UKRI What Works Innovation Fellowships – Tackling Violence Against Women and Girls

Spend 18 months as one of three What Works Innovation Fellows, generating and championing evidence that helps transform how the UK tackles violence against women and girls. Each fellowship is funded by UKRI's Research & Development Missions Accelerator Programme and will be hosted by one of three Government-backed What Works Centres: Foundations (the What Works Centre for Children & Families); the What Works Centre for Crime Reduction at the College of Policing; and the Youth Endowment Fund.

You will:

- Deliver research and innovation projects within your host What Works Centre, generating and championing rigorous, actionable evidence to prevent or reduce violence against women and girls (see specific fellowship descriptions for further detail).
- Play a leading role in the launch of a National What Works Programme on tackling Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG), working in partnership with the other Fellows and organisations including the Cabinet Office, UK Research and Innovation (UKRI), VAWG sector support services, universities, and other What Works Centres.

Who can apply

You must be based at a UK employing organisation eligible for UKRI funding. Check if your employing organisation is eligible.

This funding opportunity is open to researchers who hold a PhD or equivalent research experience as well as relevant subject matter or methodological expertise.

This fellowship is open to applicants of all career stages.

Funding available

Fellows can apply for up to £220,000 at Full Economic Cost consisting of:

- £180,000 for the fellowship at Full Economic Cost
- £40,000 for research and collaboration costs

UKRI will fund 80% of the Full Economic Cost. Your employing organisation is expected to support the remaining 20%. Please consult your research office for further advice.

Fellowships should start on 4 January 2027.

Fellowships

The three available fellowships are:

1. **What Works in tackling domestic abuse – Foundations (What Works Centre for Children & Families)**
2. **Economic modelling to support effective prevention – What Works Centre for Crime Reduction (College of Policing)**
3. **What Works to prevent VAWG perpetration – Youth Endowment Fund**

Please consult the specific fellowship descriptions before deciding whether to apply.

Person specification

Applications will be assessed by a selection panel against the following criteria:

You must:

- be a researcher in the remits relevant to the specific position applied for or be able to demonstrate how you could generate interdisciplinary insights through combining these disciplines with other recognised academic disciplines. Please see each host specific fellowship positions for more details on eligibility
- be based at an eligible UKRI research organisation
- hold a PhD or equivalent research experience
- meet any additional eligibility and person specification criteria for the fellowship you are applying for
- have subject matter and analytical expertise and skills relevant to the specific fellowship position you are applying for
- be able to work effectively at pace to deliver expected outcomes, including working as part of a team on shared goals
- have the ability to communicate complex information and analysis
- have the ability to demonstrate the use of expertise in a non-academic context
- have excellent written and verbal communication skills, with the ability to translate complex information into meaningful narrative that is accessible to a non-academic audience
- possess excellent stakeholder engagement and collaboration skills
- have the ability to co-design work programmes and lead on knowledge exchange activity between research, policy and funder communities

Applicants will also be assessed against some opportunity-specific requirements (see specific fellowship descriptions for further detail).

Background

Policy.context

In December 2025, the UK Government published its new cross-government strategy, Freedom.from.Violence.and.Abuse, marking the first step in a transformational approach to tackling violence against women and girls (VAWG). The strategy recognises that addressing a whole-society issue like VAWG requires an equally strategic approach to generating, sharing, and using high-quality evidence.

The complex, evolving, and often hidden nature of VAWG has long limited our ability to build a robust evidence base. Major gaps remain in understanding its drivers, true prevalence, and what works to prevent and reduce it. These gaps constrain policymakers' and practitioners' ability to design effective responses or scale proven interventions. At the same time, the wider research and evidence landscape remains fragmented. Existing organisations provide very valuable insights but typically concentrate on individual services or the specific life stages of a

perpetrator or victim. What is missing is a whole-system, whole-life-course approach to producing actionable evidence on how best to prevent and respond to VAWG.

In response, the Cabinet Office and UK Research and Innovation have partnered to create a nationally coordinated What Works programme focused on identifying, testing, and scaling the most effective interventions. The What Works Innovation Fellowships to tackle VAWG will play a critical role in shaping and strengthening this programme.

