

Call for an early years expert resident

Nesta Residency Programme

Are you an early years expert with experience in leading family support services in a local authority in England?

Join us at Nesta for a five-to-six month paid residency (part-time, starting in autumn 2025) to help us scale innovations that strengthen support for families.

About Nesta

We are the UK's innovation agency for social good. We design, test and scale new solutions to society's biggest problems, changing millions of lives for the better. For over 20 years, we have worked to support, encourage and inspire innovation.

Our three missions are to give every child [a fair start](#), help people live [healthy lives](#), and create [a sustainable future](#) where the economy works for both people and the planet. We use innovation methods, including data science, behavioural science, design thinking, evidence and experimentation, arts and more to achieve our goals.

About our fairer start mission

Our fairer start mission (AFS) aims to close inequalities in early childhood development between economically disadvantaged children and their peers. To achieve our mission, we are focused on supporting parents in their parenting, advancing joined-up family support, ensuring low-income children have access to high-quality early education and childcare and that their families have a solid financial bedrock.

About the residency

Nesta is offering a unique opportunity for an experienced professional to join our team as an early years 'expert-in-residence'.

The resident will play a key role in deepening our understanding of local government policy, decision-making and services leadership in the early years. They will help us shape, frame and deliver impactful innovation partnerships with the potential to scale.

The resident will provide ongoing advice and guidance to projects exploring:

- scalable solutions for implementing evidence-based parenting programmes
- approaches to enhance integration across family support, health visiting, and early education and childcare
- improved decision-making through better data collection and use.

In addition, the resident will play a valuable role in unlocking connections to other local authorities, frontline organisations and practitioners who could become future partners in our work.

The resident will be based at Nesta for a 5-6 month period, for 1-2 days per week, although duration and time commitment can be discussed. This would consist of time with the team in person on a regular basis (eg, weekly or fortnightly) in [our London office](#) (but we are open to other arrangements to cater for individual circumstances). We will reimburse reasonable travel expenses for individuals based outside of London who need to attend meetings or workshops at our office. This includes travel for in-person working days.

As a charitable foundation, Nesta has more freedom to take risks, think long-term and to choose what we work on than many other organisations. This residency will offer an opportunity to shape the direction of early years innovation in the UK and collaborate with a dynamic team committed to improving outcomes for children and families.

Benefits of being a Nesta resident includes:

- a fee to cover the duration of your engagement with Nesta
- access to our networks and insights about the cutting edge of innovation
- opportunity to work closely with Nesta staff
- use of a workspace and resources, through the ability to use the offices (London, Wales and Scotland) for the entire duration of the residency
- public recognition as a Nesta resident.

Who we would like to hear from

We're looking for an expert with extensive experience of planning and leading early years services in a Local Authority in England (eg, current or former early years lead). We would like this person to have been involved in activities such as: planning and commissioning of early years services, managing children's centres/family hubs, local childcare sufficiency management and quality improvement.

While an ideal candidate would have all of the following skills and experience, we will consider the right candidate with a combination of some of them:

- recent experience as a leader in early years services
- up to date knowledge of current development in early years family services and/or education and childcare
- excellent understanding of the needs of children and families
- experience of implementing and managing change or innovative practice in Local Authority settings
- experience of working collaboratively with a range of partners.

The individual will need to be available for 1-2 days per week over a 5-6 month period commencing in September or October 2025. To cater for existing commitments there is some flexibility around the start date and weekly time commitment.

We are keen to have the broadest lived experience possible represented as part of the programme.

If you have had a non-traditional career path in this sector, we would like to hear from you.

Key outcomes from the residency

The resident will contribute to Nesta's work in the following ways:

- Work with members of the fairer start mission team to shape, frame and deliver impactful innovation partnerships.
- Provide advice and guidance to ongoing projects.
- Unlock connections to other local authorities, frontline organisations and practitioners who could become future partners.
- Contribute to learning and development at Nesta by sharing your expertise through lunch & learn sessions or staff meetings.
- Share your experience and reflections on engaging in the residency programme, for example by publishing a blog post.
- Work with the Nesta team to identify and run a project that combines your particular expertise and interests with the capabilities of the fairer start mission team to advance one of the mission's [strategic priorities](#).

How it works - budget and time commitment

The proposed day rate for the programme is £300-£400 per day. We expect the successful candidate to work with the AFS team for between 37-50 days over a 5-6 month period. The day rate will be determined based on seniority, the number of days spent in the residency and the experience, skills and networks that the candidate brings to the residency.

We're also open to secondments from other organisations and are happy to discuss day rates and other arrangements on a case-by-case basis.

We anticipate that the residency will commence in September or October 2025.

How to apply and selection process

If you are interested in applying, please send your CV or LinkedIn profile to discoveryhub@nesta.org.uk along with your answers to the following questions:

1. What skills and experience would you bring to the residency? [Max 250 words]
2. Who do you consider to be the key stakeholders in transforming early years services at a local authority level, and how would you go about reaching them as part of this residency, to help inform Nesta's work? [Max 250 words]

The applications will be evaluated against the criteria set out in the 'Who we would like to hear from' section. Those with the closest match to the resident profile will be invited to take part in a follow-up conversation. More information will be shared with shortlisted candidates in due course.

Indicative timetable

- 10 July – Start of open call
- **10 August (23:59)** – Deadline for applications
- 11-15 August* – Shortlisting
- 18-22 August* – Follow-up conversation with shortlisted candidates to take place
- 22 August* – Appointment
- September/October – Expected start of residency

** Please note that dates are indicative and may be subject to change.*