

ESRC Welsh Graduate School for Social Sciences

Research in Practice Placement Opportunity

The following information has been provided by the Host Organisation and outlines the opportunity available. Any queries about this placement should be addressed to the host organisation in the details provided below.

This placement is aimed at Postgraduate Researchers who have funding through the ESRC Doctoral Training Partnership from October 2024 onwards, who must complete a Research in Practice placement as part of their award.

Name of Host Organisation	CASCADE
Registered Address	sbarc spark, Maindy Rd, Cardiff CF24 4HQ
Website	CASCADE – Children’s Social Care Research and Development Centre
Brief description of the Host organisation:	CASCADE is the leading centre for evaluative research in children’s social care in the UK and sits within the School of Social Sciences (SOCSI), a leading centre of excellence in social sciences and education research with particular expertise in quantitative methods.
Company registration Number	

PLACEMENT OPPORTUNITY

Placement role title: <i>e.g Policy officer</i>	Data scientist / Data analyst
Background/expected impact of the project:	<p>Measuring the impact of Flying Start using a quasi-experiment and data from the SAIL databank</p> <p><i>Background</i> Poverty negatively impacts children's health and education outcomes, contributing to long-term</p>

generational inequalities in the UK. Effective early years interventions can reduce inequalities upon arrival to school and provide long-term economic benefits into adulthood. All four UK nations have strong political wills to tackle early years inequalities through interventions such as free childcare. However, not all early years programmes may work as intended or be cost-effective, and finding credible evidence of 'what works' to improve outcomes is a policy challenge.

Flying Start is a flagship Welsh early-years policy introduced in 2007 and available to families living in some of Wales's most deprived areas. Every family living in a Flying Start is entitled to free part-time childcare for 2-3 years olds; an intensive health visiting service; access to parenting support; and support for speech, language and communication development. Due to its popularity and perceived success, Flying Start has been expanded twice (2012 - 2016, 2021 – present).

This project is part of an ESRC-funded study to measure the impact of Flying Start using a novel quasi-experimental design (Regression Discontinuity) and routinely collected administrative data from the SAIL databank. The project team has access to a wide collection of data related to child and maternal health, social care and education.

The internship

The intern will work within a small research team to support ongoing analysis of data from the SAIL databank. The intern will support the team to analyse health and social care outcomes in the SAIL databank and do subgroup analyses of impact.

Impact

Flying Start is a flagship early-years policy, and the study's findings are highly relevant to Welsh policymaking. The project team maintains close

	<p>communications with relevant teams in Welsh Government about this project. This project is also part of a series of studies undertaken by CASCADE to measure the impact of early-years interventions (alongside an evaluation of Sure Start in Northern Ireland). For more info, see on our approach follow the links to our previous webinars (link, youtube link).</p>
<p>Outline of duties/description of opportunity</p>	<p>The internship will require working closely with senior quantitative researchers on the team. It will offer an opportunity to further develop generic skills (such as report writing and making presentations), advanced quantitative skills, and to enhance policy knowledge.</p> <p>Interns will benefit from:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Gaining a better understanding of work in a research centre which specialises in evaluations. - Insight into the SAIL databank and how to work with routinely collected administrative data - Working with large databases in secure Trusted Research Environments - Opportunities to work with policy colleagues and non-academics to consider how research findings may be applied to Wales and the rest of the UK - Opportunity to produce reproducible code and documentation - Transferable skills and knowledge; - Experience of contributing to future research and funding bid development (optional, based on intern interests) - Time management skills and - Report writing skills
<p>Expected output(s)/deliverable(s)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Descriptive statistics on mothers and children in the study - Analysis of the impact of Flying Start on a range of outcomes and how these effects may vary by age of mother, marital status and other demographic factors - Summary report on findings and implications for policy