What.Works.Network

The Government's What Works Network is made up of independent evidence centres (What Works Centres) that ensure policymakers and frontline services have access to the best available evidence when making decisions. Collectively, the Network generates, translates, and shares evidence across policy areas that account for more than £250 billion of public spending. Research trials, evaluations, and evidence syntheses commissioned by the Centres have shaped local and national decisions in areas such as policing, health, schooling, and youth services. These What Works Innovation Fellowships will be hosted within three What Works Centres that already lead dedicated work on preventing and responding to VAWG and will play a critical role in the success of the national What Works Programme to tackle VAWG.

Funding

Funding for these What Works Fellowships will be provided by UKRI's R&D Missions Accelerator Programme (RDMAP), in partnership with the Economic and Social Research Council. RDMAP invests in research and innovation solutions that align with the UK government's five national missions. This includes the safer streets mission which aims to halve knife crime and violence against women and girls within a decade, while increasing public confidence in policing and the criminal justice system.

Additional information

Fellows will be required to:

- sign a fellowship agreement between the What Works Centre host (the partner) and the relevant employing research organisation (the employer)
- meet the security checks and other clearance and declaration of interest processes required by the host
- observe the codes of conduct of the host What Works Centre

It is a condition of the funding opportunity that host organisations, fellows and their employers will need to have a fellowship agreement in place for the start of the fellowship. This will be provided by the host organisation in line with their specific policies and procedures and based on a template provided by UKRI.

Attendance and location requirements are set out in the specification for each fellowship. By applying for the fellowship, you are acknowledging and agreeing to the attendance and location requirements. In addition, fellows will be expected to undertake, and travel for, knowledge exchange activities with the wider fellowship cohort. Not all these activities can be planned in advance of starting the fellowship. By applying for the fellowship, you are acknowledging and agreeing to this possibility of additional travel. The hosts will be happy to discuss any reasonable adjustments that may be needed to due personal circumstances.

How to apply

The closing date for applications is **16:00 on Tuesday 8 September 2026**.

You will not be able to apply after this time.

To apply for one of the advertised fellowships, you must submit a CV and "Application Statement" to the What Works Centre hosting the specific fellowship you wish to apply for. Your CV and Application Statement should be no more than three pages each (six pages in total).

The application statement should take account of the advertised role specification and respond to the following questions:

- **Vision:** What are you hoping to achieve with your proposed fellowship?
- **Applicant capability to deliver:** Why are you the right individual to deliver the objectives of this fellowship? Please refer to the fellowship requirements.
- **Approach:** How are you going to approach the co-design of the fellowship with your host What Works Centre?

To apply for the fellowship hosted by the College of Policing, please submit your CV and application statement to: WhatWorks@college.police.uk

To apply for the fellowship hosted by the Youth Endowment Fund, please apply via: https://youthendowmentfund.org.uk/careers/

To apply for the fellowship hosted by Foundations, please apply via: https://foundations.org.uk/opportunity/ukri-domestic-abuse-fellowship/

Only online applications are accepted for these fellowships. If your application does not follow the guidance, it may be rejected.

Interviews

For shortlisted applications, representatives from the host What Works Centre will conduct interviews with applicants, before making funding recommendations to UKRI. UKRI will make the final funding decisions.

Interviews are expected to take place in the week commencing **28 September 2026**.

Successful applicants will be required to upload their applications to the UKRI Funding Service.

The host What Works Centre and UKRI reserve the right to modify the assessment process as needed.

Contact Details

Queries about these fellowship opportunities can be addressed to:

- College of Policing: WhatWorks@college.police.uk
- Foundations: https://forms.monday.com/forms/686db80a943338a64c11a69952418ab1?r=use1
- Youth Endowment Fund: recruitment@youthendowmentfund.org.uk
- UK Research and Innovation: saferstreets@ukri.org

Sharing data with UKRI

Personal information provided in your application will be shared with UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) for the purposes of supporting the assessment process and administering funding. Further information on how UKRI uses personal data is available in the UKRI privacy notice: https://www.ukri.org/who-we-are/privacy-notice/