

**Evidence reviewing and qualitative research to identify good practice in planning and delivering user centric Early Years services?**

**Summary**

This is an exciting opportunity to do a paid work placement on a project for the Welsh Government. The project will conduct desk-based and primary research into how the Welsh Government can create accessible and inclusive user centric early years’ services. This will build on the learning from the work being undertaken by Public Service Boards (PSBs) in Wales who have joined the Early Years Integration Transformation (EYIT) Programme as pathfinders. The successful applicant will work closely with Welsh Government officials and stakeholders to research and develop a varied range of research outputs, and support the Welsh Government in their research process. The applicant will have the opportunity to apply research skills in a policy environment, further develop generic skills (such as report writing or making presentations), and to enhance their knowledge of research outside academia.

**The Organisation**

The Welsh Government is the devolved Government for Wales with responsibility for the economy, education, health and the Welsh NHS, business, public services and the environment of Wales.

Specifically, the internship will be based within Knowledge and Analytic services (KAS). KAS provides the collection, analysis and presentation of research and data for policymakers and the general public in keeping with professional standards. They offer independent evidence to understand, develop, implement, monitor and evaluate government policies. KAS also supports policy colleagues with policy development, implementation and delivery.

**The Internship**

The internship will provide an exciting opportunity to work at the heart of Welsh Government. The internship will require working closely with policy officials working on the EYIT programme in the Children and Families Division as well as researchers, and will provide an opportunity to apply research skills in a policy environment, further develop generic skills (such as report writing or making presentations), and to enhance policy knowledge.

The successful candidate will benefit from development opportunities offered centrally by the Welsh Government, potentially including mentoring, shadowing, peer support and training.

Interns will benefit from the experience of working closely with the Welsh Government:

* Gaining a better understanding of the world outside of academia and increasing employability, using their knowledge and skills to contribute to the work of the Welsh Government.
* The intern’s colleagues at the Welsh Government can offer an insight into the intern’s PhD project that can contribute to the success of their thesis’, as well as networking opportunities within the policy arena linked to their research area
* Transferable skills and knowledge
* Time management skills
* Report writing skills

**The Project**

The ambition of the EYIT Programme is to develop joined up and responsive Early Years’ services to ensure every child has the best start in life. Children should be at the centre of excellent, integrated services that put their needs first, regardless of traditional organisational and professional structures.

**Our aims are:**

* To create an Early Years system to deliver services in a co-ordinated, integrated and timely way
* To support local partners to re-configure Early Years services focusing on planning, commissioning and identifying and addressing needs.
* Through this process to identify barriers to integration and ways to remove, reduce or rationalise them.

**Guiding Values**

An integrated early years’ system will:

* Give children and parents a voice and listen to their needs;
* Put the needs of the child and the family first;
* Reach all children and families as early as possible;
* Ensure stability and continuity of services along a continuum from prenatal into Foundation Phase and on to school;
* Include and effectively accommodate children with ALN/SEN;
* Value parents as decision makers;
* Work in true partnership across and within organisations and professions to maximise investment;
* Develop the workforce around a shared ambition for the success of every child.

**There are currently fourteen PSB Pathfinders involved in this work**, including Blaenau Gwent, Caerphilly, Carmarthenshire, Ceredigion, Cwm Taf, Flintshire, Neath Port Talbot, Swansea, Newport, Anglesey and Gwynedd, Monmouthshire, Pembrokeshire, Torfaen and Wrexham.

These pathfinders are expected to:

* Shape the development of a National Framework for early years transformation
* Feedback on WG policy thinking
* Help WG understand barriers and solutions

The EIF (Early Intervention Foundation) Early Years maturity matrix is a self-assessment tool to support a system-wide approach to improving outcomes for children in the early years. The matrix allows pathfinders to assess the current state of early intervention across their local maternity and early years system, guide local service and system medium-term planning and act as a baseline to effectively assess progress. These maturity matrices provide an insight into levels of engagement and significant factors undermining integration against 10 key elements, which can be analysed to identify barriers and areas of good practice. This project contributes to the Community Ownership element of the matrix with a focus on planning and delivering user centric Early Years services.

**Internship Research**

The EYIT Programme is now at a stage where it is crucial to identify the key characteristics of ‘good practice’ in how we create accessible and inclusive services. Focusing on pathfinders’ involvement in testing the core components of what an early years’ system should look like including pilots to test different models to delivering services in a more integrated way, the research will consider:

1. what are the pathways/ referral mechanisms for accessing services and how are they working in practice?
2. what are the reported barriers/challenges to access services/ provision? Are there any significant gaps? Are barriers/ challenges or gaps more significant to some characteristics/ groups than others and why?
3. Suggestions on how to effectively engage children and families in co-producing services? What are the benefits? What is the role of voluntary and community organisations? What examples of best practice can be drawn upon from the work of the PSBs and across other service and policy areas?
4. examples of new and innovative provision being developed locally to meet identified needs

This project will provide a report detailing the results of the analysis and a series of recommendations of ‘good practice’ on delivering accessible and inclusive services.

It is anticipated that the successful applicant will conduct a desk-based literature review in order to consider what is important in terms of delivering accessible and inclusive services, with a specific focus on the early years.

The intern will also be expected to conduct primary qualitative research in the form of semi-structure interviews with key Welsh Government policy officials as well as Pathfinder professionals. These interviews will consider how user-focussed service provision is approached in other key policy areas e.g. health and to investigate this issue from the pathfinder perspective.

*Anticipated project outcomes:*

* A literature review
* A written analysis of the qualitative research
* A report combining the findings from the literature review and the interviews. If possible the report should also highlight examples of ‘good practice’ uncovered by the research.

**Internship responsibilities and requirements**

The internship will last for three months, with the option of extension, during which time the students PhD project will be paused by their home institution. The student will be paid the equivalent of their stipend during their internship. Over and above leave policies, time for existing PhD commitments can be arranged on discussion with line managers. E.g. research groups meetings and conference presentations. Applications are encouraged from part-time students.

It is anticipated that the successful applicant will be working from home during their internship. This is based on our current understanding of the situation and what is possible in terms of research work. This may change as the Covid-19 situation develops. Should the Covid-19 situation develop and allow for a return for a phased return to offices this will be discussed with successful applicants.

The internship will last for a period of three months full-time or the part-time equivalent. For students registered on a part-time studentship, this internship is available on a part-time basis over a longer time frame (no fewer than three days a working week), this would be negotiated between the WG and the successful applicant. If you would like to be considered on a part-time basis, please specify your preferred working hours on the application form.

*Student specification*

The student must have:

* Strong literature reviewing skills
* Good qualitative skills both in terms of collection and analysis
* Experience of or interest in public service planning and delivery and coproduction

**Start date of internship**

End of January 2022 (exact date to be negotiated). There may be some flexibility dependent on individual circumstances.

**Funding and costs**

Reasonable travel and accommodation costs for students not normally based in Cardiff can be met. Requests should be consistent with Wales DTP guidelines. 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

**Security**

The Welsh Government’s vetting procedures (which apply to temporary as well as permanent staff) involve the completion of a Baseline Personnel Security Standard (BPSS) application form and a Security Questionnaire for the purpose of security vetting.

This process requires the applicant to produce in person three original forms of identification documents, one of which should be photographic (passport, new driving license), one document should showing their current address, plus one of: a utility bill, birth certificate, P45 or P60.

**Queries**

Any queries relating to the post or application process should be directed to Jody.Mellor@gov.wales