UKRI policy fellowships 2027

Fellowship position

Fellowship title:

West Yorkshire Combined Authority healthy working lives policy fellowship

Fellowship type:

Place policy fellowship

Host organisation:

West Yorkshire Combined Authority

Host team:

Healthy Working Lives Team

Academic discipline/s:

Public health, labour market policy, economic growth, behavioural science

Summary:

An opportunity to work with the regional Healthy Working Lives Team to address the role of devolution in health and work outcomes in West Yorkshire.

Policy topic:

Health and work

Research career stage:

Open to early and mid-career researchers

Fellowship structure

The fellowship is scheduled to begin on 1 October 2027. 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 will be based in central Leeds, with requirements to travel to meet partners within and across West Yorkshire.

Hybrid working:

This is a hybrid working opportunity with expected travel to the host office in central Leeds one to two days a week as well as engagement with partners across the West Yorkshire region.

Security clearance and nationality eligibility criteria:

Security clearance is not required for this position. Policy Fellows must be eligible to work in the UK. If visa sponsorship is required, please refer to the guidance on the Funding Finder regarding the Global Talent Visa.

Fellowship position description

West Yorkshire has high levels of unemployment and economic inactivity, with rates of employment below the national average.

The Combined Authority's ambition, set out through the Healthy Working Life Plan and Work, Health and Skills Plan, is to create a region where good health and good work reinforce one another, enabling residents to access, remain in, and progress through healthy, inclusive and productive employment. This ambition goes beyond reducing economic inactivity to creating the conditions for people to flourish through good health and good work. Improving healthy working lives can deliver benefits for individuals, employers and communities through improved wellbeing, workforce participation and productivity.

Achieving this ambition requires action across systems, services and workplaces. Understanding how health, skills, employment, transport, employer practices and wider determinants interact is critical to developing more preventative approaches that improve health outcomes, reduce inequalities, support economic participation and increase productivity. This includes understanding how systems, services and workplaces can intervene earlier to prevent health conditions from developing, worsening or leading to people leaving work altogether. Workplaces, job design and employment practices can either support healthy working lives or contribute to people leaving employment if they are not sufficiently flexible, inclusive or supportive.

The Combined Authority is working with national, regional and local partners to develop a more integrated and person-centred and preventative work and health system. Despite increasing collaboration, challenges remain around system fragmentation, data sharing and aligning resources to improve outcomes. Evidence is needed to identify and understand which interventions and investments are most effective in improving health and employment outcomes, how resources can be aligned across policy areas, and how the changing nature of work may create future challenges and opportunities.

As devolution continues to evolve, there is an opportunity to work with partners and co-design a new system. This system must enable partners to work through a person-centred lens, while ensuring sufficiency and capacity across services.

The fellowship will strengthen analytical and policy capability within the Healthy Working Lives Team and contribute to organisation-wide goals to maximise the use and impact of evidence to shape decision-making on health, work and inclusive growth. As a nationally devolved area of policy, there is potential to inform how evidence is generated, synthesised and applied to health and work policy in other devolved areas, providing lessons for regional and national policymakers.

There will be an opportunity to publish outputs from the analysis produced, subject to clearance processes. This could in include academic journals or as part of Combined Authority committee reporting.

This Policy Fellowship will seek to provide answers across the following topic areas:

- What is the cumulative impact of government policy on health and work outcomes in West Yorkshire?
- What are the characteristics of a healthy inclusive workforce, where people with health-related challenges and disabilities are enabled to contribute to their full potential? How do we effectively measure and monitor the health of a workforce and what available indicators best capture it?
- What hidden or underserved groups with health barriers or disabilities are not currently engaging with employment and health support and what approaches are most effective in supporting their engagement?
- How can employers and regional partners shape the changing nature of work to improve inclusion, health and economic outcomes across West Yorkshire?
- What works to incentivise and support employers across different business sizes and sectors to recruit, retain and support people with health-related challenges and disabilities, and what barriers remain?

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 relevant to the focus of this fellowship.
- subject matter expertise in specific topics such as employment support and work and health
- strong analytical skills relating to labour market policy and public health

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:

- understanding of Local Government and devolution legislation
- experience of working in West Yorkshire
- conducting policy research with groups with lived experience of labour market exclusion/health barriers to work

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 Combined Authority'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.