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Senior User Researcher

Government Digital Service

Apply before 11:55 pm on Sunday 1st March 2026



Government
Digital Service

Reference number

449537

Salary

£55,403 - £61,740

£56,070 - £61,793 (National) / £61,740 - £70,219 (London) - Based on capability. The base salary of this grade is £61,005 for London and £55,403 for other locations. Offers made above this will be made up with a specialist pay allowance.

Job grade

Grade 7

Contract type

Permanent

Business area

GDS - GOV.UK

Type of role

Digital

Working pattern

Flexible working, Full-time, Job share, Part-time, Compressed hours

Number of jobs available

3

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Location

Bristol, London, Manchester

About the job

Job summary

The Government Digital Service (GDS) is the digital centre of government. We are responsible for setting, leading and delivering the vision for a modern digital government.

Our priorities are to drive a modern digital government, by:

1. joining up public sector services
2. harnessing the power of AI for the public good
3. strengthening and extending our digital and data public infrastructure
4. elevating leadership and investing in talent
5. funding for outcomes and procuring for growth and innovation
6. committing to transparency and driving accountability

We are home to the Incubator for Artificial Intelligence (I.AI), the world-leading GOV.UK and at the forefront of coordinating the UK's geospatial strategy and activity. We lead the Government Digital and Data function and champion the work of digital teams across government.

We're part of the Department for Science, Innovation and Technology (DSIT) and employ more than 1,000 people all over the UK, with hubs in Manchester, London and Bristol.

The Government Digital Service is where talent translates into impact. From your first day, you'll be working with some of the world's most highly-skilled digital professionals, all contributing their knowledge to make change on a national scale.

Join us for rewarding work that makes a difference across the UK. You'll solve some of the nation's highest-priority digital challenges, helping millions of people access services they need

Job description

We are hiring 3 Senior User Researchers for GOV.UK. GOV.UK is the trusted online home for government information and services, every week millions of people rely on it to complete essential and often life-changing tasks. GOV.UK also supports government colleagues to publish content, ensuring accurate and accessible information is always available to the public.

As a Senior User Research, you will:

make an impact: work on and tackle some of the toughest challenges in public infrastructure, improving millions of people's lives through solutions that are informed by high quality, evidence-based, insights

deliver work that matters: driving change, delivering better value and outcomes for users and government, to empower and transform

grow with us: thrive in a supportive research community that values experimentation, learning, failing fast and reflection as key steps to growth. With dedicated development resources, training and cross-government networks, you will have plenty of opportunities to grow

Your main responsibilities are:

to lead and conduct a wide range of user research projects that are aligned with GOV.UK's vision and goals using a range of qualitative and quantitative research methodologies

to deliver high quality research projects end-to-end: from planning, recruiting participants, data analysis and reporting, ensuring key insights are acted upon

to collaborate with multidisciplinary colleagues and stakeholders throughout the research process, and work with analytics colleagues and use a wide range of data to build a rich picture of user behaviour

to produce impactful and reusable insights to inform, guide (or even reset) design, driving, tactical product and strategic decisions at both the team and organisational level

to advocate for evidence-based decision-making, persuading colleagues and stakeholders to adopt research approaches and research initiatives that can deliver significant value to GOV.UK and GDS

mentor, guide and line manage more junior user researchers to assure and improve research practice

consistently explore and implement innovative ways to deliver better outcomes, whether by refining existing methods or experimenting with new, creative, approaches

help colleagues understand when and when not to do research, and advocate the value and demonstrate the importance of research by ensuring that impact is tracked and visible to others

be a reflective practitioner who continually strives to improve their own practise and will contribute to our thriving User Research Community to share knowledge, case studies and examples of best practice

Person specification

You don't need government experience to apply for this role. We're interested in seasoned research practitioners who are experienced in both evaluative and foundational research, leveraging a wide range of data and techniques. A skilled communicator with a proven track record of influencing stakeholders and advocating for users, driving decisions and shaping direction at both tactical and strategic levels.

