

Kent Health Vice Chancellor's Research Scholarship 2017

The impact of social prescribing on health & social care.

Centre for Health Services Studies is currently inviting applications for a PhD scholarship in applied health research in partnership with Bexley Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG), to commence September 2017. The awardee will work in both community and clinical settings with colleagues in Bexley CCG to evaluate a new social prescribing model, supervised by Chartered Psychologist Dr Sarah Hotham (Primary supervisor in CHSS) <https://www.kent.ac.uk/chss/staff/research/hotham.html>, Primary Care Transformation Manager Andy Fairhurst (Primary supervisor at Bexley CCG), Chartered Health Psychologist Dr Kate Hamilton-West (Co-supervisor in CHSS), and Chief Clinical Officer Dr Nikita Kanani (Co-supervisor at Bexley CCG).

This scholarship is provided by Kent Health in the form of a Vice Chancellor's Research Scholarship administered under the Graduate Teaching Assistant Scheme (GTA). This scholarship will cover tuition fees at the Home/EU rate plus a combined maintenance grant and salary, equivalent to the full UK Research Councils rate of £14,553 (rate for 2017/18). This scholarship is tenable for one year in the first instance, renewable annually for a maximum of three years (36 months) for full-time students, or five years (60 months) for part-time students, subject to satisfactory progress and continued registration as a postgraduate student on a doctoral programme at the University of Kent.

Under the GTA scheme you will be expected to provide 8.5 hours per week of research work to develop, undertake and disseminate health services research within CHSS and work with collaborators on agreed projects. Current projects include work on public health evaluations, evaluating the implementation of new clinical pathways, research on integrated care and developments in primary care. Duties may include assisting in the undertaking of literature reviews, rapid reviews and database searches, collection of quantitative and qualitative data, assisting in writing of reports, peer-reviewed papers, and presentations.

The project

NHS Bexley CCG and the London Borough of Bexley Council are co-commissioning a service to deliver social prescribing through primary care, with an aim to realise savings and improve patient outcomes across the health and social care system. Social prescribing is a mechanism for promoting health and independence. It provides GPs with a non-medical referral option that can operate alongside existing treatments to improve health and well-being. These might include opportunities for arts and creativity, physical activity, volunteering, as well as support with employment, benefits, or legal advice.

The proposed PhD would provide a unique opportunity for a candidate to work in an applied health setting, alongside colleagues in NHS Bexley CCG and Bexley Voluntary Service Council, to conduct a formative, summative, and process evaluation of a new social

prescribing model. The evaluation would capture patient outcomes and organisational processes to explore the impact of the new model and provide the necessary evidence to inform future commissioning decisions.

The key objectives of the PhD will be to:

- Assess the impact of social prescribing on use of primary care, social care and other NHS services.
- Identify the barriers and facilitators to the successful implementation of an integrated programme and the extent to which these influence patient outcomes.
- Identify the long-term impact on patients' health and well-being.
- Assess whether impacts differ for patients not referred to a social prescribing programme.

This unique opportunity will engage the awardee in an ambitious applied health project, working alongside general practitioners, clinicians, health and social care commissioners and voluntary & community sector leaders. The PhD will be supervised by a panel of experts in health psychology and Primary Care. The student will gain a deep understanding of how health services are delivered in primary care; they will be at the forefront of developing new models of care and provide much-needed evidence about the impact of Social Prescribing to inform the efficient, effective commissioning of services by highlighting what works, for whom, in what circumstances and with what outcomes. The position will include time spent in General Practice and wider Primary Care environments. In addition, the student will gain expertise in health service evaluation and have the opportunity to further develop both quantitative and qualitative research methodologies. They will also have the opportunity to further develop their research portfolio and publications by collaborating with CHSS staff on other projects within the department through the GTA research position.

Environment

The successful student will be hosted within the Centre for Health Services Studies (CHSS), University of Kent. CHSS is an international centre of excellence for health service research and research training. The centre has a wide range of research and disciplinary experience. It undertakes commissioned research and has a portfolio of competitively funded studies. CHSS has specialist groups for its research and other collaborations. It hosts the NIHR Research Design Service South East (RDS) and a key role of this post will be to provide methodological advice and support for NHS researchers. CHSS has excellent links with local and national healthcare organisations and universities. CHSS is also part of the Department of Health funded Policy Research Unit in Commissioning and the Healthcare System (www.prucomm.ac.uk) which is directed by Stephen Peckham and involves collaboration with the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine and the University of Manchester.

<https://www.kent.ac.uk/chss/index.html>

Due to the applied nature of the project they will also be required to spend time at a number of sites around the London Borough of Bexley, including the CCG offices, BVSC offices and at GP practices.

Criteria

The duration of the PhD is three years full time or five years part-time (2 and a half days a week). To be considered for the scholarship, candidates must have at least a 1st or strong 2:1 (or international equivalent) in an undergraduate or Master's level degree in a health-related discipline (e.g., Epidemiology, psychology, medical informatics, data science, health services research and evaluation) from recognised institutions (with evidence of substantial distinction level performance, for example in dissertation, research methods). Applications would also be welcomed from candidates with relevant clinical qualifications and experience looking to develop an academic portfolio.

How to apply

All completed applications must be received by **midnight Monday June 5th, 2017**. Applications must be submitted via KentVision under Social Policy PhD <https://www.kent.ac.uk/courses/postgraduate/126/social-policy>. Applications should include **all four** of the following items:

1. Research proposal (maximum 1000 words). This should include:
 - A proposed design for the evaluation of the social prescribing model based on the information provided in the outline document enclosed in this advert
 - Why you are interested in the project.
 - What your unique contribution to the project would be
2. A transcript of degree undergraduate and postgraduate marks to date and certificates, if completed.
3. The names and email addresses of two academic referees. References must also be received by **midnight Monday June 5th, 2017**. Please leave a suitable amount of time for your referees to respond to the reference request which is sent automatically upon submission of the PhD application in KentVision. If an alternative submission method is needed, referees can send their letter of recommendation directly to sspsr-pg-admin@kent.ac.uk via their professional email account.
4. A current CV.

Interviews will be held in the week commencing June 12th. Unfortunately we are unable to cover travel costs but will arrange telephone/Skype interviews where appropriate. For further academic details about the project, please contact Dr Sarah Hotham by email: S.Hotham@kent.ac.uk. For general questions about the academic process please email sspsr-pg-admin@kent.ac.uk