**PhD Internships at the Wales Centre for Public Policy**

Background

The Wales Centre for Public Policy is funded by the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC), Welsh Government and Cardiff University. It works with leading policy experts to provide ministers, the civil service and public services with high quality evidence and independent advice that helps them to improve policy decisions and outcomes. The Centre also undertakes research to advance understanding of the role which evidence can play in supporting better policy making and public service delivery. More information on the Centre is available here www.wcpp.org.uk

We are providing opportunities for ESRC funded PhD students located on Doctoral Training Partnership (DTP) pathways within the Wales DTP institutions, to spend three months in the Centre to apply and develop their research skills and techniques to real-world issues with high topicality. These internships will provide an excellent opportunity for a PhD student to gain practical experience of undertaking research in an organisation that works at the interface of research and policymaking. You will work alongside staff who have gained PhD’s and currently work with policy makers and practitioners in providing evidence to improve policy-making and public service outcomes in Wales.

The internship will improve the candidate’s understanding of policy making in Wales as well as improve their research skills (e.g. literature searching, reviewing, taking part in designing and producing academic outputs, Q methodology). You will also have the chance to develop a wide range of practical skills (e.g. report writing, communication, time management, team working, developing impact strategies) that will be crucial for your future career. The internship will also allow the candidate to extend their network amongst academics, policy makers and practitioners in Wales and beyond.

We have outlined four topics for students to consider:

1. The Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015: Implementation and evaluation
2. Q methodology *(which studies the perspectives of participants by asking them to rank and sort a series of statements)* and the role of evidence in policymaking
3. Evidence ecosystems at the local level in Wales
4. The use of policy tools in Wales in implementing change

Further details on each project is provided below. The proposed methodology for each project is likely to be primarily qualitative and include interviews (conducted remotely), documentary analysis, and literature review.

Student specification

For each internship, we would expect the student to have:

* Strong research and analytical skills including experience of undertaking literature reviews and qualitative methods (e.g. semi-structured interviews).
* Experience of analytical work in the areas of social or public policy.
* The ability to produce concise, well-written documents in an accessible format.

The WCPP and the ESRC Wales DTP are committed to supporting and promoting equality, diversity and an inclusive research environment. We value the indispensable contribution made by researchers of all backgrounds to our work. We warmly welcome applications for these internships from currently underrepresented groups, including Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic communities.

Anticipated project outcomes

Each internship will include the following outcomes:

* A report summarising the approach taken and outlining the findings. This should be presented in an accessible way to help to ensure that the research is used.
* A blog summarising the research to be included on the Centre’s website.
* Possibly an event designed by the student to present the findings of the research.

Length and start date of the internship

The internship would last for a period of three months and be based in the Wales Centre for Public Policy at Cardiff University. We hope to be back in our offices in January 2021 and would prefer for the internship to be conducted by the student attending our offices, but it will also be possible to be conducted remotely. For students registered on a part-time studentship, the internships are available on a part time basis, and this will need to be negotiated with the project lead.

We are flexible on the start date of the internship as this will depend on individual circumstances and the status of the pandemic. We plan for the internship to start in January 2021, but the start date can be put back according to the situation.

Funding and costs

The successful applicant will get a paid extension of three months to their PhD at an indicative monthly rate of £1,500 per month (fees and stipend costs).

Reasonable travel and accommodation costs for students not normally based in Cardiff can be met by the Wales Centre for Public Policy. Requests should be consistent with Wales DTP guidelines. It would not usually be expected that a Cardiff registered student would need to reclaim travel/accommodation expenses. Applications from students requiring additional funding for travel and accommodation will not be treated less favourably. For any queries on this please contact Carole Baker at the Wales DTP on: enquiries@walesdtp.ac.uk

1. The Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015: Implementation and evaluation

The Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act has been seen by the international community as ‘ground-breaking’ in its way of targeting long-lasting, positive change and the implementation of sustainable development goals. There has, however, been little research conducted on the topic and most of the existing outputs has been published by the Welsh Government and other public bodies in Wales. This project will aim to inform the conversation in Wales on the Act and its impact.

The Wales Centre for Public Policy has conducted a short project on the meaning of the Act by analysing well-being plans produced by Public Service Boards and conducting interviews with key stakeholders. There is a need for more research examining whether, and if so, how the Act has changed how policies and services have been formulated and implemented across Wales.