We're interested in people who:

can demonstrate the execution of research projects following best practice, delivering high impact results that have directly influenced important design and product directions both tactically and strategically

have strong analytical skills, with the ability to distil hidden and actionable insights from diverse data sources and communicate them effectively through storytelling

have a proven ability to advocate for research and build strong relationships with colleagues and stakeholders. Skilled in collaborating with multidisciplinary teams and senior stakeholders throughout the product development process to drive actions and meaningful change

have proven experience in educating and directing team(s) focusing on the right research and adopting a wide range of methods/approaches to deliver best results

have demonstrable experience in developing engaging and impactful team workshops to assist with research scoping, prioritisation of research insights, and ideas generations

have a good understanding of social and technological contexts and how that influences user behaviour and solutions; and accessibility and inclusion practices

thrives on the demands of delivery pressure, ambiguous environments by combining pragmatism, professional judgement and flexibility (not just playing it by the book) to overcome challenges.

demonstrate tenacity and proactivity: seek solutions with creativity, curiosity and collaboration, while continuously reflecting on own practices to drive improvements and deliver meaningful change

are educated to at least Bachelor's level in a field related to User Centered design (e.g. HCI, Human Factors, Anthropology, Design, Psychology) or related work experience.

Benefits

There are many benefits of working at GDS, including:

flexible hybrid working with flexi-time and the option to work part-time or condensed hours

a Civil Service Pension with an average employer contribution of 28.97%

25 days of annual leave, increasing by a day each year up to a maximum of 30 days

an extra day off for the King's birthday

an in-year bonus scheme to recognise high performance

career progression and coaching, including a training budget for personal development

a focus on wellbeing with access to an employee assistance programme

job satisfaction from making government services easier to use and more inclusive for people across the UK

advances on pay, including for travel season tickets

death in service benefits

cycle to work scheme and facilities

access to an employee discounts scheme

10 learning days per year
volunteering opportunities (5 special leave days per year)
access to a suite of learning activities through Civil Service learning

Any move to Government Digital Service from another employer will mean you can no longer access childcare vouchers. This includes moves between government departments. You may however be eligible for other government schemes, including Tax Free Childcare. Determine your eligibility at <https://www.childcarechoices.gov.uk>

Office attendance

The Department operates a discretionary hybrid working policy, which provides for a combination of working hours from your place of work and from your home in the UK. The current expectation for staff is to attend the office or non-home based location for 40-60% of the time over the accounting period.

DSIT does not normally offer full home working (i.e. working at home); but we do offer a variety of flexible working options (including occasionally working from home).

Things you need to know

Artificial intelligence

Artificial intelligence can be a useful tool to support your application, however, all examples and statements provided must be truthful, factually accurate and taken directly from your own experience. Where plagiarism has been identified (presenting the ideas and experiences of others, or generated by artificial intelligence, as your own) applications may be withdrawn and internal candidates may be subject to disciplinary action. Please see our [candidate guidance \(opens in a new window\)](#) for more information on appropriate and inappropriate use.

Selection process details

The standard selection process for roles at GDS consists of:

stage 1: An application screening process - We ask for a CV and cover letter up to 750 words

stage 2: 75 minute interview. We will use this to understand your work, experience, and assess in terms of competency and behaviours. You will receive a brief beforehand if preparation is needed. This will be conducted over video conferencing

stage 3: Final stage. Research technical exercise session. In this session, we will assess your research practices and skills using a series of hands-on tasks. You will receive a brief with more info about this before attending the exercise session. This will be conducted over video conferencing

Depending on how many applications we get, there might also be an extra stage before the video interview, for example a phone interview or a technical exercise.

In the event we receive a high volume of applications, we will conduct the initial sift against the lead criteria which is:

the execution of research projects following best practice, delivering high impact results that have directly influenced important design and product directions both tactically and strategically.

strong analytical skills, with the ability to distil hidden and actionable insights from diverse data sources and communicate them effectively through storytelling.

In the Civil Service, we use [Success Profiles](#) to evaluate your skills and ability. This gives us the best possible chance of finding the right person for the job, increases performance and improves diversity and inclusivity. We'll be assessing your technical abilities, skills, experience and behaviours that are relevant to this role.