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - A presentation of the findings to CASCADE colleagues with an option to present to relevant outside organisations - Option to co-develop a research paper for submission to a peer-reviewed journal <p>We can be flexible and try to match deliverables with the interests of the intern.</p>
<p>Skills and experience required for the role</p>	<p>We welcome individuals who can bring the following skills and experience to the role:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Quantitative data analysis skills, including the ability to undertake a range of statistical, numerical, and analytical techniques using appropriate software such as R, or Python - Strong evidence appraisal skills related to evaluations/ causal inference - The ability to discuss with the research team (which includes non-quantitative researchers) to understand their needs and to carry out desk research and data analysis - Ability to evaluate research findings and work with colleagues to consider how they may be applied - Ability to produce concise, well-written documents, presenting complex evidence in an accessible format <p>Desirable:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Knowledge of Regression Discontinuity design and quasi-experiment designs - Knowledge of early years and/or child and maternal health - Previous experience working with highly restricted administrative data (examples: SAIL databank, Longitudinal Census Study data). - Experience of doing analysis within notebooks (Jupyter, Quarto, R Markdown)
<p>Please indicate which of the following skills could be developed or applied during the placement, you may select more than one.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Research skills <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Communication skills <input type="checkbox"/> Project management <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Policy understanding or engagement <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Collaboration / teamwork <input type="checkbox"/> Data collection <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Specific methodologies (please specify):

	<p>- Quasi-experiment designs (Regression discontinuity design)</p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Software skills (please specify): Working with large databases (SAIL), SQL, R/ Python and the use of analysis notebooks</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Professional and transferable skills</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Other (please specify):</p>
<p>What support will be provided for the Postgraduate Researcher <i>e.g necessary resources, training, support and equipment for the student to undertake their placement</i></p>	<p>We will cover the cost of SAIL data access for the applicant and any related SAIL training costs. We will also provide IT equipment for the student to undertake their placement.</p> <p>We cannot cover any travel or relocation costs to Cardiff.</p>

KEY INFORMATION	
Number of placements available:	1
Location of placement	sbarc spark, Maindy Rd, Cardiff CF24 4HQ
Placement duration:	3 month (Full time) or 6 months (Part-time)
Full time or part-time attend in a single block or spaced out over period of XXX months	3 month (Full time) or 6 months (Part-time)
Working hours or core hours	<p>37 hours per week (if full-time).</p> <p>With prior agreement with the placement supervisor, you may be able to work flexible hours in accordance with Cardiff University 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 CASCADE 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.</p>
In-person, online or hybrid:	Hybrid. SAIL data access is highly restricted but can be accessed remotely. However, we would like the applicant to be in Cardiff on some days at the beginning of the project to work on analysis with the research team.

Anticipated start date:	No earlier than September 2026 (with some onboarding to take place before start date)
Security/health and safety restrictions (if relevant)	<p><i>Will the postgraduate researcher need to provide a form of ID, security vetting, sign a GDPR form, etc, civil service nationality rules etc.</i></p> <p>The researcher must complete Safe Research Training beforehand. More information is available here: Safe Researcher Training - SAIL Databank.</p> <p>Successful applicants will have to undergo Cardiff University Vetting procedures.</p>
Language requirements (if relevant)	

HOW TO APPLY	
Closing date and time for applications	18 May 2026
How to submit an application	<p><i>Details of what the applicant needs to submit e.g CV, cover letter, application form etc</i></p> <p>Short CV (one page max) Cover letter outlining relevant experience and skills (600 words max)</p>
Recruitment process	<p><i>The Host Organisation is responsible for processing the applications received for this opportunity and applications will be processed as follows:</i></p> <p>Initial sift of applications (Early June) Online interviews (Late June)</p>
Contact name and email for any queries related to the placement:	<p><i>Meng Le Zhang (zhangm19@cardiff.ac.uk) (Main contact until May – may be slow to contact afterwards)</i></p> <p><i>Martin Elliott (ElliottMC1@cardiff.ac.uk) (Quicker contact for queries between May and September)</i></p>

EQUALITY, DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION	
<i>Equality, diversity and inclusion in the workplace is about valuing all people equally, fairly and with respect, avoiding all forms of unlawful discrimination irrespective of their age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage or civil partnership, pregnancy or maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, or sexual orientation.</i>	
Do you agree to uphold the principles of equality, diversity, and inclusion throughout the placement process and experience.	Yes
Does your organisation have an EDI policy?	Yes
FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE	
<i>WGSSS Postgraduate Researchers receive their studentship stipend whilst attending their Research in Practice placement/opportunity.</i>	
<i>It is expected that any travel expenses incurred during the course of the placement i.e. travelling to business meetings or placement events, will be covered by the placement host.</i>	
Please confirm if your organisation would be willing to contribute towards additional expenses	Yes (no additional travel costs expected)