

# PERSON SPECIFICATION

## 2024 – 2026 PARLIAMENTARY THEMATIC RESEARCH LEAD ON HEALTH

Publication date: 11 December 2023

- Deadline for submission of application: 11:55pm, Sunday 3 March 2024
- Apply for the position of Thematic Research Lead on by clicking on the relevant link on: [www.parliament.uk/trls](http://www.parliament.uk/trls)

### 1. About Parliamentary Thematic Research Leads

#### Context

Thematic Research Leads (TRLs) are mid-career researchers who spend three days a week in the UK Parliament. The Thematic Research Lead is a strategic role; leading, facilitating, and enhancing Parliament's engagement with research evidence in a broad policy area.

Over the past year, the [Parliamentary Office of Science and Technology \(POST\)](#) and the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) have been piloting a network of three Thematic Research Leads. Evidence from the TRL network pilot has shown that these academic roles are able to bring about a step change in the way research feeds into Parliament's scrutiny, legislation and debate.

In partnership with UKRI and all its research councils, we are expanding and extending this initiative for a further two years: from September 2024 to Summer 2026. We are therefore looking to appoint eight Thematic Research Leads for the second phase of this initiative.

#### 2024 – 2026 Thematic Research Leads

POST is partnering with UKRI and its constituent research councils to recruit an expanded Thematic Research Lead network to operate between September 2024 and Summer 2026. We are looking to appoint TRLs to the following areas:

- AI and digital
- Arts and humanities
- Business, Economics and Trade
- Climate and Environment
- Crime and Justice
- Health
- International Affairs and National Security
- Transport

Funding for these roles comes from UKRI and its constituent research councils.

[You can find more information on Thematic Research Leads here.](#)

## 2. Guidance information

Please read this Parliamentary Thematic Research Lead Person Specification alongside the [Guidance Notes for Applicants](#), which gives information on:

- Key dates
- Eligibility and security clearance
- Funding
- How to apply
- Assessment and selection process
- Our values
- Reasonable adjustments and workplace adjustments
- Ethics approval
- Thematic Research Lead status
- Terms and conditions
- Contacts and sources of further information

## 3. Role of the Thematic Research Lead

### The Parliamentary Thematic Research Lead

Thematic Research Leads (TRLs) are mid-career researchers<sup>1</sup> who conduct the role of TRL part-time: three days a week (0.6FTE), whilst retaining their substantive academic post for the remaining time. TRLs are based in policy-relevant teams in Parliament and operate in a network facilitated by POST's Knowledge Exchange Unit. In their TRL role, they are line managed by a senior member of staff with expertise in their broad policy area.

The purpose of the TRL is to facilitate and enhance the use of research evidence and expertise in Parliament (in both the House of Commons and House of Lords) through effective knowledge exchange, collaboration and processes.

To achieve this, TRLs conduct three primary activities. The below indicates the *kinds* of activities that TRLs will do in these broad areas. However, the *specific activities* will be determined by context and priorities at the time.

### 1) Strategic support for the production and delivery of research evidence for Parliament within the policy portfolio

This may include supporting the use of research evidence and data by:

- Working with select committees. For example, through support for inquiry planning, scoping, identifying witnesses, evidence gathering, reviewing briefings and technical advice

---

<sup>1</sup> For the purposes of this call, mid-career researchers are considered those in professional research roles up to but not including professorial level. Researchers must be from a UK University, or from one of UKRI's [Eligible Independent Research Organisations or Catapult Centres](#).

- Working with the House of Commons and House of Lords Libraries. For example, through supporting the production of briefing materials on legislation and policy debates and in the delivery of seminars and events for colleagues and parliamentarians
- Working with POST. For example, through providing technical advice, peer review of briefings and parliamentary horizon scanning
- In some cases, working with Parliamentary staff as part of cross-cutting policy hubs to support greater resilience and capacity. For example, through learning and development activities, facilitation of networking with the external research community and supporting the development and delivery of novel mechanisms to enhance scrutiny such as [Areas of Research Interest](#) and [policy simulations](#)

## 2) Activities to support the development of a Research, Development and Innovation ecosystem that facilitates and encourages knowledge exchange between Parliament and the research community

This may include:

