

**Developing a Theory of Change for three interlinking support packages within the Early Years and beyond**

**Summary**

This is an exciting opportunity to do a paid work placement on a project for the Welsh Government. The project will develop a Theory of Change (ToC) for three interlinking support packages covering the early years and beyond (0-25), in response to the Covid-19 pandemic, to inform future monitoring and evaluation.

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 intern will work between the three Divisions of Childcare, Play and Early Years; Children and Families, and Curriculum and Assessment, and will continue to strengthen links between them. The internship will provide an exciting opportunity to work at the heart of Welsh Government. The internship will require working closely with policy officials and 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 pandemic has had a profound and ongoing impact on children and young people, especially vulnerable children. To help address those challenges and meet ongoing needs, Welsh Government introduced several packages to help local authorities in Wales to support children, young people and parents. This project focuses on support packages in the early years and beyond (0-25).

**Three Support Packages:**

1. **The Early Years Project within the Renew and Reform Programme**

The [Renew and Reform Plan](https://gov.wales/renew-and-reform-supporting-learners-wellbeing-and-progression-html) published in June 2021 sets out the approach in education and childcare to mitigate the impact of the pandemic on children’s learning and development.

The aim of the Renew and Reform Plan is to address the effects of the disruption caused by the pandemic on learning and development, ensuring equity for all learners whilst taking the opportunity to improve outcomes. The early years is a key priority area within the plan.

The Early Years Project has been established to consider the specific issues impacting on early years learners in line with the overarching approach for the wider Programme. The Project will focus on action required to support learning and development in maintained and non-maintained settings for all children in their early years (0-7). These will focus primarily on provision for Foundation Phase aged children (3-7), including those in childcare settings not funded to deliver early education, aligned with our work on Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) which seeks to develop closer working between education and childcare provision.

An additional £13m has been made available to support early years learning and development, to be administered through the Education Improvement Grant. This funding is designed to:

• £10m - support schools in delivering Foundation Phase ratios to ensure effective learning and development and for local authorities to enhance educational support to non-maintained childcare settings which deliver early education (children aged 3-7)

• £3m – support the learning and development in childcare settings not funded to deliver early education, but which have statutory responsibilities under the National Minimum Standards for childcare provision.

1. **Early Help Fund**

The Early Help Fund is administered through the Children and Communities Grant (CCG) (£7m) and is additional funding, made available to Local Authorities, to ease the pressure on, and reduce waiting times for, vital early help and support services in support of children young people and parents in response to the pandemic. This support package was designed to supplement existing funding allocations in order to drive down waiting lists for early support services delivered through Flying Start, Families First and other early help services supporting children, young people and parents.

1. **Child Development Fund (CDF)**

The Child Development Fund (£11.5m) as introduced in October 2020 to support children under 5 whose development may have been adversely impacted due to the COVID-19 public health restrictions. A total of £11.5m has been allocated to all local authorities in Wales (October 2020 - March 2022) to enable them to address concerns around developmental delay due to public health restrictions as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic including speech, language and communication delay; fine and gross motor skills delay; and personal and social development. The focus has been on boosting early intervention to address needs as early as possible rather than allowing problems to escalate to a point of crisis or the point of no return. This approach will go some way in supporting our youngest children to build resilience as well as attain the critical life skills they will need to get the best start in life to enable them to fulfil their potential.

**The Development of a ToC for the Early Years and beyond**

Together, these three support packages will go some way in supporting young children to build resilience as well as attain the critical life skills they will need to enable them to fulfil their potential. To help measure the success of these support packages and to provide clarity around the core principles on which these are based, the three Divisions will now focus on the development of a ToC.[[1]](#footnote-1)

The role of the intern will be to develop a draft ToC which draws together existing research and WG colleagues’ experiences/views about the change process relating to the three support packages, to ensure that COVID-19 recovery is appropriately supported for young children. This model will pay attention to the distinctions inherent within the three support packages, as well as the similarities between approaches. To develop the ToC, existing documentation on the three support packages will be drawn together, and the intern will lead a participatory process involving the insights of WG policy and research colleagues.

The creation of this model will ensure that the assumptions about the change process are agreed upon and made explicit, and that the framework is able to create a range of conditions that can lead to the desired changes. This project is crucial to support the monitoring and evaluation of all three support packages, and will provide an iterative model which can then be re-defined throughout the process, as appropriate.

The outputs from this project will be:

• High quality data and analysis to aid an understanding of the project

• The development of a Theory of Change to encompass three interlinked support packages

**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 communication and analytical skills Strong evidence reviewing and synthesis skills
* Interest and/or experience in the Early Years and beyond (0-25)
* Interest and/or experience in using evaluative thinking in order to support the policy making cycle

**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

1. <https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/5964b5dd40f0b60a4000015b/UK-Aid-Connect-Theory-of-Change-Guidance.pdf> [↑](#footnote-ref-1)