Evidence synthesis of user experience for bilingual augmentative and alternative communication technology

Summary

This is an exciting opportunity to do a work placement on a project for the Welsh Government. This internship will work on evidence to help inform the development of policy interventions to bilingual provision of augmentative and alternative communication technology. The project involves synthesising available evidence in this field, to produce an overview to inform future policy development in the Welsh Government. 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 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 intern will work with teams including Neurodiversity Policy, Cymraeg 2050, the Welsh Language Policy Team in the Health, Social Care and Early Years (HSCEY) Group, and Health and Social Care Research. The internship will require working closely with policy officials and social 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

Evidence synthesis of user experience for bilingual augmentative and alternative communication technology.

Background

Augmentative and alternative communication (AAC) is any kind of communication that falls outside of typical spoken communication[1]. AAC devices help people who are non-verbal to communicate, for example some autistic people, those with motor neurone disease (MND) or those who have had a stroke. Electronic AAC devices can include voice output communication aids (VOCA), where a user clicks on letters or pictures and the device says what they've clicked on out loud, using either a synthesized or real recorded voice.

The Neurodiversity Policy Branch (ND Branch), Early Years, Childcare & Play Division, the Cymraeg 2050 Team and the Welsh Language Policy Team in Health, Social Care and Early Years within Welsh Government have been involved in offering an active choice with Welsh language AAC devices. Anecdotally, policy colleagues are informed that the gold-standard would be bilingual AAC devices, allowing a bilingual user to communicate in English and Welsh easily and enabling them to code switch between Welsh and English in everyday settings with the least friction possible (for example, between or within sentences). Policy colleagues are looking to understand the best user experience with AAC technology for bilingual speakers. This work directly supports the aims of Mwy na geiriau / More than just words – which is the Welsh Government's Welsh Language plan for health and social care, and delivery of the Active Offer, which is the provision of services and support in Welsh without requiring individuals to ask for it.

Aim

To synthesize available evidence on user experience for bilingual AAC technology.

Research Questions

Questions may include:

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[1] Communication aids and augmentative and alternative communication (AAC) - Sense

- What are the key features of available bilingual AAC technology e.g. which languages are included and in which countries have they been used?

- Is there a body of research evidence exploring optimal user experience for bilingual AAC technology?

- What key requirements have been identified from users (and other key stakeholders) for the best experience when using bilingual AAC technology? For example, which features allow users to seamlessly code-switch between languages (such as between or within sentences)?

- What is the quality of the evidence identified?

Planned methods

This may be informed by a scoping review to firstly explore the extent of the research literature on user experience of bilingual AAC technology. This could then be expanded into a more comprehensive literature review of any identified evidence.

Anticipated project outcomes:

- A report, sent to relevant policy teams and social research colleagues. This report may include a summary of key features from existing bilingual technology for AAC devices and a discussion of the available evidence on user experience for bilingual AAC technology. The report will also appraise the quality of the identified evidence and provide recommendations to Welsh Government on key features to include for bilingual AAC devices which support English and Welsh, with a view to ensuring the best user-experience. The report may also be published as a Government Social Research report on the Welsh Government website.
- Development and refinement of reports.
- A presentation of the findings to the relevant policy and social research teams, to inform the final report.

Internship responsibilities and requirements

The internship will last for a maximum of 3 months. Full time students are expected to step back from their PhD to focus on the placement for its duration in line with ESRC guidelines (ESRC Postgraduate Funding Guide p. 27). 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 3 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 Welsh Government 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:

- The ability to understand the needs of policy colleagues and to design research questions within the review which can address these.
- Experience of evidence synthesis methods, including for example literature and/or systematic review.
- Strong organisational skills, with a high level of attention to detail and an ability to maintain clear records throughout the review process.
- Ability to critically appraise research studies and to summarise their strengths and weaknesses.
- Ability to produce concise, well written documents, presenting complex evidence in an accessible format.
- Ability to communicate research findings effectively to specialist and non-specialist audiences.

Start date of internship
January 2026 (exact date to be negotiated). There may be some flexibility dependent on individual circumstances.

Funding and costs
Reasonable travel costs for students not normally based in Cardiff can be met. Requests should be consistent with Wales Graduate School for the Social Sciences (WGSSS) guidelines. Applications from students requiring additional funding for travel and accommodation will not be treated less favourably. For any queries on this please contact Katy Marrin Katy.Marrin001@gov.wales and Jo Coates Joanne.Coates@gov.wales.

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.

Nationality requirements

Eligibility for taking up an internship on this scheme is dependent on meeting the [Civil Service Nationality rules](). Please check that you are eligible before applying. Those who do not meet the eligibility criteria will not be able to take up a placement opportunity.

Queries

Any queries relating to the post or application process should be directed to: [semele.mylona@gov.wales]()

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