 **PhD Policy Secondment Opportunity**

## **Children, Families and Disadvantage Analysis Division**

##  **Department for Work & Pensions**

## ***Identifying good practice and transferable learning in interventions for ethnic minorities that encourage participation in the labour market***

The Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) has a 3-month secondment opportunity for a suitably qualified and experienced doctoral student to lead on a high-priority project within a policy analysis team. The objectives of this secondment are twofold:

1. To offer the opportunity for a student to gain direct experience of working at the policy evidence interface, in the heart of a high-profile analysis team.
2. To offer the opportunity for a student to lead on a priority evidence review project **to identify good practice and transferable learning in interventions for ethnic minorities that encourage participation in the labour market.**

While there is no restriction on discipline (with applications welcome from a broad range of disciplinary backgrounds including economics, sociology, social policy, geography, statistics, psychology, epidemiology or other related subjects), we are seeking a candidate with **experience of conducting qualitative research, including interviewing and qualitative analysis. Experience of conducting literature reviews is also required.**

# **Analysis in DWP**

The Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) is responsible for welfare, pensions and child maintenance policy. As the UK’s biggest public service department it administers the State Pension and a range of working age, disability and ill health benefits to over 22 million claimants and customers.

The Department is a large employer and offers many opportunities for graduate and post graduate analysts who are employed as government specialists. Analysts in government work closely with policy makers at all levels including government ministers. Therefore their work has a great deal of influence over policy and can have a substantial impact on the lives of large numbers of people. This is especially true of DWP analysts who work in the evaluation and analysis of very large programmes impacting on labour market policy, poverty reduction, disability, ageing society and welfare reform.

The analytical community in DWP is large and multi-disciplinary with over 500 members split between four core professions; Social Researchers, Economists, Operational Researchers and Statisticians. The Department also employs a growing number of data scientists; and expert advisers in Behavioural Science, Psychology and Medicine. Many analysts join the Department having completed postgraduate degrees and doctorates, attracted by the excellent opportunities for professional development and promotion within the Civil Service.

Analysts in DWP are split between four main sites: Leeds, London, Newcastle and Sheffield. Analysts at these sites can work on a variety of topics and areas of work are not restricted by site.

# **Main Role**

The successful applicant will help senior analysts conduct high-priority qualitative research to **identify good practice and transferable learning in interventions for ethnic minorities that encourage participation in the labour market.**

This analysis is a critical part of the public commitment that DWP made in response to the publication of the *Race Disparity Audit* to work in *“Hotspot areas”* to improve employment outcomes for BME populations. Whilst DWP has so far focused on interventions to encourage employability through, for example, Universal Credit and the Work and Health Programme, these are not BME specific. The Department intends to develop new area-based interventions, which will eventually be rolled out to the hotspot areas, and which maximise the effectiveness of Jobcentre activity in getting BME groups into work.

The work will offer a range of opportunities to enhance research and analytical skills, including evidence synthesis and policy translation.

The successful applicant will also have the opportunity to inform the development of policy at a senior level in government. The post-holder will work within a busy analysis team, offering the opportunity to directly experience the generation and use of evidence in the policy-making process.

The student will also benefit from development opportunities offered centrally by the DWP Analytical Community, including spot mentoring, shadowing and peer support.

# **Essential skills**

We are looking for current PhD students who have the following skills/experience:

* Qualitative interviewing skills
* Qualitative analysis skills
* Research project planning
* Experience of conducting literature reviews and awareness of systematic reviews
* Evidence assimilation and synthesis
* Strong drafting and writing skills
* Strong presentation and communication skills

Whilst not essential to the post, some understanding of the labour market and employment would be beneficial.

# **Project Description**

***About the project:***

The Prime Minister commissioned the Race Disparity Audit (RDA) to examine how people of different backgrounds are treated across areas such as health, education, employment and criminal justice. The Audit was published on GOV.UK in October 2017 and consists of 60 datasets covering 200 individual measures from twelve departments and attracted significant public interest.

