UKRI policy fellowships 2027

Fellowship position

Fellowship title:

Education Endowment Foundation early years SEND and inclusion fellowship

Fellowship type:

What Works Innovation fellowship

Host organisation:

Education Endowment Foundation

Host team:

Evidence Synthesis and/or Evidence Mobilisation Teams

Academic discipline/s:

Education, child development, social policy, psychology, social research methods

Summary:

Opportunity to advance understanding of how evidence can support high-quality inclusive practice in the early years and improve outcomes for children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND), and those at risk of learning difficulties, through research, evidence synthesis and knowledge mobilisation.

Policy topic:

Breaking down barriers to opportunity.

Research career stage:

Open to early and mid-career researchers

Fellowship structure

The fellowship is scheduled to begin on 1 October 2027 subject to 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:
Our office is in Millbank Tower in Central London.

Hybrid working:
Full-time Education Endowment Foundation (EEF) staff are expected to work from the office for a minimum of one day per week, usually on an agreed team day. The fellow will be placed in our Evidence Synthesis Team or Evidence Mobilisation Team. Fellows can expect to travel once per week (to the office or another location) throughout the inception and placement phases, and potentially the knowledge exchange phase depending on the nature of dissemination activities. Alternate arrangements are possible and can be discussed with the fellow.

Security clearance and nationality eligibility criteria:
No security clearances are required to start the role. A right to work and a basic DBS check will be required.

Fellowship position description
EEF is seeking a fellow to undertake research and knowledge exchange focused on improving outcomes for children in the early years with SEND, those at risk of learning difficulties and, particularly, those also experiencing socio-economic disadvantage.

The fellow will be embedded within EEF's Evidence Synthesis or Evidence Mobilisation Team and work closely with the Early Years team. During the inception phase, the fellow will co-design a programme of work that aligns EEF's strategic priorities with their own research interests and expertise. This will include identifying priority questions, agreeing appropriate research approaches and developing a programme that supports EEF's work and the fellow's longer-term research interests.

We welcome proposals for research questions and approaches within EEF's broad priorities for early years SEND and inclusion. Areas of interest may include:

- early identification of SEND and learning difficulties
- inclusive pedagogy and high-quality teaching
- supportive approaches for language, communication and interaction needs
- professional development and workforce capability
- approaches that address the intersection of SEND and socio-economic disadvantage
- partnership working and effective transitions
- effective implementation and leadership of inclusive practice

Depending on the fellow's expertise and the agreed focus, activities may include:

- reviewing and synthesising evidence
- analysing existing research or practice data (e.g. from EEF's archive) to generate new insights
- identifying promising approaches, evidence gaps and research priorities for future EEF commissioning
- exploring implementation in early years settings
- engaging educators, policymakers and sector organisations
- developing, refining or testing approaches to knowledge mobilisation

Outputs will be co-designed during the inception phase, but we expect the fellowship to contribute to strengthening the understanding of the evidence base for early years SEND and inclusion. Outputs may include, for example, evidence reviews or maps, practical educator-facing resources and guidance, briefings for policymakers or system leaders, recommendations for future evidence generation,

stakeholder engagement activities, dissemination events and academic publications, subject to EEF's publication processes.

The fellowship is designed as an exchange between academia, policy and practice. The fellowship offers an opportunity to shape a programme of applied research within a national What Works organisation. The fellow will develop experience in evidence synthesis, knowledge mobilisation and policy engagement; build relationships with educators, policymakers, researchers and sector leaders; and produce outputs that strengthen the impact and policy relevance of their academic work.

The fellow will receive dedicated line management and work with colleagues across EEF's Early Years, Evidence Synthesis, Evidence Mobilisation, Evaluation, Content and Engagement, and Policy teams. They will also have access to induction, professional development and networking opportunities within and beyond EEF.

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:

- knowledge of early years education, child development, SEND, inclusion or a closely related field
- ability to critically interpret and synthesise complex research evidence, drawing on appropriate research methods
- experience of designing and undertaking high-quality research and communicating findings effectively to academic and non-academic 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:

- research experience relating specifically to early childhood education, child development, pedagogy, SEND/inclusion or socio-economic disadvantage
- experience of translating research into resources, guidance, professional learning or policy recommendations for the benefit of educators
- understanding of the English early years and SEND system, with experience of working with educators or sector organisations within it

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 EEF's privacy notices 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.