- building connections with researchers, knowledge mobilisers and relevant research organisations, to draw excellent research evidence and expertise into Parliament
- building relationships with key research council staff and investments. Engaging UKRI investments in Parliament's work and sharing insights from Parliament back to research councils to inform short-, medium- and long-term planning and activities, including using knowledge of the Parliamentary context to advise research stakeholders on maximising the impact of their work. Drawing on UKRI data infrastructure investments and using data-driven research or analysis, where relevant.
- working with parliamentary staff to contribute the parliamentary perspective to the development of REF 2028, the KEF, and the KE Concordat
- contributing to sector-wide activities where TRL insights may add value such as advancing the use of Rapid Evidence Assessments and Areas of Research Interest in policy
- exchanging knowledge and insights with the Government Chief Scientific Adviser Network team, UKRI Policy Fellows in government, staff in devolved legislatures

## 3) Participation in the Thematic Research Leads network to share intelligence and insights across policy areas

TRLs will act as a network, meeting once a week to share information, insights and best practice. Through the network, they will also identify cross-cutting opportunities for enhancing the work of Parliament through research insights, building capacity in the R&I system and knowledge exchange. The network will also serve as a space through which the TRLs will conduct professional development; be that through participating in in-house training, or training provided by UKRI or other parties.

### The portfolio of the Thematic Research Lead on Health

#### *Policy areas*

The TRL on Health will work to bring insights to Parliament to support scrutiny, legislation and debate in various policy areas, which may include: advanced therapies, antimicrobial resistance, cancer, clinical trials, Covid-19, dentistry, digital transformation, disability, early intervention, gender dysphoria and incongruence, general practice, health and medicines regulation, health inequalities, healthy ageing,

infectious diseases, integrated care, learning disabilities, life sciences, mental health, obesity, pharmacies, prevention, public health, screen use, suicide, the NHS, and zoonoses.

The TRL is not expected to be an expert on more than one of these areas, rather they will use their knowledge exchange skills and networks to make sense of these areas for a parliamentary audience.

### ***Parliamentary stakeholders***

Teams the TRL may work with include: the Parliamentary Office of Science and Technology's Biological Sciences and Health Section, and Social Sciences Section; the Commons Health and Social Care Committee, Women and Equalities Committee, Science and Technology Committee; the Lords Science and Technology Committee, Social Care Committee; the Commons Library Science and Environment Section Social Policy Section; and the Lords Library.

### ***Research council priorities***

This role will engage most closely with MRC and BBSRC, as well as all other constituent councils, such as ESRC, where relevant. It will provide opportunities for UKRI-funded researchers to deliver against the UKRI strategic themes of '[creating opportunities, improving outcomes](#)', '[securing better health, ageing and wellbeing](#)' and '[tackling infections](#)'.

The TRL will be a channel through which insights from MRC and BBSRC can feed into parliamentary scrutiny and legislation. It will connect investments into parliamentary audiences and help to generate or implement socially and economically viable solutions to the health challenges facing the UK.

Priority areas for MRC and BBSRC include the challenges of demographic changes and an ageing society, prevention and early treatment, improving health equity, protecting health in the face of environmental change, the fundamental biological mechanisms of healthy systems, antimicrobial resistance, mental health, nutrition, the microbiome, and technologies for health.

The role will provide a means for relevant programmes and their networks (e.g. [Health Data Research UK](#), [UK Biobank](#), [Population Research UK](#), [Adolescent Health Study](#), [National Mouse Genetics Network](#), Population Health Food Cluster, [Food Safety Research Network](#), Gut-Immunology-Brain axis Network +, [Centre for Society and Mental Health](#), [International Centre for Lifecourse Studies](#)) to share their collective voices with parliamentary audiences.

Key stakeholders will be the MRC and BBSRC Centres and Institutes, whose work provides national capability and expertise in strategically important areas of research. They are national centres of excellence that provide leadership, expertise and infrastructure for the wider research and innovation community.

The successful TRL will also need to connect in with the wider medical and life science research network, including other medical research funders, both public and private, including the [National Institute for Health and Care Research](#), the medical research charities, and industrial and commercial partners.

#### 4. What you will get out of this opportunity

The position of TRL is a highly influential and prestigious role at the heart of Parliament. As far as we are aware, we are the first parliament globally to have developed such a position, and the first nation to have embedded an academic network in our legislature. In a global landscape, delivering and developing this role therefore provides exciting possibilities.

The role presents a unique opportunity for you to continue shaping the development of this forward-thinking position and to work closely with policy, research and analysis staff from across the UK Parliament. It offers an exciting opportunity for you to see first-hand how research feeds into policy, through shaping parliamentary work with your research expertise and participating in the development of parliamentary processes for knowledge exchange.