The RDA highlighted, amongst other things, that the gap between the ethnic minority employment rate and the overall employment rate stands at 10.3 percentage points and that employment rates are higher for white people (75.7 per cent) than BME people (63.9 per cent) across the country. Women from Pakistani and Bangladeshi background were the least likely to be employed, and people overall from Pakistani and Bangladeshi backgrounds tend to be low skilled and in low paying occupations compared to other ethnic groups. The Prime Minister’s message at publication was that if the disparities cannot be explained they must be changed.

In response, DWP have undertaken further analysis and identified twenty ‘challenge areas’ characterised by high ethnic minority population and high gap between the ethnic minority and white employment. DWP plans to work with those challenge areas in order to provide targeted support and develop local solutions to improve BME employment outcomes.

To help DWP achieve this, we are undertaking research to:

* Identify best practice in existing interventions which encourage members of the BME population to participate more effectively in the labour market;
* Identify best practice in hotspot areas in both Jobcentre Plus (JCP) and from wider sources;
* Gather case studies (where available), and
* Identify any existing barriers to putting interventions in place and how these might be overcome.

***Research methods***

Research methods comprise of four broad elements:

1. a literature review
2. a mapping exercise
3. qualitative interviews, and
4. analysis and dissemination of findings.

*Literature review*

A limited review of literature conducted around barriers to BME groups participating in the labour market (taking into account knowledge already internally available) and interventions to encourage labour market participation for these groups. The review will identify evidence that already exists in relation to the above research questions and identify where there are gaps in our knowledge.

*A Mapping exercise*

This part of the research will contact all 3 volunteer hotspot areas, and all remaining JCP areas which are in the top 20 hotspot areas (19 as one volunteer area – Hackney is in the top 20). This will include the 3 stand-by volunteer hotspot areas who are already in the top 20.The research will identify relevant interventions which will include:

* JCP projects which support ethnic minorities.
* Other projects working with BME groups but which are not necessarily liked to JCP.
* Where no interventions exist in hotspot areas, the research will explore the barriers to putting these in place.

Mapping these interventions will initially be achieved through 22 semi-structured telephone interviews with relevant colleagues in Jobcentre Plus (20 hotspot areas including Hackney and the 2 other volunteer areas – Oldham and Sandwell).

*Qualitative interviews*

When the mapping exercise has identified relevant interventions, a selection of these will be explored in more depth. To limit the scope of the research, there will be no more than 6 interventions. These will be chosen as the most appropriate in conjunction with policy colleagues. These will be held with

* Jobcentre - managers
* Jobcentre - staff
* External stakeholders - managers
* External stakeholders - staff

*Analysis and dissemination of findings.*

* Presentation of high level findings from the literature review, mapping exercise and discussion of quantitative research instruments.
* Presentation of findings from the quantitative survey of food bank providers
* Presentation of findings from qualitative research with food bank staff.
* Presentation of findings from quantitative and qualitative research with food bank users
* Draft final report of all findings
* Final report for publication.

# **Secondment Details**

**Duration and timing of secondment:**

* 3 months duration. Starting as soon as possible but with potential for flexibility.

**Location and travel:**

The DWP analytical community relies on flexible and inclusive working practices, as all teams are cross-site and multi-location.

The successful candidate will be able to work flexibly between their home location and in DWP offices in London, Leeds, Sheffield or Newcastle.

Some travel may be needed to help conduct any face to face interviews/ meetings associated with the qualitative research. Travel and related expenses, whilst in post, will be covered by DWP.

All team meeting are conducted in a geographically inclusive way using videoconferencing and teleconferencing to facilitate flexible working.

# **How will applicants be assessed?**

Candidates will be shortlisted on the basis of information provided within the application form. Shortlisted candidates will be invited to an informal telephone interview.

Within the application form and if invited to interview, applicants will need to demonstrate a detailed understanding of qualitative research and analysis methods, and approaches to reviewing and assimilating evidence from different sources.

Candidates will be expected to be able to provide examples of where they have demonstrated these skills sets both at application and at interview stage.

Candidates will not be asked to give a presentation.

# **How to apply**

Please submit:

* CV
* Completed application form and
* Completed permissions form

by email to evidence.strategyteam@dwp.gsi.gov.uk. Please also use this email address for any enquiries related to the secondment.

**Deadline for applications: Midday, Monday 28th May 2018**