UKRI policy fellowships 2027

Fellowship position

Fellowship title:

MoJ justice transformation fellowship

Fellowship type:

Core policy fellowship

Host organisation:

Ministry of Justice (MoJ)

Host team:

Evidence and partnerships hub in MoJ policy group's analysis directorate

Academic discipline/s:

Social science, economics, data science, law, health sciences

Summary:

Opportunity to apply innovative social science research and methods to inform MoJ policy and practice decision-making in support of justice transformation

Policy topic:

Opportunity to work on numerous justice topics and policies, in line with the successful fellow's research interests and the MoJ Areas of Research Interest (ARI) 2025, and supporting landmark justice reforms.

Research career stage:

Open to early and mid-career researchers

Fellowship structure

The fellowship is scheduled to begin on 1 October 2027 subject to 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:

MoJ welcome applications from researchers based across the UK (Fellows must be UK-based for the duration of the Fellowship and cannot work outside the UK). There will be some requirement to travel to meet other team members based in the MoJ National Office Network but this will depend on where the fellow lives and which MoJ teams they work with during their Fellowship. Further travel will depend on specific research projects, for example, travel would likely be required if primary research were undertaken.

Hybrid working:

A laptop will be provided. MoJ offers hybrid working arrangements that allow fellows to work from different MoJ offices, their university, from home, or a combination – subject to adherence to information security at all times. We anticipate the fellow will attend an MoJ office two times per month or more to meet with relevant colleagues during the main placement phase.

In addition to office attendance, it would be useful to budget for travel to London around four times in the placement year and once in the inception phase. 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 as a minimum, which usually takes around six weeks. In some instances, Security Check (SC) clearance may be required (which can take longer), but this would be discussed with the fellow if applicable. 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. The civil service also has nationality requirements that candidates would need to meet in order to take up the post. Please see the civil service recruitment nationality rules for further information. Candidates should check these requirements before applying to ensure they meet the eligibility criteria.

Fellowship position description

The fellow will work as part of the Ministry of Justice (MoJ) Evidence and Partnerships Hub's impactful academic engagement programme, enabled by the departmental Areas of Research Interest (ARI). The Hub, based in Policy Group's Analysis Directorate, enhances MoJ's strategic research capabilities, to enable evidence-based decisions, by collaborating with academic experts, research networks, and research funders.

The Analytical Community in MoJ consists of multidisciplinary teams embedded throughout the department, providing analysis and research across a diverse and exciting agenda. They provide high-quality data, analysis, and research to ensure strategic, policy, finance, corporate and operational decisions are based on robust evidence. The fellow will work alongside policy- and practice-facing analytical teams to co-design and deliver impactful research that contributes to the departmental evidence base.

The scale of transformation underway in the justice system, including implementation of recommendations from the Independent Sentencing Review and the Independent Review of the Criminal Courts, alongside the ongoing Independent Review of the Prison System creates a significant opportunity for research and evidence to shape decisions across a wide range of policy, operational and service delivery challenges. At this pivotal moment, the fellowship has the potential to make a transformative contribution to the future direction of the justice system.

Fellows will have the opportunity to work on projects that directly address priority evidence gaps in the 2025 Areas of Research Interest (ARI) publication. The high-level ARI priorities are structured around the department's strategic objectives for the justice system. Exact topics will be determined by departmental priorities during the inception phase and projects will be co-designed with the fellow and optimised to maximise their input and expertise. A typical project might involve synthesising and translating existing academic research, or designing and delivering cutting edge research, to inform policy and practice decision-making.

Given the complex and interconnected nature of the justice system, the ARI also contains system-wide themes and issues that cut across jurisdictions and policy areas. MoJ welcome fellowship applications proposing innovative and methods-driven research that takes a holistic approach to improving understanding of what works to improve outcomes across the system. This aligns with a departmental focus on building timely and decision-relevant evidence, reflected in the MoJ Evaluation and Prototyping Strategy and the principles set out in the Magenta Book Test and Learn Annex.

The intellectual project ownership given to the fellow will allow them to make projects their own whilst delivering research findings that directly shape MoJ decision-making in real time. Fellowship findings will add to the future evidence base through delivery of research outputs and academic publications that communicate and consolidate the impact of the fellowship.

The fellow will be embedded in and line managed by the Evidence and Partnerships Hub, whilst flexibly deployed to policy and practice-facing analytical teams on their specific project(s). As part of this, the fellow will receive ongoing guidance and support on a regular (one-to-one) basis, and will also jointly participate in team meetings, away days, and training as appropriate. The fellow will also be part of a (growing) network of MoJ fellows from existing and past iterations of the Policy Fellowships Scheme.

The fellow will benefit from wider support, networking opportunities and learning and development available to the Analytical Community, giving them a richer experience during their fellowship. They will be supported by the Evidence and Partnerships Hub in the translation, dissemination and application of their work, including via knowledge exchange opportunities such as seminars, roundtables, and specialist academic advice sessions to maximise the impact of their fellowship.

Testimonial from a past fellow:

"During the policy fellowship, I really enjoyed conducting empirical research on subjects that were of interest to policy and analysis colleagues, as well as being related to my research expertise. I also developed excellent networks across the Ministry of Justice and His Majesty's Prison and Probation Service and through my cohort of fellows. The Evidence and Partnerships Hub team were incredibly welcoming and supportive."

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:

- a proven academic track record in the fellow's own discipline
- strong technical expertise in the application of research methods to analyse social policy delivery and outcomes relevant to the fellowship
- deep knowledge of the justice evidence landscape and specific topics or themes related to the fellowship (within the MoJ ARI)

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:

- previous experience of collaborating with a UK government department or agency

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 MoJ'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.