

UKRI fellowships 2026

Fellowship title: Foundations What Works Centre for Children and Families – Domestic Abuse Fellowship

Fellowship type: What Works Innovation Fellowship

Host organisation: Foundations – What Works Centre for Children and Families

Host team: Impact Team

Summary:

A Fellowship within the What Works Centre for Children and Families to lead Foundations' input into a national What Works programme of work to tackle violence against women and girls, and to research and design solutions to improve local authority use of evidence on identifying and supporting children and young people affected by domestic abuse.

Policy topic: Safer Streets – Reducing Violence Against Women and Girls

Academic discipline/s: social science, gender studies, psychology, public health, social policy evaluation, behavioural science, data science, applied research ethics or other related fields

Research career stage: Open to all career stages

Fellowship structure

Inception phase:

Estimated start date: 4 January 2027

Duration: 3 months

FTE: 0.4 FTE

Main placement phase:

Duration: 12 months

FTE: 0.6-1 FTE

Knowledge exchange phase:

Duration: 3 months

FTE: 0.4 FTE

Work arrangements

Location requirements: Our office is based in Westminster, at Alliance House, Caxton Street, SW1H 0QS.

Hybrid working: All Foundations staff living within two hours of London are expected to work from the office at least twice a week, while home-based workers are expected to come in at least once a month. These same principles would apply to the successful Fellow. The Fellow would be invited to join the weekly organisation-wide meeting on Mondays (hybrid), monthly Impact Team meetings (hybrid), and a fortnightly Domestic Abuse Working Group (hybrid). Attending team meetings would provide an opportunity for the Fellow to embed themselves within the team, troubleshoot issues and provide progress updates on the fellowship as well as to learn from the wider organisation. The Fellow will also meet regularly with their line manager at Foundations. Eligible Travel and Subsistence costs are supported in the main UKRI grant. Please see full call text and guidance for more details.

Security clearance: No security clearances are required to start the role.

Fellowship Description

As the What Works Centre for Children and Families we generate and champion the actionable evidence needed to improve outcomes for vulnerable children and young people. We influence policy and guide practice to improve services and change the system for the better. Despite the prevalence of domestic abuse, there is a lack of high-quality impact evaluation and evidence about what works to prevent domestic abuse and to support the recovery of babies, children and young people. This is why we developed our [REACH plan](#). This ambitious work programme aims to improve our understanding of what works to support some of our most vulnerable children, and to inform national

policy and local practice to improve identification and responses to domestic abuse for children and young people. Our current work programme includes:

- delivering the first full-scale impact evaluations of domestic abuse recovery programmes in the UK, providing evidence on whether programmes work, for whom, how, in what contexts, and at what cost;
- building capacity of service providers to prepare for evaluation and working with delivery partners to identify further programmes that can progress to full scale impact evaluation;
- developing and strengthening infrastructure for evidence generation, including data sources, tools for innovation, programme development and evaluation, guidance for services about how to use the Core Outcomes set (developed by UCL) and alternative secondary outcomes; and
- investing in evaluating approaches to equip the children's and families workforce to spot and respond to domestic abuse more effectively.

Cross-cutting What Works Programme

Alongside Fellows in the College of Policing and the Youth Endowment Fund, the post will help to address critical VAWG evidence gaps, and deliver new interventions, tools and/or technology that will contribute significantly to prevention and intervention in violence against women and girls. The Fellow will lead Foundations' input into the development of a national What Works Programme to tackle violence against women and girls. This might include collaborative activities with the wider What Works Innovation Fellowship cohort, the Cabinet Office Evaluation Task Force, and the UKRI R&D Missions Accelerator Programme's VAWG Challenge. This is an opportunity to help develop a cross-cutting programme, and we would expect the Fellow to:

- understand Foundations' work programme and identify how it can contribute to cross-government policy development and delivery;
- help us develop and disseminate our research agenda on children and domestic abuse e.g. encouraging further funding and academic work in this space
- advocate for and champion solutions that focus on preventing domestic abuse of children and young people and supporting their recovery, informed by our work programme and research strategy;
- identify opportunities to embed evaluation within government departments' commitments in the VAWG strategy;
- work with Fellows in the College of Policing and Youth Endowment Fund to identify opportunities for cross-sector tools and information to embed evidence use in commissioning at a local level;
- design and develop this work with a view to leading meaningful change in commissioning and delivery of services in the future.

Improving local authority practice and commissioning

The Fellow will focus on developing a new strand of work for Foundations - linking our work programme with frontline practice and develop our understanding of local commissioning practices. The Fellow will research and develop strategies and actionable recommendations to improve local authority (LA) use of evidence on identifying and supporting children and young people affected by domestic abuse. The exact scope of the work will be determined with the Fellow, but is likely to involve:

- Research into the barriers to, and enablers of, the use of evidence on domestic abuse within LAs — across social work and family help;
- Developing evidence-based strategies to support local authorities in identifying and strengthening protective factors for children and young people, incorporating emerging findings from our planned evaluations of workforce training programmes on domestic abuse;
- Research into commissioners' use of evidence on domestic abuse services for children and young people, and the development of strategies to address gaps in both the evidence and evidence use;
- Working with our nine Partner Place LAs to develop a community of practice on domestic abuse and to test and develop tools and information that would support them as practitioners and commissioners;
- Development and dissemination of outputs such as an LA-focused research strategy; tools and information to support commissioners and practitioners; and research report/s on evidence use on domestic abuse in LAs.

Whilst the Fellow will be line managed within the Impact Directorate, we would expect the Fellow to play a cross-cutting role in supporting our wider work programme on domestic abuse, collaborating with colleagues across our Evidence Directorate.

Person Specification

Applications will be assessed by a selection panel against the following essential opportunity-specific requirements in addition to the generic eligibility and call criteria.

Essential Criteria:

- Academic background in social science, gender studies, psychology, public health, social policy evaluation, behavioural science, data science, applied research ethics or other related fields
- Expert-level knowledge, experience and understanding of violence against women and girls and domestic abuse
- Experience of working with local leaders and commissioners on strategy development in a relevant sector, for example local authority children's services, or domestic abuse services
- Knowledge of national policy and local public sector strategy and delivery relating to domestic abuse
- A strong understanding of evaluation including impact evaluations (especially RCTs), implementation and process evaluations (IPEs) or value-for-money evaluations
- A strong understanding of the agenda around What Works Centres and the broader agenda around evidence-based policy and practice in public services
- Ability to act on own initiative, with agility and flexibility, and willingness to collaborate as part of a high-functioning team
- Ability to engage effectively and credibly with a range of stakeholders – both internal and external
- Excellent communication skills, including report writing/presentation skills, and experience leading, or contributing to, knowledge exchange activities

Shortlisted applicants will also be assessed at the host led interview selection process against the following desirable opportunity-specific requirements.

Desirable Criteria:

- Experience engaging with policymakers and practitioners at a national and/or local level to understand perspective on evaluations, to identify opportunities for collaboration, and to disseminate findings
- Practice experience within children's services, or strong knowledge of the sector - experience of domestic abuse practice in local authorities, or engaging with practitioners at a local level on related areas
- Experience of primary research and the appropriate design and selection of methodologies when conducting evidence generation activities
- Experience managing trials and engaging with practitioners to deliver evaluations
- Experience developing practical tools and solutions to support service delivery or evaluation activities such as data collection
- Experience building capacity and understanding of those who are less experienced with evaluation