ESRC Policy Fellowships 2021: Opportunity description

Fellowship Title: MHCLG Climate Change

Host department: Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government

Host team: Chief Scientific Adviser's office

Summary: Opportunity for a behavioural scientist to work on individual and community behaviours in relation to net zero.

Policy topic: Climate change / Net Zero, Housing, Local Government

Potentially relevant academic disciplines: social science particularly behavioural science

Relevant research career stage: No preference – open to early or mid-career

Practical details

Start of 3-month inception phase: December 2021- February 2022

Length of core placement: 12 months (part-time) or 6 months (full time)

FTE for core placement (range): 0.5 - 1

Location requirements: We particularly welcome applications from those who would be based in our second headquarters in Wolverhampton, or our Darlington office; however, placements can be based in any MHCLG office.

Necessary level of security clearance: Basic Personnel Security Standard checks, and a Counter Terrorism Check. We would ask the person taking up our Fellowship opportunity to start the security clearance application process as soon as their Fellowship has been confirmed by ESRC; and so, ideally, before the inception phase begins. See National security vetting: clearance levels - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)

Detailed description

MHCLG is building its evidence base to inform policy at pace on climate change. There is significant scope for an ESRC Fellow to shape the role and identify where they can have an impact on MHCLG policy, help to develop the associated research and evidence base, develop connections between MHCLG and the research community, and ultimately have a central role in translating science into policy.

A Fellow would benefit from:

- Proximity to interesting and topical policy decisions at a national scale
- The opportunity to inform and influence senior leaders and Ministers
- Experience of Government ways of working and how policy is made, to help 'land' research more effectively
- Access to a network of policy, analysis and research teams in MHCLG and in other Departments
- Access to national datasets and information (for use whilst in post only, and subject to security clearances)

Given the fast-moving nature of policy priorities, we envisage that specific deliverables would be agreed every 2-3 months between the Fellow and MHCLG. Potential activities could include:

- Creating evidence summaries, reviews and analysis to meet key policy needs
- Examining the existing and emerging evidence regarding individual and community behaviours in relation to net zero
- Developing and challenging others' development of credible evidence-based assumptions about policy proposals and plans
- Designing and organising policy workshops – to provide academic challenge and rigour
- Conducting evidence-based horizon scanning exercises
- Informing approaches to improving scientific capability and knowledge sharing

Policy and research challenges might include:

- What does the evidence show about how the COVID pandemic has affected people's behaviours, and what are the implications of this for (dis)incentivising net zero behaviours?

- What are the synergies, and tensions, between housing quality, zero carbon, and building safety?

- What are the most effective interventions to support improved local growth outcomes, that support transition to a net zero future?

Opportunity-specific person specification

Applications will be assessed against the following opportunity-specific requirements in addition to the generic eligibility and call criteria.

Skills/ expertise:

- subject matter expertise relevant to MHCLG climate change policy - for example, expertise in relation to the housing sector or building retrofit, local economic growth, local government studies, or climate change adaptation / mitigation / decarbonisation more broadly

- experience of meaningful collaboration with the local government or housing sectors

- experience of developing team or organisational capability