

PhD placement/PIPS: Pathways to a Children's Environment Award at Kew

Placement supervisor:

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Placement team/department:

Learning and Participation

Placement overview and objectives:

The early years of a child's life present a golden opportunity. During this period, the brain develops faster than at any other time – an astounding million neural connections are made per second. Whilst genetics provide the initial map for development, it is everyday experiences and relationships in early childhood that help shape the adults we become. There's compelling evidence to suggest that we are born with an innate need to explore and seek connections with nature (known as 'biophilia'). At a time when children's brains are at their most receptive and adaptable, experiences in nature can help stimulate the senses and inform early values of the natural world. Studies show that our formative memories of nature – which can be as simple as feeling grass underfoot for the first time – can leave a powerful imprint and profoundly influence pro-environmental attitudes and behaviours as adults.

The Family and Early Years Team at RBG Kew is exploring the creation of a Children's Environmental Award, a new initiative designed to give children the knowledge and confidence to have a stronger voice in shaping environmental learning. This would complement the principles of Kew's existing [Young Environmental Leader Award | Kew](#) to a younger age group, creating opportunities for children and their families to contribute ideas, share experiences, and take responsibility for the natural environment in their community.

The placement will support this exploratory work by gathering evidence on existing practice within cultural and environmental organisations, and by engaging with families, children, and colleagues across Kew. The student will help assess the potential structure, aims, and feasibility of such an award.

The main outcome will be a set of recommendations outlining opportunities, challenges, and pathways for establishing a Children's Environmental Award at Kew.

Tasks to be undertaken/possible projects:

- Research existing models of Environmental Awards and children's participation in cultural, educational, and environmental organisations.
- Explore examples of governance, inclusivity, and safeguarding that could inform the design of a Children's Environmental Award.
- Support consultation with families, children, and colleagues across Kew
- Analyse findings and identify key themes and opportunities.
- Produce a report with recommendations to guide decision-making on the potential Award.

Required skills and experience:

- Strong research and analytical skills.
- Communication and consultation skills, particularly with children and diverse stakeholders.
- Ability to synthesise evidence into clear, practical recommendations.
- Organisational skills and time management skills to manage multiple strands of work.
- Interest in family and early years education, children's participation, science capital and enquiry-based environmental learning.

Skills and areas of knowledge to be developed through the placement:

- Research and evaluation within cultural and educational settings.
- Stakeholder consultation, including with families and children.
- Understanding of governance and participation models for children and young people.
- Report writing and formulating evidence-based recommendations.
- Cross-team collaboration with Family and Early Years, Learning, and Science colleagues.

Location of work:

Kew Gardens, Richmond. Hybrid work.

Length of placement:

3 months. Shorter/longer placements possible.

Provisional start date:

Any time

Deadline for applications:

Applications open until filled (no fixed deadline).