Organisation/ department background
The Behavioural Insights Team (BIT) is a high profile unit set up by the coalition government to explore how behavioural science can improve the design, delivery and evaluation of public policy. There is a growing consensus that the success of many policy initiatives is contingent on their behavioural impact. The Behavioural Insights Team is working with a number of departments, government agencies and local authorities to develop innovative, evidence-based policy solutions and to implement them using robust randomised control trial methodology. The team is part of the Cabinet Office based on Whitehall in central London.

Project brief

What are the research opportunities available?
This is a unique opportunity to apply the evidence from behavioural science to public policy first hand. As a successful candidate, a research fellow should expect to be bringing together a wide range of research and using their own creativity to come up with innovative policy solutions. We expect our policies to be evaluated in a rigorous and robust fashion and research fellows will help to make sure that policy is designed in a way that makes this possible. There will be some occasions where research fellows can use the data and research they do with the team to write academic publications, although this is not guaranteed.

What specific work would be involved?
The work of our research fellows is divided into two main strands:

First, the team has a strong empirical approach and is actively involved in 20+ field trials in a range of policy areas. Research fellows will be tasked with setting up, managing and analysing the data from these trials.

Second, the team routinely prepares briefings for both Ministers and Senior Civil Servants on how behavioural science could inform policies. We will often require quick turnaround work on issues of significant policy relevance – research fellows will work with members of the team to respond to requests for such work.

Our projects change on a regular basis but as an example we are currently setting up trials of policies to decrease unemployment and increase economic growth as well as ongoing work on public health, public sector fraud and community engagement.

Ideally we would identify candidates whose research expertise is closely aligned with our upcoming areas of work, and take them on full-time or part-time for a period of 3-6 months. We will, however, consider applicants whose research interests differ from the projects listed above.
Student specification
We are looking to recruit up to six research fellows who match the following specifications:
We would welcome expressions of interest from late stage PhD students and postdoctoral researchers with the following skills:

- Research background in cognitive and/or social psychology, judgement and decision-making, behavioural economics.
- The ability to think creatively about how to solve policy problems.
- Experience in designing and conducting experiments.
- Proficiency in statistical methods relevant to a range of experiment designs.
- Strong data analysis capability (eg SPSS, STATA, or similar)

Applicants who have the following interests are also likely to get more out of the placement:
- The use of behavioural science in public policy
- The way that Whitehall and Government work

Start date of internship
This can be any date between early July and December. This is to be agreed between the applicant, the applicant’s supervisor, the host organisation and the ESRC.

Security
Students may have to undergo standard civil service security clearance on successful application for a place.

Applications
Online applications must reach the ESRC by 8 March 2013. Late applications will not be accepted. Applications will be checked for eligibility by the ESRC, before being sent onto the relevant organisation, for them to review the applications, hold interviews and select and applicant to complete the internship.

Queries
Any queries relating to the application process should be directed to esrcinternshipscheme@esrc.ac.uk