

PhD Internships at the Wales Centre for Public Policy

Background

The Wales Centre for Public Policy (WCPP) is funded by the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC), Welsh Government and Cardiff University. It works with leading policy experts to provide ministers, the civil service and public services with high quality evidence and independent advice that helps them to improve policy decisions and outcomes. The Centre also undertakes research to advance understanding of the role which evidence can play in supporting better policy making and public service delivery. More information on the Centre is available [here](http://www.wcpp.org.uk)

This is the fourth year of our PhD Internship Scheme which provides opportunities for ESRC funded PhD students located on Doctoral Training Partnership (DTP) pathways, to spend three months in the Centre to apply and develop their research skills and techniques to real-world issues with high topicality. These internships provide an excellent opportunity for PhD students to gain practical experience of undertaking research in an organisation that works at the interface of research and policymaking. You will work alongside staff who have gained PhD's and currently work with policy makers and practitioners in providing evidence to improve policy-making and public service outcomes in Wales. Previous PhD students have studied the following topics:

- [The Welsh Government's use of policy tools for mainstreaming equalities](#)
- [Collaboration and policy implementation at the local level in Wales](#)
- [Lived experience evidence in disability policy making](#)
- [What is the role of evidence in shaping suicide prevention policy in Wales?](#)

The experience of previous PhD students is summarised [here](#) and [here](#).

The internship will increase the candidates' understanding of policymaking in Wales as well as improve their research skills (e.g., literature searching/reviewing, designing a research plan). You will also have the chance to develop a wide range of practical skills (e.g. report writing, communication, time management, team working, developing impact strategies) that will be crucial for your future career. The internship will also allow the candidate to extend their network amongst academics, policy makers and practitioners in Wales and beyond.

We welcome applications for internships which examine the role of evidence in policymaking and/or the impact of knowledge mobilisation. This could be in a particular policy field of your PhD or more generally. Some further information on areas of focus and potential research questions are provided below.

Areas of focus and potential research questions

Assessing the impact of the Wales Centre for Public Policy

Background

The Centre is committed to maximising its 'impact' (defined as the contribution that our research makes to the economy, society, culture, and public policy, beyond academia). It is important to demonstrate and document where our work makes a difference. The Centre uses an 'impact locker' to store evidence of impact on an ongoing basis. This includes citations of the Centre in reports, press releases, news reports, Ministerial letters, Parliamentary Inquiries where Centre staff give evidence, and plenary sessions where the Centre's reports or provision of expert evidence is drawn upon. We track where the Centre's evidence is used through Overton which collects citation data of our reports. It shows who cites the outputs including sources such as the OECD, EU, governments across the world etc. We also use a monitoring service and Google alerts to notify us of any mention of the Centre and receive testimonials from Welsh Government and public services which highlight the impact of our work.

Methods

The project will begin with an analysis of the evidence in this 'impact locker' to select projects to conduct further research examining the impact of projects, which may span our work with Welsh Government and public services. The researcher will liaise with colleagues in the Centre to determine which projects to select and the rationale for this choice. We may also explore a project that may have been less impactful or where anticipated impact did not materialise.

We want to assess impact on policy and practice change, decision-making processes, and attitudes. The chosen methodology will need to gather data on these three factors but also assess the hard to capture effects of our work. We will also focus on specific process factors that are established in the literature that are most likely to enhance impact (e.g., relationship building, ensuring buy-in and ownership, approaches to evidence synthesis, presentation, and engagement, etc.)

Interviews are likely to be the preferred method for studying impact (Pederson et al. 2020). We have used interviews with key stakeholders examining the impact of a project on children looked-after which included project steering group members and others from across Welsh local government, who were not directly involved in the research, to assess the 'reach' and 'significance' of the work. This research helped in understanding our impact and improving our ways of working and a repeat of this work on a different project is also likely to be beneficial. There would also be potential to conduct a reflection session with staff to assess how impact was facilitated in projects.

Outputs

Outputs will include a full write-up of each case but also a short impact summary which could be used as a way of highlighting to external audiences, including our funders, where our work has led to 'real-world' impact for an organisation. These case studies would focus on what impact was

achieved and how this was facilitated. The text will also be included in the Centre's Impact Report which is currently being drafted.

Student specification

For each internship, we would expect the student to have:

- Strong research and analytical skills including experience of undertaking literature reviews and qualitative methods (e.g., semi-structured interviews).
- Experience of analytical work in the areas of social or public policy.
- An interest in writing concise, well-written documents e.g., blog posts, summaries of research etc. aimed at non-specialist audiences.

The WCPP is committed to supporting and promoting equality, diversity, and an inclusive research environment. We value the indispensable contribution made by researchers of all backgrounds to our work. We warmly welcome applications for these internships from currently underrepresented groups, including students/researchers with disabilities, and Black, Asian, and Minority Ethnic communities.

Length and start date of the internship

The internship would last for a period of three months and be based in the Wales Centre for Public Policy at sbarc|spark in Cardiff University. Staff work in the office for two days a week and we encourage the student to do likewise. For students registered on a part-time studentship, internships are also available on a part-time basis, and this will need to be negotiated with the Centre.

We are flexible on the start date of the internship as this will depend on individual circumstances.

Funding and costs

Reasonable travel and accommodation costs for students not normally based in Cardiff can be met by the Wales Centre for Public Policy. Requests should be consistent with university guidelines. It would not usually be expected that a Cardiff registered student would need to reclaim travel/accommodation expenses. Applications from students requiring additional funding for travel and accommodation will not be treated less favourably. For any queries on this please contact: info@wcpp.org.uk

Application process

We welcome applications from students on *all* pathways. If you are interested in an internship, you should first discuss this opportunity with your supervisor and get their approval.

Please send a letter of application and a CV to info@wcpp.org.uk by **23:59 15th February 2026** please cc. esrc@bangor.ac.uk when submitting your application.

Each document should be no more than two sides of A4. Your letter should outline the focus of your internship — **Assessing the impact of the Wales Centre for Public Policy**, including your ideas on the methodological approach to the study and ideas on ways to disseminate the findings.

You should also confirm that you have the agreement of your main supervisor, specify a suggested start date, and include how you feel the internship would be of benefit to your Doctoral programme.

There will likely be an interview as part of the selection process, and these will take place using MS Teams.