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PhD Studentship – Improving outcomes for children who have experienced adversity using the BERRI

UCL Department / Division

Research Department of Clinical, Educational and Health Psychology

Specific unit / Sub department

Psychoanalysis Unit & Child Attachment and Psychological Therapies Research Unit, Anna Freud Centre

Vacancy Information

The UCL Dept of Clinical, Educational and Health Psychology, in partnership with the Child Attachment and Psychological Therapies Research Unit (ChAPTRe) at the Anna Freud Centre, is offering a 3-year full-time studentship starting in October 2020 to work on the BERRI.

BERRI is a questionnaire and accompanying set of online tools to help identify and track the psychological needs of children who have experienced adversity (see www.BERRI.org.uk). There is already a large data set from BERRI about the needs of young people living in residential care, and we are starting to collect samples from children in foster care, secure settings and from education. Previous doctoral research has explored the validity and reliability of the measure.

This PhD studentship exists to support the development of the BERRI outcome metrics and app, and to help us disseminate our findings and maximise their impact. We envisage this PhD as comprising a series of studies analysing various elements of this data to help us understand it

better, with a particular focus on BERRI as a tool for mapping the psychological needs of children in Care. We have lots of questions that this PhD can help to answer. For example, how do children's needs vary by age or gender? Are scores different according to placement type? Do some types of needs mean that children are placed in children's homes rather than in foster families? How do needs change over time? What impact do different life events make on children's BERRI scores? How do scores relate to Adverse Childhood Experiences before the child came into Care, and proximal stressors they might be experiencing during their Care journey, such as school exclusion, legal proceedings, substance misuse, gang involvement, sexual exploitation, offending? Does BERRI correlate meaningfully with other measures? Do BERRI scores indicate risk of placement breakdown? Is it meaningful for our reports to give different advice according to scores on particular clusters of concerns within our five main categories (e.g. social skills deficits vs attachment and trust issues within the "Relationships" category; or placing self at risk vs self-harm vs risk to others within our "Risk" category)?

Person specification

Applicants should have a first or high upper 2nd class degree in psychology or related discipline and ideally a Masters (or near to completion) in one of those areas. They must have achieved a level of research training which would allow them to proceed to PhD. We are looking for applicants who are highly motivated, academically excellent and proficient with quantitative research methods. We want someone who loves answering clinical questions with data, and who feels confident with a range of quantitative research methods and statistical analysis. You will be competent in using SPSS and/or with R and other software for statistical data analysis. Familiarity with advanced statistical analysis techniques, such as multiple regression or factor analysis, would be an advantage. Experience writing papers for publication would be an advantage, as would experience contributing to grant applications. Beyond this, we want you to share our mission to improve the lives of children who have experienced adversity.

Supervision

Supervision will be shared between Dr Miriam Silver, Consultant Clinical Psychologist at LifePsychol Ltd, who developed the BERRI, with academic supervision from academic staff from ChAPTRe, with additional input from the Evidence Based Practice Unit (EBPU). Both are research partnerships between the Anna Freud National Centre for Children and Families, and University College London (UCL).

LifePsychol is a small clinical psychology company, that has particular expertise about children and families, particularly when it comes to attachment, parenting and recovery from adversity. We

work with local authorities, courts and placement providers to ensure we make the best possible decisions and provide the highest standards of care to improve children's psychological wellbeing. We are sponsoring this PhD because we are committed to evaluating everything we do, and this post is a critical link between our research and the services we provide. We want to improve what we do by learning from our data, and to publish our findings and show that what we do works, so that more organisations subscribe and we are able to reach more children.

ChAPTRe is co-directed by Dr Nick Midgley and Prof Pasco Fearon. The mission of the research unit is to be a space for developing and promoting research related to children and young people's mental health and emotional well-being. The particular focus is on understanding children's development (especially in relation to attachment and mentalization) and both evaluating and reaching a better understanding of psychological therapies for children and young people. Any enquiries relating to the project and/or suitability should be directed to Dr Miriam Silver (lifepsychol@gmail.com).

Deadline for applications: May 18th at 12 noon.

Interview date (tbc): May 28th or 29th.

Studentship Description

The studentship will be a tax-free stipend of £20,000 per annum. Applications are open for both home/EU and overseas applicants, but please note that the studentship will be the same, although fees are different for home/EU and overseas students. The successful applicant will be expected to demonstrate that they would be able to study on a full-time basis, if necessary supplementing this stipend.

UCL Taking Action for Equality

UCL is firmly committed to promoting equal opportunity. Our Equalities and Diversity Policy and Strategy underlies every aspect of our student selection process.

How to apply

If you wish to apply for the studentship you should email Helen King (helen.g.king@ucl.ac.uk) your CV (including the names of two referees) and a covering letter (750 words maximum) outlining your research interests, how your skills and experience fit with this project, what you hope to achieve from the PhD and your research experience to date. Please include contact details (telephone; e-mail). A transcript of your degree results would also be appreciated.

