

UKRI Policy Fellowships 2023: Fellowship Opportunity Description

Fellowship Title: DfE Applying Behavioural Insights to Education Fellowship

Host Organisation: [Department for Education](#)

Host Team: Strategy Unit

Summary: An opportunity to lead a portfolio of innovative, robust, respected research, that demonstrates the value that behavioural science can bring to educational policy making.

Fellowship Theme: Creating Opportunities, Improving Outcomes. 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: Education including early years, schools, further and higher education, and adult skills.

Research Council: ESRC

Academic Discipline/s: Behavioural sciences including, but is not limited to, economics, psychology, cognitive science, sociology, anthropology, and political science.

Research Career Stage: Early and mid-career researchers.

Fellowship Structure

Inception Phase:

Estimated Start Date: October 2023

Duration: 3 months

FTE: 0.4 FTE

Main Placement Phase:

Duration: 12 months

FTE: 1.0 FTE

Knowledge Exchange Phase:

Duration: 3 months

FTE: 0.4 FTE

Work Arrangements

Location Requirements: Applicants can be based anywhere in the UK. Eligible T&S costs are supported in the main UKRI grant. Please see full call text and guidance for more details.

Hybrid Working: We encourage 2 to 3 days per week in either our London or Sheffield offices.

Security Clearance: **Security Clearance:** Baseline Personnel Security Standard (BPSS) is expected to take 4-6 weeks from submission. We expect the successful applicant to start the security clearance application process, with support from the host team, as soon as their Fellowship has been confirmed by ESRC. Ideally the security clearance process would be completed before the inception phase begins. See [National security vetting: clearance levels - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#).

Fellowship Opportunity Description

This is a unique opportunity to apply behavioural science research within the heart of DfE's strategic education policymaking. Sitting with the Strategy Unit, the successful candidate will have the opportunity to work on the highest priorities of the department, influence the country's educational landscape, and improve the lives of children and young people.

We are looking for someone to lead a portfolio of innovative, robust, respected research, that demonstrates the value that behavioural science can bring to educational policy making.

To deliver an impactful research portfolio, the successful candidate is likely to engage in a range of research activities that may include:

- Examining the evidence related to specific education behaviours and creating summaries, reviews and analysis to meet key policy needs.
- Conducting primary research with stakeholders which may use innovative research methods to understand drivers of education behaviours and co-design innovative solutions.
- Analysing large-scale datasets to identify factors associated with education behaviour and decision making and provide advice on what this means for policy.
- Conducting evidence-based future thinking exercises.
- Developing robust interventions and recommending creative solutions to complex policy problems.
- Disseminating findings and publishing research outputs as academic or policy papers.

These activities may be applied across a variety of policy areas, including early years, schools, further education, higher education, and adult skills. The common thread throughout will be the application of behavioural science to achieve important policy objectives. For example, research may apply behavioural science to:

- Understand what drives school absence.
- Understand the impact of the pandemic on post-18 educational decisions.
- Understand the long-term challenges facing education.
- Increase the uptake of childcare.
- Increase participation in formal maths education post-16.
- Increase uptake of technical education (e.g. apprenticeship, t-levels, etc.).

We want to ensure the successful candidate is working on the highest priorities. Given the fast-moving nature of policy priorities, the specific policy topic(s) and deliverables will therefore be agreed on during the inception phase.

We expect the placement to provide the following benefits to the successful Research Fellow:

- Gain valuable experience of the provision of high-quality advice, at pace, to senior leaders and Ministers.
- Gain an understanding of Government ways of working and how policy is made.
- Experience how research and evidence is used and embedded in policy making.
- Work with DfE's Behavioural Insights Unit, building their professional network.
- Work with policy and analytical colleagues in DfE and across Government.

Person Specification

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

Essential

- A track record of research that has sought to define, understand and/or change behaviour.
- The ability to understand, interrogate and synthesise information from different sources to provide a better understanding of, and solutions to, complex problems.
- Excellent written and verbal communication skills (particularly presenting academic and technical work for non-academic audiences).
- Experience in managing and facilitating collaborative working across teams and/or organisations.
- Strong project and time management skills including; producing projects plans, monitoring project deliverables, managing multiple projects delivered to a high standard on time.
- A willingness to learn and develop new research skills.

Desirable

- Expertise in applied behavioural science research in a complex policy setting.
- Previous experience of research in education and/or with children and young people.