

# UKRI policy fellowships 2026

## Fellowship position

### Fellowship title:

Gambling Commission illegal gambling data innovation fellowship

### Fellowship type:

Gambling policy fellowship

### Host organisation:

[Gambling Commission](#)

### Host team:

Research and Statistics

### Academic discipline/s:

Data science, statistics, data modelling or related fields

### Summary:

Opportunity to develop the evidence base on illegal gambling, particularly in relation to use of data to understand trends, scale and characteristics of this market. Findings will inform policy development and operational disruption work to achieve consumer protection outcomes.

### Policy topic:

Illegal gambling creates threats to consumers, tax revenues and to legitimate businesses. Understanding how this market works and how it is changing over time will assist work to disrupt illegal gambling and prevent it from operating at scale for consumers in Great Britain.

### 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:

Requirement to travel to the Gambling Commission's offices in central Birmingham at least once a week (usually a Thursday) during the main placement phase. Travel to our offices is also likely to be required during the inception and knowledge exchange phases to attend face-to-face planning or dissemination meetings and to meet the Research and Statistics team, this is likely to be around twice per month.

## Hybrid working:

The Research and Statistics Team work in a hybrid way, with at least one day per week in the office (usually a Thursday). Where face-to-face project meetings are happening on other days of the week we would encourage attendance in person. This will help embed the successful fellow into the project and aid working relationships. We have regular team meetings for the whole team on a Thursday in the office which the successful fellow would be invited to attend, as well as regular project meetings with smaller subgroups of the team. There are also opportunities to attend Commission-wide 'Connect' sessions to find out more about the work going on across the rest of the Commission, and other organisation-wide 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 checks \(BPSS\)](#), usually takes around 6 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. The inception phase can begin before the security clearance process is completed but will be required for the main placement phase. See [National security vetting: clearance levels - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#).

## Fellowship position description

The Gambling Commission plays a key role in ensuring that gambling is fair, free from crime and that consumers are protected from harm. Addressing the risks from illegal gambling is a significant area of focus in relation to these objectives. We have created a hub on our website to provide an [overview of our work](#) to date on this topic.

Tackling illegal gambling is most effective when underpinned by a strong evidence base on how this market operates and data to help us track trends and target disruption activity. Illegal gambling takes place both online and in-person – due to the greater availability of data, we envisage, however, that the primary focus of the fellowship will be in relation to the online area of this market. We recognise that eliminating illegal gambling entirely is an unrealistic goal – our focus therefore is to ensure that it is difficult for illegal gambling to be offered at scale to consumers in Great Britain. To achieve this, we undertake disruption targeted at as many parts of the illegal gambling supply chain as possible, including advertising, website hosting, data provision, and payment platforms.

We envisage that the fellow will play a role in developing new insight. This is a fast developing operational and policy area, and so we expect that the fellow will work with us to co-design a project that will support our work and contribute to the overall knowledge base on illegal gambling. The fellow will have the opportunity to make an impact on a high-profile policy issue with significant consumer protection and public interest benefits.

Achieving our objectives requires us to work in partnership with other international gambling regulators, other domestic regulators (e.g. the Advertising Standards Authority), law enforcement agencies, internet service providers, social media companies, payment service providers and licensed operators. A strong evidence base and compelling data is therefore essential to demonstrate where action is needed and by whom. The work of this fellowship will therefore have the potential to make an impact on the work of multiple agencies and stakeholders.

We encourage the fellow to consider where original research can be undertaken to support our work in this area and to enhance wider academic understanding of illegal markets. We look forward to a co-design process which takes into account the interests and expertise of the fellow combined with insight into key areas of research and evidence which will have a significant impact on our objectives.

Potential areas of interest could include developing methodologies obtain data and evidence on:

- visibility of marketing – with multiple channels relevant to this activity (web search, social media, streaming, influencers, etc)
- features of consumer engagement and experience – motivations, activities undertaken, the role of cryptocurrencies and VPNs, impacts.
- opportunities to improve and verify existing estimates of consumer engagement with the illegal market – supporting development of a ‘gold standard’ approach to measuring scale and trends in this market
- illegal gambling supply chains, how these are changing over time and where the highest priority areas for disruption should be targeted.

The exact topics and areas of focus will be shaped by the fellow’s interests and input from the Gambling Commission on the status of our work and priorities where most value can be added. We would expect that outputs of a successful fellowship would contribute positively towards:

- enhancing our operational ability to disrupt illegal operators
- improving how we demonstrate impact of our work
- illustrating where stakeholders should focus their resources
- building wider knowledge and understanding about how this market operates and how it is changing.

To be successful the fellow will need to work close with teams across the Commission, including Research and Statistics (the host team), Enforcement, Intelligence and Policy. We also expect that the fellow will help us communicate key insights and benefits of this work with stakeholders, including Government and other public bodies involved in work to tackle illegal gambling. This might take the form of presentations, seminars or roundtable events.

The host will also be able to explore opportunities to publish academic outputs of their work in suitable journals to support dissemination of evidence on this topic.

## 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:

- strong analytical skills, including experience of identifying and accessing relevant data and applying it to solve problems and generate insight
- strong spoken and written communication skills to convey and present complex data analysis to internal and external audiences

- experience of developing data outputs that meet relevant government guidelines for robust and fit for purpose analysis – e.g. [Aqua Book](#).

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 understanding the needs of different teams and audiences to deliver outputs that support distinct operational, policy and research purposes
- understanding of the gambling industry and awareness into how supply chains function for online markets
- ability and willingness to learn new systems and software.

## 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 [host's 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.