# Review of public attitudes to council tax in Wales

# Summary

This is an exciting opportunity to undertake a paid work placement on a project for the Welsh Government.

The project will involve 3 interlinking components:

1. Reviewing the wider literature around public attitudes to local property taxes inc. any international examples or comparisons with Council Tax in Wales (eg. local, sub-national or community-based property taxes which pay for public services), paying particular focus to people’s understanding and awareness of the tax
2. Analysing responses to a representative survey of public attitudes to council tax in Wales, to be carried out in March 2023 and comparing results with a baseline wave undertaken in 2022.
3. Reviewing the research in relation to question 1 and the findings from question 2, and providing recommendations on future actions the Welsh Government can take to add to our understanding of public attitudes.

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 its 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 be part of the team working on public services and local government research. The internship will provide an exciting opportunity to work at the heart of the 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

Council tax in Wales helps to fund the provision of essential local services to communities including education, social care, policing, fire and rescue services, waste and recycling, and many others.

The Welsh Government is undertaking a programme of research to inform its approach to delivering its [Programme for Government](https://gov.wales/programme-government) commitment to reforming council tax to ensure a fairer and more progressive system.Public understanding and acceptance of future changes are crucial for the Welsh Government to achieve its aims but previous research has identified that levels of awareness of, and attitudes to, local taxes are not clear and are seldom measured.

The successful candidate will review recent actions to measure attitudes specifically in Wales and provide recommendations to help strengthen our understanding of public perceptions of council tax. The first part of this project will be to review the wider literature around local taxes, including any international comparisons with comparable taxation around the world, to assess the lessons we can learn from elsewhere, other best practice and potentially whether the provision of information and messaging matters.

 The second part of the project will be to lead the analysis of results from a representative survey of public attitudes to council tax in Wales. The [results of the first wave of the survey](https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/statistics-and-research/2022-07/survey-of-public-attitudes-to-council-tax.pdf) were published in July 2022, and the survey will be repeated in March 2023.

The aim of the survey is to examine public perceptions of the fairness of council tax, including its design and the way that the tax revenue is used and invested in communities, and measure any changes in attitudes since the first wave of the survey. This will be particularly important to understand given the ongoing wider context of the cost-of-living crisis. It will also explore the relationship between the level of knowledge and understanding of council tax and perceptions of its fairness.

Building on the findings of the first and second waves of the survey and the literature review, the successful candidate will be expected to evaluate the research to assess its strengths and weaknesses and to offer recommendations on how we could build on this in the future, including any findings in term of best practice.

Anticipated project outcomes:

* Publication of a Government Social Research report that includes:
	+ the findings from analysis of Wave 2 of the survey of public attitudes to council tax
	+ a comparison of the results between Wave 1 and Wave 2
* A written briefing for Ministers and officials outlining the key findings from the analysis.
* A technical report for internal use, setting out the options for suggested amendments to the survey questions for future waves.
* A, summary of the literature around attitudes to local tax reforms and evaluation of the Welsh Government’s current research model
* A presentation to analytical colleagues and policy officials on the findings of the project.

# 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 work in a hybrid way between home and a Welsh Government office during their internship. This may change depending on Welsh Government policy. Any changes to working arrangements 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:

* Ability to analyse quantitative survey data using Excel or SPSS (or other statistical software packages).
* Ability to analyse qualitative data (answers to open-ended survey questions) applying a thematic approach.
* Ability to produce cross-tabulations, well designed charts and concise, well written documents presenting technical material in an accessible format.
* Ability to review and collate literature from a range of sources, to identify research findings applicable from other contexts and areas of good practice.

# Start date of internship

April 2023 (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 Ian Jones (ian.jones006@gov.wales) or Nerys Owens (nerys.owens@gov.wales) in Welsh Government Knowledge and Analytical Services.