You will be uniquely placed to build connections with parliamentary and government stakeholders to take forward through your career, and this participation will provide you with rich and varied experiences to support you on an upward professional trajectory. Current postholders have reported that the role has contributed to advancement in their careers, including to professorial level.

#### 5. Expected timeline and working arrangements

- Applications open on Monday 11 December 2023, and close on 11:55pm, Sunday 3 March 2024
- Interviews are expected to take place in the second half of April
- Successful applicants will undergo security clearance, and complete Fellowship Agreements, between May and August
- Thematic Research Leads will take up their substantive, part-time positions in September 2024

#### 6. Working arrangements

- We welcome flexible working to deliver this 0.6FTE role.
- UKRI will make provision to cover additional time above 0.6FTE for those candidates based over four hours' travel time (by public transport) from London.
- We offer a range of adjustments to enable colleagues with additional needs and requirements to take up the role – this includes those with caring responsibilities. This can also include adjusting the 0.6 FTE nature of the role to support colleagues travelling a significant distance. We welcome discussions about this at interview.
- We expect that most of the role can be delivered in a hybrid way, however, we know from experience that postholders and the parliamentary teams they work with benefit from the time they spend in person in Westminster.
- Wednesday will be a required core working day (hybrid attendance). Weekly network meetings and other network activities are scheduled on Wednesdays. Most network meetings and some other activities will be held online, however, there is an expectation that those in role will attend in-person on a set Wednesday each month when Parliament is sitting.
- In *September 2024*, we will require those in role to be present in Westminster on Tuesday 3, Wednesday 4 and Thursday 5 September for cohort induction. We welcome candidates expressing any personal adjustments they would require to enable them to participate in the induction, and we will do our best to meet them as the programme allows.
- *Across the two years* in role, the expectation would be that generally the Thematic Research Lead would attend Westminster at least three days a month, preferably Wednesdays. We would also encourage TRLs to be more present in Westminster as they take up their role, as this will

help in building relationships with staff. There is less need to be on site when Parliament is not sitting. Where an applicant might struggle to meet the requirement of three days in Westminster per month (for example for personal or medical reasons), we will endeavour to be able to accommodate them as the programme allows.

- We would also appreciate some flexibility in attendance, in order that those in role can come to Westminster for key activities and events.

You should propose and discuss your working pattern at interview.

## **7. Skills and experience**

We welcome applications from everyone regardless of their ethnicity, race, gender, religious beliefs, sexual orientation, age, marital status, socioeconomic background or whether or not they have a disability.

When you respond to the questions on the application form, please demonstrate how you meet these criteria using the STAR framework to structure your answers: Situation, Task, Action, Result.

If you are invited to interview, we will ask you a combination of competency questions and role specific questions solely based on the criteria below. Any presentation or test requirements will be clearly communicated to you well in advance of your interview.

### **Criterion 1: academic expertise**

An established national reputation in your discipline. Broad knowledge of the work and experts in Health to enable you to engage widely with the research community, as well as knowledge of the policy landscape in relation to the broad discipline area.

### **Criterion 2: ability to work outside of your comfort zone, and acquire and communicate new knowledge**

Experience and confidence to quickly get up to speed on areas outside of your specialism. Excellent written and oral communication skills including demonstrable ability to explain complex scientific or technical information clearly, impartially, and succinctly to a non-specialist audience. Ability to develop knowledge of Parliamentary and research council priorities and investments, including across UKRI, and to mobilise this information.

### **Criterion 3: working with others, convening groups of people, and building networks**

Ability to liaise and collaborate impartially with diverse stakeholders at different levels of seniority. Experience of initiating and developing relationships with different stakeholder groups. Confidence to work independently, coupled with an inclusive approach and demonstrable team player attributes.

### **Criterion 4: organisation and project management**

Ability to work at speed, to tight deadlines, as well as to adapt to changing priorities. Demonstrable experience of working on multiple projects in parallel, with diverse stakeholder groups. Experience of managing two or more roles simultaneously, or managing competing demands on your time.

### **Criterion 5: reflectivity, innovation and persuasion**

A pro-active and innovative approach, drawing on creative, analytical and/or reflective skills. Experience in spotting and capitalising on opportunities to increase impact. Confidence to take initiative and

contribute to designing and realising innovative activities. Proven ability to challenge the status quo, bring others on board through persuasion and influence, and facilitate change.

## **8. Contact**

For further information, please consult the Guidance Notes for applicants, on [www.parliament.uk/trls](http://www.parliament.uk/trls).

For any remaining questions, please email the Knowledge Exchange Unit on: [keu@parliament.uk](mailto:keu@parliament.uk)