 **PhD Policy Secondment Opportunity**

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

##  **Department for Work & Pensions**

***Identifying good practice and transferable learning relating to peer mentoring for unemployed claimants with drug and alcohol dependencies***

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 relating to peer mentoring for unemployed claimants with drug and alcohol dependencies.**

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 400 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 help identify good practice and transferable learning relating to peer mentoring for unemployed claimants with drug and alcohol dependencies.

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 former Prime Minister commissioned Dame Carol Black to undertake an independent review of the impact on employment of addiction to drugs and alcohol. Her report, (“Drug and alcohol addiction, and obesity: effects on employment outcomes”) published in December 2016, recommended that: “Jobcentre Plus (JCP) works with treatment providers to trial a network of peer mentors to engage with claimants with suspected addictions”.

1. Further, the review recommended that: “JCP should act as advocates and visible signs of recovery to encourage safe disclosure of addictions and engagement with support.”
2. A review of current peer mentoring activities available through JCP revealed that more needs to be done to increase both the availability and awareness of those initiatives.
3. The aims of this research are to:
* Identify best practice in peer mentoring—particularly when working with those who are unemployed and have a drug and/or alcohol dependency.
* Identify best practice in both Jobcentre Plus (JCP) and wider sources.

This research will contribute towards developing and publicising peer mentoring networks in local areas. Development of this work is on-going and provides a platform to identify and share good practice and tap into established networks, including with recovery organisations.

***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 review of literature will be conducted around peer mentoring, including academic papers and research reports. 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 identify relevant projects, including:

* Job Centre Plus (JCP) projects which support peer mentors and work with both claimants that have a drug and/or alcohol dependency and those working with other vulnerable groups.
* Other peer mentoring projects working with individuals that have drug and/or alcohol dependency.
* Jobcentres where it is known there is a substance misuse problem in the locality, but do not have peer mentoring.

Mapping these projects will be achieved through obtaining details from the literature review, links with relevant external stakeholders such as Public Health England (PHE) and links with internal colleagues e.g. in OED and Jobcentre Plus. It is not known at this point how many relevant projects will be identified.

*Qualitative interviews*

Drawing on the mapping exercise (which will identify relevant peer mentoring projects), the researchers will contact potential interviewees to seek their agreement to participate in the research. Qualitative interviews will be conducted to explore the potential for peer mentors and the barriers to putting them in place. These will be held with: Jobcentre managers; Jobcentre staff; Peer mentors; Drug and Alcohol provider staff and Claimants.

*Analysis and dissemination of finding:* Bringing all of the evidence together the subsequent analysis are the most appropriate way to explore the mapped projects and evidence potential best practice. We intend to publish findings from this research.

# **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**