UKRI policy fellowships 2027

Fellowship position

Fellowship title:

MHCLG English devolution and resilience to crises & emergencies fellowship

Fellowship type:

Core policy fellowship

Host organisation:

Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG)

Host team:

Resilience & Recovery Directorate (RED) – a large team of around 70 which leads UK government's response to 12 national risks and sponsors the local resilience tier made up of 38 Local Resilience Forums.

Academic discipline/s:

Political science, public administration, systems science, resilience and disaster studies, human geography

Summary:

An opportunity to build a robust evidence base to support strengthening of England's system for resilience to crises and emergencies, including implementing a clear role for mayors and strategic authorities.

Policy topic:

The fellowship will focus on evidence to support mayors and strategic authorities in taking on a clear role in England's local resilience system, in order to further strengthen community readiness to prepare for, respond to and recover from crisis and emergencies in the context of rising climate, technological and geopolitical risk.

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:

The role can be based in London, Wolverhampton, Darlington, Manchester or Bristol. The host team is geographically diverse and has staff located in a wide range of Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) locations across England, with hybrid working arrangements well established. There will be some requirement to travel to meet other team members; this could be up to 4 times a year and once in the inception phase and would be covered by expenses.

Hybrid working:

Fellows should generally aim to align with MHCLG's standard working arrangements for office attendance during the main placement where feasible. These are currently 40-50% depending on location. There is flexibility for the fellow and host to discuss alternative office attendance arrangements both during the inception phase and the main placement depending on the nature of the work the fellow will be undertaking, location and individual circumstances.

A laptop will be provided enabling work from home or other sites, providing access to host systems. In addition to travel to meet the team, it would be useful to budget for travel to elsewhere in the UK to meet local partners around 4 times in the placement year. 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:

If successful, you must undergo a standard (or equivalent) criminal record check. You will also need to complete baseline personnel security standard checks before the inception phase. You will then need to meet the security requirements before the main placement phase. The level of security needed is security check. See our vetting charter. 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 Civil Service also has nationality requirements that candidates would need to meet in order to take up the post. Please see the civil service recruitment nationality rules for further information. Candidates should check these requirements before applying to ensure they meet the eligibility criteria.

Fellowship position description

MHCLG is responsible for ensuring England's local resilience system can prepare for, respond to and recover from crises and emergencies. The scale of the challenge is rising. Over the next decade the UK faces significant national security risks, driven by climate change, geopolitical volatility and conflict, cyber threats, pandemics and fragile global supply chains. These trends are expected to result in more frequent, interconnected and protracted emergencies.

England's local resilience system is based on 38 Local Resilience Forums (LRFs) – multi-agency partnerships of responders, including police; fire and rescue services; and local authorities. MHCLG has been delivering a programme of work to further bolster their efforts aligned with the UK Resilience Action Plan, including confirming multi-year funding for LRFs until 2029; establishing the Stronger LRF Trailblazer Programme to fund innovation and develop the role of Strategic Authorities in real time; and supporting insight, learning and capability development through a new peer review model, assurance framework and digital, data and AI transformation programme.

The UK Resilience Action Plan committed to clarify the role of mayors and strategic authorities in resilience. Rewiring the State has since set out the government's ambition to accelerate progress on devolution, including through strong integrated public services built around the priorities of people and places; alignment of key public service boundaries with strategic authorities – including fire, police and Integrated Care Boards, key members of LRFs; and greater alignment and pooling of funding for preventative services.

The fellow will work in partnership with Resilience & Recovery directorate and local stakeholders to build a robust evidence base which would support mayors and strategic authorities in taking on an active role in England's resilience system, in line with these commitments.

We would co-design and scope the specific project(s) based on the host's priorities and the fellow's interests during the inception stage. We are open to a wide range of research interests and approaches which deepen insight and support progress in this area. Broad areas of interest include helping to identify how mayors and strategic authorities can bring a stronger focus on preparedness and integrate this across their wider policy priorities; how to strengthen and support collaboration between central government, strategic authorities and local authorities; and how to support development of capabilities.

Illustrative examples of potential projects could be:

- mapping of the local resilience system to identify strengths and vulnerabilities, and recommendations for how to address these
- developing case studies based on the experience of established mayors and strategic authorities, which could support those more newly established areas
- designing and testing approaches for sharing information across local and national tiers
- developing and sharing lessons learned from international best practice which could inform policy implementation in England
- advising on or developing metrics used to monitor the strength of the system

The fellow would benefit from:

- support for academic publication arising from fellowship activities, subject to relevance, sensitivities and departmental clearance processes
- being embedded in the host team and have access to internal systems and processes, gaining in-depth understanding of the policy process
- the opportunity to inform and influence host and wider government policy on resilience
- access to datasets related to LRF preparedness
- access to a wider network of policy, analysis, other experts and opportunities to engage with government departments and aligned organisations
- knowledge exchange opportunities, including policy roundtables, cross-government workshops and wider networks

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 a social science field relevant to the fellowship
- subject matter expertise in at least one area related to the fellowship (e.g. local government reform, devolution, resilience to crises and emergencies, systems thinking, etc.)
- strong analytical skills (for example, the ability to synthesise a range of quantitative and qualitative data using statistical and data science methods)

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:

- ability to clearly and succinctly communicate findings to non-technical audiences
- flexible and adaptable to working on a fast-moving policy programme

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 MHCLG'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.