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Government Partners with Meta to Launch AI Fellowship Scheme for Public Sector Innovation

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The United Kingdom government has announced a new Artificial Intelligence (AI) fellowship programme, backed by social media giant Meta Platforms, to accelerate the use of AI across key areas of the public sector. Funded by a $1 million (£740,000) contribution from Meta, the

initiative will support up to ten fellowships through the Alan Turing Institute, the UK's national centre for data science and AI.

Fellows will begin placements in early 2026, working directly with government departments on AI projects with practical applications. These include improving emergency responses during power outages, streamlining planning application systems, and using AI tools to assist in translating classified government materials. All projects will use open-source AI models, supporting the government's drive to build transparent, sovereign capabilities in the sector.

Science Secretary Peter Kyle said the fellowships would help "scale that kind of impact" seen in previous AI pilots. He pointed to the success of tools like "Caddy", an AI chatbot developed in collaboration with Citizens Advice that halved call-centre wait times, as a model for wider adoption.

The fellowships will be advertised from next week and form part of Prime Minister Sir Keir Starmer's broader "Plan for Change" policy agenda. However, critics have questioned the effectiveness of that agenda given the lack of clarity on long-term funding and strategy for AI integration across departments.

Meta's funding is intended to attract top academic and technical talent to deliver AI projects for public good. Joel Kaplan, Vice President of Global Policy at Meta, said the fellowships would help "solve real challenges" in collaboration with civil servants, with a focus on developing practical, people-focused outcomes.

From a centre-right perspective, the scheme reflects a market-aware, fiscally responsible approach: leveraging private-sector investment to

build public-sector capability without increasing direct taxpayer burden. By channelling industry expertise into targeted roles, the fellowships aim to modernise Whitehall without resorting to bloated consultancy contracts or unchecked public spending.

With departments under pressure to improve efficiency and meet rising public expectations, the AI fellowships could offer a pathway to smarter, faster, and more reliable services. Whether this partnership model can scale effectively will become clearer once the programme is underway in 2026, but the early signals suggest a pragmatic and innovation-led approach to digital transformation.