

UKRI policy fellowships 2026

Fellowship position

Fellowship title:

DCMS gambling behaviour and harm fellowship

Fellowship type:

Gambling Policy fellowship

Host organisation:

[Department for Culture, Media and Sport](#)

Host team:

Gambling and Lotteries

Academic discipline/s:

Economics, sociology, behavioural science, psychology

Summary:

Opportunity to investigate how the normalisation of gambling and peer-driven behaviours impact children and young people, specifically within the DCMS remit of gambling, advertising and digital engagement.

Policy topic:

Gambling behaviours amongst children and young people (CYP). By applying behavioural science and social theory, the project will identify how social networks and commercial inducements drive participation. This research will directly inform DCMS policy on gambling advertising, safeguarding CYP in digital spaces and the refinement of regulatory frameworks to better protect future generations.

Research career stage:

Open to early and mid-career researchers

Fellowship structure

The fellowship is estimated to begin in May 2027. The exact date will be confirmed by the host depending on onboarding and security clearance requirements. The fellowship will have three phases:

- inception: duration is 3 months at 0.4 FTE
- main placement: duration is 12 months at 0.6-1 FTE
- knowledge exchange: duration is 3 months at 0.4 FTE

Work arrangements

Location requirements:

The role can be based in London, Manchester or other office locations by agreement. There will be some requirement to travel to meet other team members, this would be approximately three times within a year.

Hybrid working:

The fellow will not be expected to work from a DCMS office during the three-month inception phase but should plan for up to three in-person meetings at DCMS offices in London. DCMS is a hybrid working organisation. DCMS colleagues based in London and Manchester are expected to spend a minimum of 60% of their working time working face-to-face with their colleagues either in offices or on official business, so ideally the same would be expected of the fellow during the 12-month main placement phase. The fellow will not be expected to work from a DCMS office during the three-month knowledge exchange phase but should plan for up to three in-person meetings at DCMS offices in London. The fellow will have the opportunity to be embedded within the DCMS Gambling Policy Team and attend regular team meetings and social events. Eligible travel and subsistence costs are supported in the main UKRI grant. Please see full call text and guidance for more details.

Security clearance and nationality eligibility criteria:

[Basic Personnel Security Standard \(BPSS\)](#) is required, which usually takes around six weeks. We would 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 UKRI. Inception phase can begin before the security clearance process is completed but will be required for the main placement phase. Please see [National security vetting: clearance levels - GOV.UK](#) for more information

Fellowship position description

Overview of research area:

The Gambling Act 2005 significantly liberalised gambling advertising in the United Kingdom. While traditional advertising spend remains high, the digital landscape has transformed how children and young people encounter gambling.

Beyond formal advertisements, there is an increasing trend toward the normalisation of gambling through social networks, peer-to-peer influence, and gaming-adjacent activities.

This fellowship will investigate the role of social normalisation and peer pressure in shaping the gambling behaviours of children and young people. While quantitative data provides a baseline for participation rates, there is a lack of qualitative and behavioural evidence regarding how social "nudges" and peer-driven inducements lead to gambling harm.

The research will specifically explore the "grey market" of youth gambling, including private wagers and the use of in-game items (such as skins) as currency. By bridging the gap between statistical trends and lived experience, this fellowship will help the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) develop policy to protect young people in digital spaces and refine regulatory frameworks for the future.

Co-design and collaboration:

The fellow will lead the delivery of an original research project while working closely with policy officials to ensure the evidence is impactful. We envisage the fellow will focus on one of the following areas, to be agreed upon during the inception phase:

- investigating the level of gambling normalisation within specific youth peer groups or online communities
- assessing the impact of proactive and passive social inducements on gambling participation
- identifying the transition points where informal or unregulated gambling behaviours (such as private betting) move into harmful regulated patterns

Fellow being embedded within policy:

- fellow will have regular engagement with policy officials and opportunity to work on policy issues
- host team will provide line management, office space (as required) and IT equipment

Benefits to the fellow:

- the opportunity to codesign and publish original research that informs national government policy
- access to internal government networks and a deeper understanding of how evidence is used in the legislative process
- technical support and line management from within the DCMS Gambling Policy Team
- engagement with a wide network of external stakeholders, including regulators and third-sector organisations

Expected outputs:

- produce updates and briefings throughout the project, with members of the Gambling Policy Team and other stakeholders
- an assessment of the role of social normalisation and peer pressure in shaping the gambling behaviours of children and young people.
- contributions to briefings and other outputs produced for departmental colleagues and Ministers
- publishable research paper containing key findings and recommendations for further research

Person specification

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

Essential criteria:

- subject matter expertise in the social or behavioural drivers of gambling, with a specific focus on children, young people, or vulnerable populations
- strong methodological skills in either qualitative or mixed-methods research, including experience in designing and conducting primary data collection such as interviews, focus groups, or ethnographic studies
- the ability to synthesise complex research findings into clear, accessible briefings that identify policy gaps and provide actionable recommendations for a non-academic audience

Applicants shortlisted from the panel assessment will be invited to a host led interview. At this stage the host will also take into account the following desirable fellowship-specific requirements.

Desirable criteria:

- experience of researching "grey market" or digitally mediated gambling activities, such as skin gambling, loot boxes, or private social media wagers
- knowledge of the UK gambling regulatory framework and the specific policy challenges outlined in the Gambling Act 2005 review
- experience of working with multi-disciplinary teams or engaging with external stakeholders across the voluntary, regulatory, or private sectors

Processing personal data

If applicants are shortlisted by the UKRI assessment panel UKRI will need to share the application and any personal information that it contains with the host for the host led interview selection process.

Your personal data will be handled in line with UK data protection legislation and managed securely. If you would like to know more, including how to exercise your Rights, please see the UKRI [privacy notice](#).

Please see the Hosts' [privacy notice](#) and they will delete your data at the end of the selection process unless you are successful, in which case we will retain your data as an independent data controller.