



**LANCASTER UNIVERSITY
AND BLACKPOOL COUNCIL
PUBLIC HEALTH TEAM -
DEPARTMENT OF
MARKETING**

RESEARCH ASSISTANTSHIP

Grace-Net (Gambling Resilience, Awareness &
Community Engagement Network):
Community of Practice

North West
Social Science
Doctoral Training
Partnership



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Project Outline

Grace-Net (Gambling Resilience, Awareness & Community Engagement Network) is a UKRI-funded research and innovation network based in the North West of England, focused on reducing gambling harm through prevention, protection and recovery (P-Pt-R). Grace-Net has been awarded Phase 1 funding (April 2026–March 2027) and is hosted jointly at Lancaster University and Liverpool John Moores University, in partnership with over 25 organisations including NHS trusts, local authorities, lived-experience recovery organisations (LEROs), and charities.

This placement sits within Work Package 2 (WP2): Community of Practice (CoP). The CoP is the knowledge-sharing engine of Grace-Net, connecting public health teams, NHS providers, LEROs, third-sector partners and academic researchers across the region and nationally.

Placement Key Objectives and Timeline

The student will support the establishment and running of the Grace-Net Community of Practice, contributing to:

- Managing and developing the Grace-Net Wiki, a living knowledge bank that houses tools, resources, videos, podcasts and policy briefings, ensuring content is accessible and up to date.
- Supporting the production and coordination of Grace-Net Shorts — short, lived-experience-led video clips produced monthly by Empowerment LERO and partner contributors.
- Capturing emerging research gaps and practitioner priorities through structured engagement during CoP sessions, feeding into the Research & Innovation Route Map.
- Contributing to knowledge exchange outputs, including accessible summaries, infographics and short briefings for the CoP network.

The following timeline is based on working 0.5 FTE for 6 months. Other working models are available, see **Duration and Timeframe** section below.

Months 1-2: Induction, familiarisation with Grace-Net partners and project governance, review of CoP frameworks and existing networks.

Month 3-4: Active involvement in CoP event planning and delivery; support for the Grace-Net Wiki; coordination of monthly Grace-Net Shorts; structured engagement data collection.

Month 5-6: Synthesis of engagement findings, contribution to knowledge outputs, final report to NWSSDTP.

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What skills will you acquire from this placement?

This placement offers the student first-hand experience of building a research and innovation community in a complex, multi-sector public health context, with direct exposure to knowledge exchange methodology and lived-experience co-production.

This placement is particularly well-suited to students with career interests in applied social research, public health, research impact and knowledge exchange, policy engagement, or the voluntary and community sector. It offers an opportunity to develop transferable skills in stakeholder engagement, cross-sector collaboration, and accessible science communication in a real-world research context.

Required and Desired Skills

This placement is well-suited to students from the Health, Wellbeing & Social Care or Society, Culture & Politics pathways, though applications from students in adjacent areas are welcome.

DESIRABLE SKILLS & KNOWLEDGE

- Strong interest in public health, social policy, or community-based research.
- Experience or interest in knowledge mobilisation, knowledge exchange, or science communication.
- Ability to synthesise information and communicate findings to diverse non-academic audiences.
- Familiarity with qualitative methods, including facilitation and engagement data collection.
- Competence in digital tools for collaborative knowledge management (e.g. wikis, shared document platforms).

BENEFICIAL EXPERIENCE

- Prior engagement with multi-stakeholder or community-based projects.
- Understanding of gambling harm, mental health, or related public health topics (desirable but not essential).
- Experience of event coordination or workshop facilitation.

Duration and Timeframe

This placement is equivalent to 13 weeks full time (1.0 FTE/5 days a week). The placement can be worked full time July–September 2026 or part time across up to six months (e.g. 0.5 FTE/2.5 days per week from July to December 2026).

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The timing is flexible and can be tailored to fit the student's PhD timeline and the Grace-Net project milestones. Ideally, the placement would begin no later than July 2026 to allow meaningful involvement in the first CoP event and Wiki development phase.

The timeline example in the **Placement Key Objectives and Timeline** section is based on 0.5 FTE (2.5 days a week) but can be adapted for other FTEs.

Delivery mode

Hybrid. The majority of day-to-day work (Wiki management, coordination, writing) can be undertaken remotely. Attendance at CoP events (three events across the year, likely in Liverpool, Blackpool or Lancaster) will require in-person participation. Regular supervision meetings will be held online with flexibility for in-person where preferred (supervisors are based in Lancaster and Blackpool). The student will be embedded in the Grace-Net network and connected to a geographically distributed team, making this placement well-suited to a student comfortable working flexibly across digital and in-person environments.

Induction process and support you will receive

The student will be welcomed as a named placement researcher within the Grace-Net project team, listed on the project website, and with a clear role, responsibilities and named supervisors.

The student will receive a structured induction in the first two weeks covering: Grace-Net project overview, aims and governance; introduction to partner organisations and key contacts; overview of health and safety protocols relevant to any in-person events; data protection and confidentiality (GDPR compliance under Lancaster University's Data Protection Policy); safeguarding responsibilities and escalation protocols; trauma-informed practice principles relevant to engagement with lived-experience contributors.

Fortnightly supervision meetings with the named supervisors; access to the Grace-Net Steering Group and Ethics Panel; peer support through the Grace-Net project team; access to Lancaster University library, IT and researcher development resources; participation in Grace-Net network events and training webinars.

Ethics Approval

Grace-Net Phase 1 does not involve primary research with human participants as research subjects. The Community of Practice involves professional and practitioner engagement and co-production activities which are managed under Grace-Net's robust ethical governance framework.

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Grace-Net operates under Lancaster University's Research Integrity and Ethics Code of Practice and has established an independent Ethics Review Panel (chaired by Professor Judith Sixsmith, University of Dundee) that meets quarterly. An Ethics Advisory Team (GREAT) and a Responsible Innovation Support network (RISK) are in place.

All CoP activities with lived-experience contributors follow INVOLVE principles, trauma-informed practice guidelines, and the RES-WELL researcher wellbeing framework. Informed consent and voluntary participation are embedded throughout. The student will be briefed on all relevant ethical frameworks as part of their induction. No additional ethics approval is required for the placement activities themselves, though the student will be expected to adhere to Grace-Net's ethical standards throughout.

Equality and Diversity commitments

Lancaster University and all Grace-Net partners are committed to Equity, Diversity and Inclusion. Grace-Net's partnership charter explicitly embeds EDI commitments, including fair remuneration of lived-experience contributors and trauma-informed, inclusive facilitation practices.

We confirm alignment with the NWSSDTP's EDI commitments and are fully willing to make reasonable adjustments for disabled students or those facing other barriers to inclusion. Hybrid working options significantly reduce geographical and mobility barriers. For any in-person events, we will liaise with venue hosts to confirm accessibility and make appropriate arrangements. Students with additional needs are encouraged to disclose these in advance so that tailored adjustments can be planned proactively. Grace-Net's inclusive ethos means that the student will join a team that actively values diverse perspectives and experiences.

How to apply

To apply for this role, please complete the 'Expression of Interest form' available on the [NWSSDTP website](#), using the reference **Grace-Net CoP** when asked which placement you are applying for. If you are interested in multiple Grace-Net opportunities, please complete one EoI form and list your order of preference for the roles.

Once completed and discussed with your supervisor, return the completed form to Amy Connolly (ripps@liverpool.ac.uk).

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