There are various ways in which to assess the impact of the Act. The internship could focus on examining:

* The impact of certain aspects of the Act e.g. by assessing one of the five ways of working (long-term, prevention, integration, collaboration, and involvement); by targeting on change in one of the seven well-being goals; examining a public body in detail (e.g. a Public Service Board, council or Welsh Government); or assessing how the Act has delivered on the Future Generations Commission’s strategic purposes (e.g. how they have acted upon the big issues and challenges facing future generations).
* The extent to which public bodies have accepted the recommendations from the Future Generations Commissioner to meet its well-being objectives and the impact.
* The impact of the Act on change in (some of) the 46 indicators measuring economic, social, environmental and cultural well-being.
* Whether, and if so, how the Act has made people behave differently.

We will work with the candidate to decide upon the final research question.

The candidate will carry out a short review of the key documents relating to the Act (e.g. Commissioner reports, Wales Audit Office etc.) and help to develop the methodological approach which is likely to include data collection during fieldwork (e.g. interviews, focus groups, and potentially a policy reunion), data analysis and writing up the results in a report and blog. There is also the possibility of contributing towards an academic publication.

The candidate will engage with policymakers and other stakeholders at national and local levels which will help to widen their network. You will develop key research and organisational/project management skills – e.g. managing part of the project – which will be transferable to a future academic or policy position. Finally, your research will feed into debate on the success of the Act and offer evidence-based recommendations on actions to improve implementation.

If you have any questions relating to the project, please direct those to Dr Eleanor MacKillop [Eleanor.MacKillop@wcpp.org.uk](mailto:Eleanor.MacKillop@wcpp.org.uk)

2. Q methodology and the role of evidence in policymaking

Despite a plethora of research purporting to distil how evidence should and could inform policy and practice, there is a lack of studies examining this question in a robust way. The project aims to better understand what is considered as evidence for policy, explore different ideologies regarding the relationship between evidence and policy, and understand different stakeholder’s perspective on this question.

Existing studies on this topic tend to either make normative claims about what role evidence *ought* to play or rely on surveys or individual case studies to inform the role of evidence in a particular setting. This project will aim to go beyond existing research by using Q methodology. This is a tool aiming to explore perceptions and attitudes towards a topic which blends quantitative and qualitative methods to develop a richer understanding.

The Wales Centre for Public Policy has conducted a short project on how evidence is understood amongst Welsh Government officials. The candidate would work with the Centre’s research team on the development of the Q sample and would lead on the administration of the tool with participants with public services in Wales. They would conduct interviews (possibly remotely), analysis and write up the results in a report.

There are different options for the internship to focus upon, but they include:

* Develop the existing Q study of Wales and carry this out in another devolved UK nation such as Scotland to compare the results.
* Use a review of co-production produced by the Centre to conduct a Q study on what is meant by co-production by those who work in Welsh public services.

We will work with the candidate to decide upon the focus.

The research will help us better understand the relationship between evidence and policy from different perspectives, which in turn will be important for future work by anyone trying to inform or formulate policy. It will also highlight that there are multiple ways of thinking about the role of evidence in policy and that, when having conversations about policymaking, all actors should be aware of these different ways of understanding.

The candidate will be supported in using the Q methodology and no previous experience is required. They will be involved in designing statements to be used as part of the data collection during fieldwork, data analysis and writing up the results in a report and blog. There is also the possibility of contributing towards an academic publication.

If you have any questions relating to the project, please direct those to Prof James Downe [James.Downe@wcpp.org.uk](mailto:James.Downe@wcpp.org.uk)

3. Evidence ecosystems at the local level in Wales

There is a growing need amongst knowledge broking organisations, like the Wales Centre for Public Policy, and other organisations that support public service improvement, to better understand how evidence is mobilised by local/regional public services. Increasingly, researchers have rejected simplistic models of evidence use in favour of more nuanced accounts, that recognise evidence as only one part of complex policy processes. These processes involve interactions amongst multiple actors that are influenced by institutional norms, events, values and beliefs. All of these factors affect how evidence is mobilized, translated, and used in policymaking and service design/delivery.

While these processes have been well articulated in relation to policymaking at the national level, evidence use at the local/regional level remains relatively less explored (particular in fields beyond public health). It is important to plug this gap and understand how and when research-derived knowledge and expertise can inform local policy and practice.

