (OPTIn) team which leads on policy

### Academic discipline/s:

Economics, statistics, data science or other quantitative social science

### Summary:

This fellowship opportunity aims to build the quantitative evidence base around how reducing transport affordability and connectivity transport barriers may enable people, particularly those in deprivation, to better access employment, education and healthcare, which is key to supporting the government's missions.

### Policy topic:

This fellowship focuses on the 'kickstart economic growth' and 'break down barriers to opportunity' missions, and ensuring that transport supports inclusive growth throughout the country.

### 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 role can be based in London, Birmingham or Leeds. There will be some requirement to travel to meet other team members, this would be approximately once every quarter.

## Hybrid working:

Whilst the Department for Transport has a three-days a week minimum office working requirement in line with the rest of the UK Civil Service, we would be content for a minimum one day a week office attendance, at any location listed above, during the main placement phase. A laptop will be provided enabling work from home or other sites, providing access to host systems. In addition to office attendance, it would be useful to budget for travel to London around four times in the placement year and once in the inception phase. 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](#) (BPSS) is required, which usually takes around six weeks. We would 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. The security clearance process should be completed before the inception phase begins.

This fellowship is broadly open to the following groups:

- UK nationals
- nationals of the Republic of Ireland
- nationals of Commonwealth countries who have the right to work in the UK
- nationals of the EU, Switzerland, Norway, Iceland or Liechtenstein and family members of those nationalities with settled or pre-settled status under the [European Union Settlement Scheme \(EUSS\)](#) ([opens in a new window](#))
- nationals of the EU, Switzerland, Norway, Iceland or Liechtenstein and family members of those nationalities who have made a valid application for settled or pre-settled status under the [European Union Settlement Scheme \(EUSS\)](#)
- individuals with limited leave to remain or indefinite leave to remain who were eligible to apply for EUSS on or before 31 December 2020
- Turkish nationals, and certain family members of Turkish nationals, who have accrued the right to work in the Civil Service

[Further information on nationality requirements.](#)

## Fellowship position description

The Department for Transport (DfT) has committed to explore how consideration of transport poverty can be integrated within decision-making across Government. There is evidence that transport barriers, including poor transport connectivity and affordability, limits people's ability to access employment and essential services and/or reduces their standard of living, particularly for those in deprivation. There is therefore an opportunity to support economic growth in a way that benefits people across the country by removing or reducing these barriers. To support decision-makers, we are developing a transport poverty tool, as announced in [Better Connected](#) (the government's long-term transport strategy) and the [Child Poverty Strategy](#).

The aim of this fellowship is to develop the evidence base around the benefits of reducing transport poverty. While there is significant qualitative evidence in this area, there is less quantitative evidence. As

such, this fellowship will aim to produce robust, quantitative, causal estimates of how transport barriers, or interventions that reduces these barriers, affect outcomes of interest relating to the government's key priorities. The social value of these impacts could also be expressed in monetary terms to help decision-makers understand the magnitude of these impacts, recognise the opportunity and benefits of reducing transport barriers, and to support future decision-making, e.g. in informing spending reviews.

We envisage that this fellowship will bring together DfT analytical tools—such as the [Connectivity Tool](#) and the transport poverty measure—and data sources from across government to understand how transport affects a range of educational, employment, health and other outcomes. The fellow will work collaboratively with people across government to develop and present their analysis. To help the fellow carry out novel and impactful research, we will support the fellow in accessing our wider government and academic networks.

We are open to discussing the exact topics, shaped by the fellow's interests and priorities, during the inception phase of the work, subject to data availability and departmental priorities.

We anticipate there will be three stages of work.

## Stage 1: rapid systematic review

A rapid systematic review will synthesise the available evidence of how transport barriers (e.g. related to reliability, affordability, travel time, frequency, availability and quality of walking and cycling infrastructure), and/or the removal of these barriers, affects outcomes of interest (in relation to employment, education and healthcare) and how it varies between populations, e.g. those on low-incomes or in deprivation. This will establish the strength of the evidence in different areas and inform areas of focus and research objectives for phase 2.

## Stage 2: quantitative analysis

This phase will bring together local level outcomes and transport data to investigate potential relationships. We will work together with the fellow to identify an appropriate methodology and analytical approach. Based on our initial review of available data across government, potential areas, to be determined in collaboration with the fellows could include:

- Outcomes: missed outpatient appointments, school attendance rates, employment and in-work progression, participation in social and cultural activities, active travel use (i.e. walking and cycling)
- Transport barriers: travel times, frequency, reliability, services at different times of day, affordability, availability and quality of active travel infrastructure
- Specific groups: consider whether effects are larger for certain populations, e.g. those experiencing deprivation, young families, young people.

For example, how do transport barriers affect school attendance and/or attainment rates, and what are the social and economic consequences of this? This is just one example of a potential research objective of the fellowship, with the exact scope to be determined in collaboration with the fellow.

Where possible, these impacts should be expressed in monetary terms in a Green Book compliant way to better support evidence-based policy-making. Such evidence could be impactful in the context of making the case for certain types of transport interventions at Spending Reviews.

## Stage 3: communication and dissemination

The fellow will share results across the government through several forums, supported by written papers and/or reports setting out the analysis and conclusions. These should be accessible to non-technical audiences to maximise the impact of the analysis.

We offer the following benefits for fellows:

- the opportunity to co-design the research and overall approach with the DfT
- line management support and ensuring the fellow is integrated with relevant teams in the DfT
- the potential for the fellow and the DfT to co-publish original research, ensuring that findings contribute to wider scientific and policy discussions. This would be subject to DfT procedures and any relevant ministerial direction to producing external outputs.
- exploring the possibility for the fellow to reference any internally produced documents as evidence of the fellow's impact, subject to DfT procedures
- maximising the relevance and impact of the research produced to policymaking by supporting the fellow in sharing and communicating results
- facilitating access to key datasets to enable the fellow to carry out novel and impactful research to inform policymaking
- the opportunity to build networks and connections with people working on similar areas across Government

## 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 in economics, statistics, data science or a quantitative social science with experience carrying out causal analysis on economic and/or social issues
- experience delivering analytical research projects
- experience in communicating complex information in an engaging way to non-technical audiences

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 working collaboratively with others in a team, and forming effective working relationships with a range of different stakeholders, both internal and external
- experience carrying out cost-benefit analysis
- interest and/or experience working on transport-related policy issues

## 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.