JOB DESCRIPTION:

Research Associate

Ref Number:	**LSSJ-242-23**
Salary Scale:	**Grade 7: £36,386 to £40,931**
Contract:	**Part time (0.5 full-time equivalent) and for a fixed term from 1st January 2024 to 31st December 2025**
School/Department:	**School of Social Policy, Sociology and Social Research, Division of Law, Society and Social Justice.**
Location:	**University of Kent, Canterbury Campus**
Responsible to:	**Alex Stevens, Professor in Criminal Justice**
Expected start date:	**1st January 2024**

The Role

We are seeking an outstanding quantitative analyst to work as part of a team to deliver the quasi-experimental, realist evaluation of the Prison Leavers Programme.

This position represents an exciting opportunity for the successful applicant to join a vibrant and diverse research culture and to apply advanced quantitative skills for the public good. The post is to support the completion of the quantitative outcome analysis for the evaluation of the Prison Leavers Programme. This programme and evaluation is funded by the Ministry of Justice. The evaluation is being carried out by the University of Kent in collaboration with Tonic. At Kent, the quantitative work for this project is being led by Professor Alex Stevens, with the support of Dr Jack Cunliffe and Dr Thomas Akoensi. The qualitative work is being led by Dr Caroline Chatwin, with the support of Dr Tara Young.

Based in the Division of for the Study of Law, Society and Social Justice, SSPSSR is the School of Social Policy, Sociology and Social Research. This is one of the leading centres for the study of criminology and social policy in the UK, ranking 3rd overall in the Research Excellence Framework 2021.

We are working with the Ministry of Justice to develop a dataset that brings together data on imprisonment, offending, health, and employment outcomes for people who leave prison. By December 2025, we must deliver to the Ministry of Justice an evaluation of the PLP. We also plan to produce related academic outputs. The successful applicant will primarily work on carrying out and reporting quantitative analysis of the outcomes achieved by people who have gone through interventions funded by the PLP. There will also be opportunities for the successful applicant to collaborate on other research projects in SSPSSR.

In order to carry out this work, the postholder will also be seconded into the Ministry of Justice (while remaining an employee of the University of Kent) in order to access the necessary data for the PLP outcome evaluation.

Key Accountabilities / Primary Responsibilities

- To prepare for and carry out analysis of data from the Prison Leavers Programme.
- To carry out high quality independent research and contribute fully to SSPSSR's research strategy.
- To work collegiality with colleagues in Ministry of Justice Tonic, SSPSSR and across the University of Kent, including supporting colleagues, helping to ensure high standards in quantitative research, publicise our work, cultivate a rewarding and engaging working environment and so on.

Key Duties

The duties of the successful candidate will include:

- Supporting the Ministry of Justice to link data on prison leavers across administrative datasets.
- Accessing the linked data via the Ministry of Justice Analytical Platform and preparing it for analysis.
- Using matching techniques (e.g. propensity score matching) to create comparisons between people who were exposed to PLP interventions and comparator groups.
- Descriptive analysis of the intervention and comparison groups.
- Creating and running regression models to identify the predictors of successful and negative outcomes.
- Providing results that are suitable for use in economic evaluation.
- Providing data extracts that are suitable for use in summative, qualitative comparative analysis of the outcomes achieved by interventions and individuals.
- Drafting reports of the process and findings of the quantitative outcome evaluation, and producing tables and graphs to illustrate these reports. This work must be of a quality sufficient to be published by the Ministry of Justice and in related academic, peer-reviewed publications.
- Such other duties, commensurate with the grading of the post that may be assigned by the Head of School or their nominee.

Health, Safety & Wellbeing Considerations

This role involves undertaking duties which include the Health, Safety and wellbeing issues outlined below. Please be aware of these, when considering your suitability for the role.

- Regular use of Screen Display Equipment
- Vocational travel on & off campus (travel to/from research sites and places of work)

SSPSSR research staff currently work in a hybrid way. The post-holder will be based within the University of Kent in Canterbury but with an option to work some days from home. In addition this post may be asked to attend meetings at our campus in Chatham and travel for work purposes. There is a free bus service between the Canterbury and Chatham campuses. The candidate may also need to travel to the London offices of the Ministry of Justice and the Office for Health Improvement and Disparities.

Internal & External Relationships

Internal: PLP team members; academic and administrative colleagues; internal University of Kent departments (e.g. research services).

External: Staff of Tonic (Matthew Scott and Dr Sarah Senker), Ministry of Justice, and other government departments that hold administrative data on prison leavers, statutory and third sector bodies that run interventions funded by the Prison Leavers Programme, prison leavers and representative groups thereof, other researchers and academics who work in the field.

Person Specification

The Person Specification details the necessary skills, qualifications, experience or other attributes needed to carry out the job. Please be aware that your application will be measured against the criteria published below.

Selection panels will be looking for clear <u>evidence</u> and <u>examples</u> in your application, or in your cover letter where applicable, which back-up any assertions you make in relation to each criterion.

Qualifications / Training	Essential	Desirable	Assessed via*
A PhD, or near to completion of a PhD (or equivalent experience) in a relevant subject	✓		A

Experience / Knowledge	Essential	Desirable	Assessed via*
Knowledge of quantitative research methods and their application	✓		A, I, T
Knowledge of qualitative research methods and their application		✓	A, I
Experience of using data matching techniques		✓	A, I
Experience of running and reporting regression analyses	✓		A, I, T
Experience in quantitative outcome evaluation		✓	A, I
Experience of day-to-day running and management of large-scale research projects,		✓	A, I
Experience or communicating and reporting results from complex quantitative data analysis		✓	A, I
Knowledge of the workings and operation of the prison system		✓	A, I
Experience of undertaking high-quality research in this or a related field	✓		A, I, T
Experience of writing reports for publication by government departments		✓	A, I
Experience of writing articles for publication in peer-reviewed journals		✓	A, I

Skills / Abilities	Essential	Desirable	Assessed via*
Excellent interpersonal, presentation and communication skills	✓		I
Quantitative (data matching, regression, using relevant software packages, particularly R) analytic skills	✓		A, I
Knowledge and an ability to use software development and version control systems (eg. Github)		✓	A, I
Evidence of ability to write research reports, journal articles	✓		A, I

Additional Attributes	Essential	Desirable	Assessed via*
Willingness to contributing fully and flexibly as part of the research team	✓		I
Willingness to learn new research methods and skills with support and training	✓		I
Ability to work independently and as part of a team	✓		I
Ability to pass security vetting by the Ministry of Justice	✓		See below

Appointment to the post will be conditional on the applicant passing vetting by the Ministry of Justice after being selected as the best applicant.

*Criterion to be assessed via:
A   = application form or CV/cover letter
I   = interview questions
T   = test or presentation at interview