This project investigates the knowledge and learning landscape of local/regional government in Wales. This would involve studying policy-evidence communities around a policy field or issue or looking at the policy-evidence communities within a local or regional geography. The focus of the study would be on the composition of these communities, how and why they are formed and how knowledge is exchanged within them.

The candidate will explore some of the following research questions:

* Who are the actors involved in the policy-evidence community?
* What are the networks between actors?
* How is research-derived evidence mobilised, translated, used or ignored in local/regional policymaking and practice?
* What other evidence is used in policymaking at the local/regional level?
* What works in knowledge mobilisation and under what conditions?
* How does the composition and function of evidence-policy communities in Wales compare with similar communities in England and Scotland?

We will work with the candidate to decide upon the final research question.

The researcher will be involved in tasks relating to actor and issue mapping, documentary analysis, interviews, case study analysis and the production of a report. There is also the possibility of contributing towards an academic publication. The researcher will also be involved in producing reports/blogs and taking part in activities to raise awareness of the research and its translation into policy/practice.

The project will aim to have impact with policy/practitioners as well as academic audiences as it will generate new knowledge about the functioning of policy-evidence communities at the local/regional level in Wales.

If you have any questions relating to the project, please direct those to Dr Hannah Durrant [Hannah.Durrant@wcpp.org.uk](mailto:Hannah.Durrant@wcpp.org.uk)

4. The use of policy tools in Wales in implementing change

Wales is a relatively poor part of the UK and faces several entrenched social and economic challenges. To meet these challenges, the Welsh Government, like any government, has a range of policy tools at its disposal; for example, it can make laws through the Senedd, it can spend money (and to some extent raise it), it can gather and transmit information, and it can build and manage networks. But it delivers very few services itself, and its tools are subject to a range of constitutional, institutional and material constraints. It is important, therefore, to understand the range of formal and informal tools the Welsh Government possesses, and to think analytically and creatively about how they could be used to maximum effect.

The aim of this project is to map and analyse the range of policy tools that the Welsh Government has used in addressing a range of policy challenges. This would involve drawing on the Wales Centre for Public Policy’s archive of evidence assignments commissioned by the Welsh Government to understand the nature and range of these challenges. Combining this analysis with the existing literature on ‘tools of government’ as a theoretical framework, the researcher will identify and analyse ways in which the Welsh Government has sought to utilise tools and with what success.

The likely research questions for this study will be:

* What policy tools does the Welsh Government possess (in general and in specific policy areas)?
* Are there policy tools that the Welsh Government could use more, or more effectively?
* What are the conditions for effective use of policy tools by the Welsh Government?
* How might the range or use of the Welsh Government’s policy tools change in the foreseeable future - for example, in view of possible changes to territorial governance in the UK?
* How does this add to our academic understanding of the conditions for the effective use of policy tools by subnational and/or small country governments more generally?

The researcher will be involved in reviewing the academic literature and policy reports (e.g. Wales Audit Office reports), analysing a range of the Centre’s outputs and producing a report on the findings. There is also the possibility of contributing towards an academic publication.

The project will aim to have impact with policymakers as well as academic audiences as it will generate new knowledge about the availability and use of policy tools within Wales. This will be of value to those working in the broad field of subnational and/or small country policymaking and implementation in Wales and beyond. The candidate will also draft a short policy brief on the findings to raise awareness of the research and its translation into policy/practice. There is also an opportunity for joint working with the Wales Audit Office on an event to collate our understandings and disseminate our conclusions.

If you have any questions relating to the project, please direct those to Dr Andrew Connell [Andrew.Connell@wcpp.org.uk](mailto:Andrew.Connell@wcpp.org.uk)

Application process

We welcome applications from students on *all* DTP pathways. If you are interested in these internships, you should first discuss this opportunity with your supervisor and get their approval. If you are interested in any of the internships, we would strongly advise you contact the person who will supervise each project.

Please send a letter of application and a CV to enquiries@walesdtp.ac.uk by **Friday 13th November 2020.** Each document should be no more than two sides of A4. Your letter should confirm that you have the agreement of your main supervisor and specify a suggested start date. It should state which internship you are interested in and outline your ideas on the proposed methodological approach to the study and ideas on ways to disseminate the findings. You should also include how you feel the internship would be of benefit to your Doctoral programme.

There will be an interview as part of the selection process. These will take place by Zoom or MS Teams.