For this role we'll be assessing you against the following [Civil Service Behaviours](#):

Seeing the big picture

Delivering at pace

Working together
Communicating and influencing
Changing and improving
Making effective decisions

We'll also be assessing your experience and specialist technical skills against the following skills defined in the Government Digital and Data Capability Framework for the [Senior User Researcher](#) role:

Agile research practices
Analysis and synthesis
Inclusive research
Research management, leadership and assurance
Stakeholder relationship management
User research methods
User-centred practice and advocacy

Want to know more about who Government Digital and Data are? [Click Here](#)

Recruitment Timeline

Sift completion: 9th March 2026

Panel interviews: W/C 16th March 2026

Candidates that do not pass the interview but have demonstrated an acceptable standard may be considered for similar roles at a lower grade.

A reserve list will be held for a period of 12 months, from which further appointments can be made.

The Civil Service is committed to attract, retain and invest in talent wherever it is found. To learn more please see the [Civil Service People Plan](#) and [the Civil Service D&I Strategy](#).

CTC is required if an individual is working in proximity to public figures, or requires unescorted access to buildings assessed to be at particular risk

from terrorist attacks (certain military, civil, industrial or commercial establishments and all Whitehall buildings).

To gain CTC clearance, applicants will usually need to have been a UK resident for a minimum of 3 years. In addition to the checks performed as part of BPSS CTC will also involve checks to prevent persons who may have connections with terrorist organisations, or who may be vulnerable to pressure from them, from undertaking certain security duties where sensitive information may be compromised. CTC normally takes 4 - 6 weeks

Sponsorship

DSIT cannot offer Visa sponsorship to candidates through this campaign. DSIT holds a Visa sponsorship licence but this can only be used for certain roles and this campaign does not qualify.

Feedback will only be provided if you attend an interview or assessment.

Security

Successful candidates must undergo a criminal record check.

Successful candidates must meet the security requirements before they can be appointed. The level of security needed is [counter-terrorist check \(opens in a new window\)](#).

[See our vetting charter \(opens in a new window\)](#).

People working with government assets must complete [baseline personnel security standard \(opens in new window\)](#) checks.

Nationality requirements

This job is broadly open to the following groups:

UK nationals

nationals of the Republic of Ireland

nationals of Commonwealth countries who have the right to work in the UK

nationals of the EU, Switzerland, Norway, Iceland or Liechtenstein and family members of those nationalities with settled or pre-settled status under the [European Union Settlement Scheme \(EUSS\) \(opens in a new window\)](#)

nationals of the EU, Switzerland, Norway, Iceland or Liechtenstein and family members of those nationalities who have made a valid application for settled or pre-settled status under the European Union Settlement Scheme (EUSS)

individuals with limited leave to remain or indefinite leave to remain who were eligible to apply for EUSS on or before 31 December 2020

Turkish nationals, and certain family members of Turkish nationals, who have accrued the right to work in the Civil Service

[Further information on nationality requirements \(opens in a new window\)](#)

Working for the Civil Service

The [Civil Service Code \(opens in a new window\)](#) sets out the standards of behaviour expected of civil servants.

We recruit by merit on the basis of fair and open competition, as outlined in the Civil Service Commission's [recruitment principles \(opens in a new window\)](#).

The Civil Service embraces diversity and promotes equal opportunities. As such, we run a Disability Confident Scheme (DCS) for candidates with disabilities who meet the minimum selection criteria.

Diversity and Inclusion

The Civil Service is committed to attract, retain and invest in talent wherever it is found. To learn more please see the [Civil Service People Plan \(opens in a new window\)](#) and the [Civil Service Diversity and Inclusion Strategy \(opens in a new window\)](#).

Apply and further information

This vacancy is part of the [Great Place to Work for Veterans \(opens in a new window\)](#) initiative.

The Civil Service welcomes applications from people who have recently left prison or have an unspent conviction. [Read more about prison leaver recruitment \(opens in new window\)](#).

Once this job has closed, the job advert will no longer be available. You may want to save a copy for your records.

Contact point for applicants

Job contact :

Name : gdsrecruitment@dsit.gov.uk

Email : gdsrecruitment@dsit.gov.uk

Recruitment team

Email : gdsrecruitment@dsit.gov.uk

Further information

If you feel your application has not been treated in accordance with the Recruitment Principles and you wish to make a complaint, you should contact gds-complaints@dsit.gov.uk in the first instance.

If you are not satisfied with the response you receive you can contact the Civil Service Commission by email: info@csc.gov.uk Or in writing: Civil Service Commission, Room G/8 1 Horse Guards Road, London, SW1A 2HQ.

