UKRI policy fellowships 2027

Fellowship position

Fellowship title:

Money and Pensions Service gambling-related financial harms fellowship

Fellowship type:

Gambling policy fellowship

Host organisation:

Money and Pensions Service

Host team:

Based in the Debt Strategy and Policy team, the fellow will work with teams across the Money and Pensions Service (MaPS) through a matrix-working approach, including wider strategy and policy, development, commissioning, delivery, and impact and evaluation.

Academic discipline/s:

Public policy, public health, sociology, economics, behavioural science

Summary:

An opportunity to build a robust evidence base on gambling-related financial harms, including problem debt, and support the development of policy, services and practice to improve outcomes for people experiencing gambling harm.

Policy topic:

Strengthening the evidence base on the scale, distribution and impacts of gambling-related financial harms to support more effective policy, service design and practice for people who gamble, and people affected by someone else's gambling.

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:

MaPS office is based at 138 Cauldwell Street, Bedford, MK40 1SU, United Kingdom. In line with MaPS' flexible and inclusive ways of working, the fellow will be able to participate fully through a hybrid working model, combining remote working with opportunities for in-person collaboration at MaPS' Bedford office.

Hybrid working:

At MaPS, we take pride in our flexible approach to work. As standard, we work on a hybrid basis with a minimum of 2 days in the office per month. During the inception phase, the fellow may need to attend the Bedford office for one day for onboarding. During the main placement phase, the fellow would normally be expected to work from the Bedford office a minimum of two days per month, in line with MaPS' hybrid working approach. We recognise that applicants have different circumstances and locations, and flexible arrangements can be discussed where appropriate.

Eligible travel and subsistence costs are supported in the main UKRI grant. Please see full call text and guidance for more details. MaPS will support the fellow to attend agreed external engagements and learning exchange opportunities, such as conferences.

Security clearance and nationality eligibility criteria:

Applicants must have the right to work in the UK for the duration of the fellowship. MaPS' requirements include a social media screening and a DBS check, which may take around four to six weeks to complete. The DBS check and social media screening must be completed before the inception phase commences. We would expect the successful applicant to begin this process, with support from MaPS, as soon as their fellowship has been confirmed by UKRI.

Fellowship position description

MaPS is an arm's-length body sponsored by the Department for Work and Pensions with a statutory responsibility to improve financial wellbeing across the UK. This includes delivering money and pensions guidance services, and commissioning debt advice services across England. MaPS strategic priorities include commissioning and delivering services to be more joined up and designed for those most in need.

Gambling-related financial harm can have significant impacts on individuals who gamble, their families and wider communities, including problem debt, financial insecurity, health and relationship impacts. The fellow will bring academic expertise to help MaPS and partners better understand gambling-related financial harms and develop practical insights that can directly inform policy, commissioning, service design and practice.

The fellow will undertake a programme of original research and analysis in one or more of the areas below, with the detailed scope, research questions and methodological approach co-designed during the inception phase, drawing on both organisational priorities and the fellow’s expertise and interests:

- improving understanding of the scale, distribution and impact of gambling-related financial harms, including problem debt
- understanding the experiences, needs and support journeys of people who gamble and people affected by someone else’s gambling around debt advice and related support
- learning from international evidence and examples of effective policy and practice on debt advice and related support for people experiencing gambling-related financial harm, and considering how these approaches may be applied across different UK contexts

The fellow will be embedded within MaPS' Debt Strategy and Policy team and connected to wider strategy, policy, commissioning, delivery and impact functions through a matrix-working approach. They will have a

nominated contact within MaPS' Insight and Impact team, providing access to relevant research, evaluation, analytical expertise, data and peer support.

The fellow will collaborate with stakeholders across England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, including government, health bodies, regulators, academics, debt advice providers and financial services organisations. Opportunities will also be available to engage with researchers and policy professionals working on complementary UKRI Policy Fellowships in the gambling harms field, including Public Health Wales.

The fellow will have access to workspace, IT equipment, relevant systems, meetings, networks and governance forums, alongside regular supervision from a designated line manager and strategic support from senior sponsors.

The fellowship offers an opportunity to:

- co-design, conduct and publish original research on gambling-related financial harms
- work directly with policy, commissioning and delivery teams to understand how evidence is used in practice
- build relationships with researchers, policy makers and practitioners across the UK gambling harms, financial wellbeing and public health systems
- influence the development of policy and services that improve outcomes for people who gamble and people affected by someone else's gambling
- contribute to knowledge exchange through engagement with leading researchers, policy makers and practitioners across the UK and internationally

This fellowship is funded through the UKRI Research Programme on Gambling – UKRI as part of the statutory gambling levy. Fellows will become part of the wider network of research funded through the programme and are expected to engage both with the cohort of policy fellows and the levy system as a whole.

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 relevant to gambling harms, financial wellbeing, problem debt, or closely related policy areas
- experience designing and delivering high-quality qualitative, quantitative or mixed-methods research
- ability to synthesise complex evidence and translate findings into practical implications for policy and service delivery

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:

- understanding of gambling policy, regulation and treatment and prevention services
- understanding of health inequalities and public health approaches to prevention and harm reduction
- experience of applying economic analysis to public policy or service delivery

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 MaPS' 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.