

UKRI Policy Fellowships 2023: What Works Innovation Fellowship Opportunity Description

Fellowship Title: Centre for Homelessness Impact How Policing Can Add Value to Street Outreach Activities Fellowship

Available budget: The full economic cost is £210,000 inclusive of additional £40,000 budget for research and collaboration costs, for further details on the additional budget see the 'How to apply' section specific to the What Works Innovation Fellowships. UKRI will fund 80% of the full economic cost of the grant.

Host What Works Centre: [Centre for Homelessness Impact](#)

What Works Collaborating Centres: College of Policing (What Works Centre for Crime Reduction)

Host Team: Evidence & Data

Summary: Opportunity to enhance the understanding and evaluation of approaches that enable local authorities, police and other enforcement agencies to work effectively together to address rough sleeping.

Fellowship Theme: Data and Evaluation. Please see the full call text 'What We Are Looking For' for a detailed summary of the research themes targeted in this call.

Policy Topic: The Fellowship will relate to crime prevention and social care.

Research Council: ESRC

Academic Discipline/s: Economics, Social Sciences, Policy, Political Science

Research Career Stage: mid-career & senior academics

Fellowship Structure

Inception Phase:

Estimated Start Date: October 2023. Exact date to be confirmed by the host depending on onboarding and security clearance requirements

Duration: 3 months

FTE: 0.4 FTE

Main Placement Phase:

Duration: 12 months

FTE: 0.6 FTE (Host preference, but flexible 0.6-1 FTE)

Knowledge Exchange Phase:

Duration: 3 months

FTE: 0.4 FTE

Work Arrangements

Location Requirements: We would ideally like the Fellow to come into the CHI office at least 1 day per week, but we are open to discussing this. The Fellow will have the opportunity to work with the two collaborating What Works Centres in London and this may present an opportunity for the Fellow to work in person at both organisations for some of the time, or if not by virtually collaborating with the College of Policing. Eligible travel and subsistence costs are supported in the main UKRI grant. Please see full call text and guidance for more details.

Security Clearance: No specific requirement.

Fellowship Opportunity Description

There is an open debate about the role that police forces should play in helping reduce rough sleeping. Some fear the involvement of the police can result in the criminalisation of people sleeping out, while others feel it can improve the effectiveness of street outreach responses. But both camps can agree that there can be value in more joined up approaches between police and homelessness services.^{[1] [2]}

Currently, the police force helps local responses to homelessness in several ways:

1. Signposting to homelessness services - police officers identify people sleeping rough and try to refer them to relevant services.

2. Training - to educate staff about e.g.: the causes of homelessness, legal rights (or lack thereof in the case of some non-UK nationals), trauma-informed approaches to access relevant services, with enforcement used as an escalation mechanism.

3. Joint delivery - when the police force works jointly with the local street outreach teams to provide 'assertive' support. It is felt this will help ensure enforcement is used carefully and humanely. In some cases, homelessness-specific multidisciplinary teams are also created within the police force.

The Opportunity

Despite significant investment by the police force and local authorities in this work over recent years, there is very little robust evidence behind even the most common interventions. Some local areas such as Manchester, Nottingham and Islington have gained a reputation for being beacons of good practice. But in the absence of rigorous evaluations of this work, it is impossible to scale any such work effectively or at pace.

We believe that a mapping and evaluation exercise would begin to transform the data available about what works in homelessness and policing and could provide valuable evidence for future work in the area and for informing future policies.

Valuable work has been done by The College of Policing who have developed a Smarter Practice Process that proposes an approach to the collaborative identification and assessment of interventions that look promising, by members of the policing system. They have used this process in order to create the smarter practice examples in this [Homicide prevention framework](#) .

The importance of better evidence and tools to enable local authorities, police and other enforcement agencies to work effectively together to address rough sleeping is also highlighted in the new Rough Sleeping Strategy published by the Government earlier last year. ^[3] The strategy recognises the vital need for better evidence, guidance and sharing of best practices to respond to challenges in tackling rough sleeping and to encourage vulnerable people to engage with support. Therefore, we strongly believe the work proposed for this fellowship will not only enable the two WWCs to develop future evaluation studies and work collaboratively together, but it will also directly inform future practice and policy development in this area.

The Fellowship will significantly increase the capacity available to undertake this much needed evidence gathering and evaluation exercise at a crucial period for homelessness in the UK. We are currently in a period of growth and learning, at Centre for Homelessness Impact (CHI), so there is a huge opportunity for the Fellow to make an impact and contribute to our Evidence team's work and, more specifically, to designing and implementing this new programme, which will bring us a step further into our mission of improving the lives of people experiencing homelessness through better use of data and evidence. This Fellowship will also pave the way for further collaborations with the wider WWN, through shared learnings from our work with the College of Policing and can contribute to other future development initiatives.

The Fellowship will focus on the following areas:

1. Mapping existing practice

Currently existing interventions are not well-defined and it's difficult to know where different approaches are being implemented. So, before we can assess their impact in a rigorous manner, it is important to map practice with a view to developing a taxonomy of interventions as well as a list of well-defined models that can be subject to rigorous testing.

2. Begin testing the relative effectiveness of different types of joint working

Once there is an agreed definition of the model(s) we want to test, and of the areas of the country to target, we can

then set about assessing the difference they made in comparison to business as usual. Resources allowing, it would also be desirable to test the effectiveness and cost effectiveness of different types of collaborations, from 'light touch' to 'intensive' models.

3. Test the effectiveness of homelessness training

Another interesting gap to address might be to test the effectiveness of the training commonly provided by the homelessness sector to the police force.

The specific activities that will be undertaken within each of the above-mentioned areas, will be co-developed by the successful Fellow, with support from CHI. We will use the inception phase of the Fellowship to work together to agree a plan of activities for the main phase of the fellowship.

[1] <https://www.crisis.org.uk/ending-homelessness/resources-for-practitioners/housing-centre-guides/from-enforcement-to-ending-homelessness-guides/>

[2] <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/17496530903209535>

[3] https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1102408/20220903_Ending_rough_sleeping_for_good.pdf

Person Specification

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

Essential Criteria:

Knowledge, Skills and Experience

1. An established expertise and proven portfolio of research and/or relevant professional experience within public policy research, evaluation and one or more of the following research fields:
 - Qualitative research
 - Lived experience research
 - Co-production of research and/or policy
 - Evidence synthesis
 - Knowledge integration and mobilisation
2. Proven record of publications in national journals and/or other research outputs.
3. Demonstrable experience in complex Project Management.

Other

4. Proven ability to effectively manage competing demands and priorities and to meet demanding deadlines.
5. Ability to adapt to changing contexts and an ability to work effectively and flexibly in a lean, diverse and agile organisation with big ambitions. Keenness to stay abreast of data and evidence and statistical developments which may have implications for CHI's evidence and data programme.

Desirable Criteria:

1. Ability to demonstrate creativity, innovation, and leadership in enhancing the capacity or understanding of others in relation to involving lived experience in the policy research process.
2. Evidence of collaborations with policymakers and/or public service practitioners.
3. Evidence of ability to participate in and develop both internal and external networks and utilise them to enhance the process and outcomes of the Fellowship.
4. Experience writing and communicating, drawing insights from data and research findings and communicating them to decision-makers.
5. Nuanced understanding of homelessness policies across the UK.