UKRI policy fellowships 2027

Fellowship position

Fellowship title:

Scottish Government improving understanding of Prevent delivery in Scotland fellowship

Fellowship type:

Core policy fellowship

Host organisation:

The Scottish Government

Host team:

Safer Communities Analytical Unit, Justice Analysis and Strategy (JAS)

Academic discipline/s:

Criminology, sociology, politics and international relations, social work, law

Summary:

An opportunity to enhance policymaker and practitioner understanding of how Prevent is currently delivered in Scotland, including in the context of broader safeguarding approaches, to identify areas of good practice and scope for improvement.

Policy topic:

Enhanced evidence on Prevent delivery in Scotland specifically will support and strengthen the implementation of one pillar of the UK's CONTEST strategy in the devolved context and contribute to wider Scottish Government priorities around community safety outlined in the Programme for Government 2026-2031.

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:

Analysts in the Safer Communities Analytical Unit within which the fellow will be hosted are based across Scottish Government offices in Glasgow (Atlantic Quay) and Edinburgh (Victoria Quay). Policy officials who lead on Prevent are based across Glasgow (Atlantic Quay) and Edinburgh (St Andrew's House).

Hybrid working:

There is scope for the fellow to be located remotely and to agree a programme of in-person work with the wider team and policy colleagues in either Edinburgh or Glasgow. We envisage the following pattern of attendance, but this can be discussed and agreed with the fellow:

- approximately four in-person days in Edinburgh or Glasgow during the three-month inception phase, including one day in St Andrew's House, Edinburgh for an induction session led by the Office of the Chief Researcher
- approximately two in-person days in Edinburgh or Glasgow per month for the duration of the main placement phase
- approximately four in-person days in Edinburgh or Glasgow during the knowledge exchange phase

If the fellow is based near Edinburgh or Glasgow and has a preference for more regular office attendance this can be accommodated.

A laptop will be provided enabling remote working and providing access to host systems. 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:

The fellow will need to pass the Baseline Personnel Security Standard (BPSS). This process takes around six weeks and must be completed before the fellow can access Scottish Government systems. Part of this entails verifying that the fellow meets the Civil Service Nationality Rules - see the Annex C flowchart to check eligibility for non reserved posts. By applying for this fellowship, you are affirming that you have understood these requirements and expect to be able to pass BPSS.

The fellow will also require clearance at Security Check (SC) level. This will enable access to relevant information and support engagement with policy officials and other stakeholders working on Prevent. This is required to effectively deliver a programme of work focused on counter-terrorism and maximise impact from the fellowship. The SC vetting process will begin once BPSS has successfully been completed. UK Government guidance on National Security Vetting provides further information on the steps and requirements involved in vetting to SC level. By applying for this fellowship, you are affirming that you have understood the requirements and process involved in obtaining SC clearance.

Security clearance at both BPSS and SC levels should be confirmed before the inception phase can commence.

Fellowship position description

Overview and context:

Prevent is one pillar of the UK's CONTEST strategy and a statutory duty under the Counter-Terrorism and Security Act 2015. There have been several reviews focused on or related to Prevent in recent years, including work commissioned or undertaken by the UK Government. These reviews have helped to identify

areas of good practice and potential improvements for those working across the system in the UK. However, Prevent is delivered through devolved sectors in Scotland, where governance arrangements, structures, and local contexts can differ from other parts of the UK. As a result, findings from broader reviews or reflections on specific cases may not always be directly transferable to the Scottish context. This creates an opportunity for a policy fellow to build on existing knowledge and strengthen the evidence base on Prevent delivery in Scotland specifically.

Fellowship opportunity:

We envisage the fellow will consider, produce and share evidence which:

- improves understanding of how Prevent is delivered in practice in Scotland, including alongside other safeguarding processes and/or in comparison to England and Wales
- champions identified areas of good practice
- supports policymakers and practitioners to consider how best to take forward learning points which can improve Prevent delivery, taking account of the delivery and resourcing landscape

The specific aims, approach and outputs of the fellowship will be co-designed and agreed during the inception phase. This provides scope for the fellow to shape the role and identify areas of research interest that are most relevant to their interests, background and expertise, whilst taking into account policy needs.

The fellow's research should consider and complement wider activity which aims to inform and improve Prevent delivery and the supporting evidence base. This should include, for example, government research, data on Prevent, independent reports and reviews (including, for example, the Southport Inquiry and Lord Anderson's Lessons for Prevent), and the latest academic research, where relevant. It will also be important to draw on input from key partners including the Home Office and Police Scotland as part of the scoping and delivery of the programme of work.

To support a contribution to the wider evidence base, the fellow should consider opportunities to publish research findings across government and academia, though these may be subject to clearance. We also welcome knowledge exchange activities (such as roundtables and seminars).

The fellow will be embedded in the Safer Communities Analytical Unit in Justice Analysis and Strategy (JAS). Analysts (social researchers and statisticians) in this unit provide existing analytical support on Prevent and a range of other policy areas, including violence and hate crime. The fellow will also have regular access to and engagement with the Counter-Terrorism and National Security policy unit which leads work on Prevent (and other CONTEST pillars) within Scottish Government. There will be opportunities to attend regular policy and analytical meetings to benefit from advice and understand how the fellowship work sits within wider context. There will be a designated line manager who will meet regularly with the fellow to assess priorities, progress and understand any challenges. These discussions will also offer the opportunity to consider work-life balance and wellbeing considerations.

Potential benefits for the fellow:

- the opportunity to co-design, produce and publish original research, ensuring that findings contribute to wider policy and practice discussions, while adhering to necessary security and clearance protocols
- the opportunity to inform and strengthen future Prevent delivery through the production and dissemination of evidence on good practice and areas for improvement
- regular access to Scottish Government policy professionals, analysts and other relevant stakeholders working on Prevent and other aspects of counter-terrorism
- the chance to lead and participate in knowledge exchange opportunities
- the opportunity to develop and/or strengthen relationships between Scottish Government and other academic partners, as well as enhance own networks with policymakers and practitioners

- being embedded in the Safer Communities Analytical Unit with access to internal systems and processes, gaining an in-depth understanding of the policy process and the role of analytical teams in government
- improved understanding of how research outputs can be effectively integrated into policy development, delivery, and monitoring and evaluation, supporting impactful future 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 and knowledge of the evidence landscape relevant to Prevent / counter-terrorism / extremism, and/or safeguarding policy and practice
- appropriate research methodological expertise in the application of social science or research methods (quantitative or qualitative) relevant to the areas of research interest
- ability to synthesise multiple types of evidence and effectively communicate findings to policymakers and practitioners

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:

- knowledge of Prevent delivery and/or wider safeguarding approaches in Scotland
- experience of forming and developing influencing relationships with key stakeholders, both internal and external
- experience of developing engaging and accessible research outputs suitable for non-specialist audiences

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 Scottish Government'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.