

We Welsh Government

Research in Practice Project Placement Proposal

A Guardianship Scheme for Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children (UASC) in Wales?

Summary of project

Following the joint briefing by the Bevan Foundation, Children's Legal Centre Wales, TGP Cymru, and The Children's Society, the Welsh Government (WG) will conduct a review of available evidence on Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children (UASC) in Wales, focusing on how these children navigate the asylum process and the support they receive. The review will compare guardianship schemes across EU Member States and provide a focussed review of the Scottish Guardianship scheme to inform a tailored Welsh approach. It will assess whether professionals have adequate experience with the asylum process and identify challenges such as isolation, access to legal advice, disparities in support, and risks of missing episodes or exploitation. The effectiveness of statutory roles, including Personal Advisors and advocates, will also be explored.

About Welsh Government Research in Practice Placements

The Welsh Government is the devolved Government for Wales with responsibility for the economy, education, transport, health and the Welsh NHS, business, public services and the environment of Wales.

A placement in Welsh Government offers a unique opportunity to work alongside policy officials and researchers, applying your research skills in a live policy environment. You'll have the opportunity to develop a range of research skills while deepening your understanding of how evidence shapes decision-making in Welsh Government.

The placement will be based alongside the members of the [Government Social Research \(GSR\) profession](#). GSR provides high-quality analytical advice and independent evidence to inform key policy decisions. Their work supports the full policy cycle—from understanding and development through to implementation, monitoring, and evaluation. Placement students will also contribute to wider efforts to support policy colleagues in shaping and delivering effective policy.

The Project: A Guardianship Scheme for Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children (UASC) in Wales?

Background

The UN Committee on the Rights of the Child has recommended a Guardianship Service for over twenty years. Under the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014, UASC have rights equal to looked after children, including access to personal advisors, advocates, health, education, and third-sector support such as the Asylum Rights Programme. The Nation of Sanctuary Plan (2019) and subsequent ministerial commitments have prioritised exploring a Guardianship Service to assess current support and gaps for UASC. Research is required to determine how a national Guardianship Service in Wales might improve UASC support in navigating asylum processes, reduce risks like exploitation and criminalisation, and complement existing statutory roles.

Aims and Objectives

To conduct a review of the relevant literature and evidence regarding how unaccompanied asylum-seeking children are supported under current WG legislation with view to informing the development of a formal consultation and or policy options analysis exercise regarding the need for a guardianship scheme for UASC in Wales.

Anticipated project outcomes

- A comprehensive report synthesising and summarising findings from academic, grey literature and secondary data analysis using existing data on UASC, personal advisers and advocate services.
- A presentation of findings to relevant policy and analytical teams.

Methods

To deliver this project the internship is likely to involve:

- Engagement with policy officials to refine research questions
- Reviews of existing evidence including evaluations, academic research and grey literature that outline how UASC are navigating the asylum system in Wales
- How Guardianship models in Scotland and across the EU compare with regards to meeting the needs of UASC

- A review of existing data relating to advocates, personal advisers and UASC to determine opportunities for analysis on service access

The project will pull together this information to provide an overview of the evidence relating to how current statutory provision is meeting the needs of UASC and what gaps in current services exist and how these gaps may contribute to risks like exploitation and criminalisation.

Skills

We welcome individuals who can bring the following skills and experience to the role:

- The ability to discuss with policy team to understand their needs and to carry out desk research of contributing factors
- Strong literature review and evidence appraisal skills, including ability to synthesise a wide range of evidence
- Strong analytical skills, with the ability to critically assess and interpret both quantitative and qualitative data
- Ability to evaluate research findings and apply them to a Welsh policy context
- Ability to produce concise reports, presenting complex evidence in an accessible format.

Placement timescales

The placement will be for a period of 3 months. The placement is expected to start no earlier than May 2026.

The start date will be discussed with the successful applicant and there may be some flexibility dependent on individual circumstances.

Funding and expenses

This opportunity is only open to students funded through the WGSSS Studentship scheme (awarded from October 2024 onwards) who are required to complete a Research in Practice placement. The placement is unpaid, however you will continue to receive your ESRC stipend. Welsh Government is not able to cover any relocation costs associated with the placement.

Reasonable travel and subsistence expenses incurred while carrying out placement-related activities may be claimed, subject to prior agreement with your placement supervisor and in line with the Welsh Government's Travel and Subsistence Policy

Working arrangements

Welsh Government working hours are 37 hours per week, 7 hours 24 minutes per day on average. With prior agreement with the placement supervisor, you may be able to work flexible hours in accordance with Welsh Government practices. For students registered on a part-time studentship, this placement may be available on a part-time basis over a longer time frame, 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.

It is anticipated that the successful applicant will work in a hybrid way between home and a Welsh Government office during their placement. This may change depending on Welsh Government policy. Any changes to working arrangements will be discussed with successful applicants.

Nationality requirements and security vetting

Eligibility for taking up this placement in Welsh Government 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.

Successful applicants will be required to undergo Welsh Government's vetting procedures (which apply to temporary as well as permanent staff). This will involve the completion of a Baseline Personnel Security Standard (BPSS) application form and a Security Questionnaire.

Contacts

For more information about this placement project, here are the contact details:
gwen.brown006@gov.wales

If you require information about Research in Practice placement opportunities in Welsh Government please contact:

Katy Marrin and James Carey, Joint Head of GSR Workforce Planning and Professional Standards

headofgsrworkforceplanningprofessionalstandards@gov.wales

If you have any other queries about Research in Practice Placements please contact:

Sian Shepherd at Wales Graduate School for the Social Sciences

escrip@bangor.ac.uk