Post-Doctoral Research Fellow
Growing up in left behind places: Children as researchers and change-makers’

Unit: WELS (Wellbeing, Education and Language Studies – HWSC)
Salary: £42,149 to £44,706
Location: Milton Keynes
Please quote reference: 19946
Terms: Fixed Term Contract till 31/05/2024 0.6FTE
Closing Date: 11th July, 2022 - 12:00

About the Role
We are pleased to announce this opportunity for an experienced social scientist to contribute to a new 21-month research project. ‘Growing up in left behind places: Children as researchers and change-makers’.

Applications are invited for a Post-Doctoral Research Fellow to contribute to this qualitative research project, led by the University of Huddersfield in partnership with the Open University and the University of Lincoln.

Funded by the Nuffield foundation, this project is about children’s experience of, and relationships with, their local neighbourhood, but also seeks to explore the complexity at play about how living in ‘left behind’ places affect their lives now and in the future. The project is being conducted as part of the third wave of the international Growing up in Cities project involving partner projects in 14 countries worldwide but is given focus by the contemporary social and policy context for children in the UK.

Under the leadership of Principal Investigators (Professors Helen Lomax and Barry Percy-Smith) and reporting directly to Dr Wendy Turner (Co-I at the OU) the post holder will have a key role in the development of research within the case study site (Coffee Hall, Milton Keynes) and in the generation, analysis and national and international dissemination of research across the project as a whole.

The post is one of three being advertised in each of the participating HEIs: University of Huddersfield and the University of Lincoln.
This post will be based at The Open University, Faculty of WELS - HWSC School, managed by Dr Wendy Turner (Co-I, HWSC).

Offered on a part-time basis (0.6) with core days (ideally Tues-Thursday) this project will involve some weekend, evening and school holiday work (i.e., when children as co-researchers are available). Ideally the candidate will be available to take up the position at the beginning of September 2022 when the study commences or as soon as possible thereafter. The post holder will be employed for the duration of the project and will contribute to project set up through to research output and dissemination.
About the research project

This ambitious research responds to recent rapid social, economic and cultural challenges affecting children and families. Rising child poverty, the cost of living crisis, digital inequality and the effects of Covid-19 have transformed contemporary childhood. Yet, the way in which these changes impact the quality of children’s everyday lives and life chances and the role of ‘place’ in mediating these impacts are not fully understood. The study responds to this gap in knowledge, generating robust new insights to inform policy and practice aspirations to ‘Build back Fairer’ in order to understand and respond to the disadvantages experienced by so many children. This participatory action research will involve children as active research partners and change-makers, in dialogue with parents/ carers, wider community and local stakeholders to explore possibilities for change. The primary focus on children aged 10-15 years growing up in contexts of disadvantage, will be explored in three contrasting, ‘left behind’ locations in England – Deighton, a poorer neighbourhood within the former northern industrial town of Huddersfield; Coffee Hall, a poorer suburban neighbourhood in the affluent new town of Milton Keynes; and Mablethorpe, an economically disadvantaged rural east midland coastal area. Innovative participatory and arts- based methods will research the opportunities and constraints of local neighbourhoods for children from their perspectives, exploring and comparing the impacts of complex and intersecting place-based and socio-economic influences on children’s wellbeing, developing sense of citizenship and agency as social actors. Working in partnership with local authority, voluntary sector and community stakeholders and with the international Growing up in Cities network, this landmark study will create impact for multiple stakeholders at a local, national and international level through new knowledge and approaches for responding to childhood inequality.

Key Responsibilities

Literature Review
• Undertake a literature review and compile a demographic profile of the study site; prepare reports and publications as required.

Programme of Research
Undertake participatory and arts-based research with children and community stakeholders under the direction of the PIs and Co-Is, to include:
- Recruitment of children as researchers using child-centred ethical protocols to support informed consent through the project
- Contribute to the development and implementation of innovative digital, mobile methods for researching with children including documentary photography, mapping and participatory filmmaking
- Conduct participatory research in the field with children and community members in partnership with artists and partner participatory filmmaker
- Develop and maintain positive relationships with children and communities in order to support children in actively participating in the research including in analysis, peer writing and local and national dissemination
- Training of children in curation, analysis and dissemination of creative visual data and in community-based video-interviewing in ways which recognise children’s expertise
- Conduct of informal observations of the case study site
- Undertake interviews and focus groups with parents, professionals and adult community members
- Organise and contribute to the facilitation of community change events in the study site;
- Contribute to the facilitation of stakeholder action learning events
Contribute to the production of high-quality research outputs, including reports, journal papers and other publications including non-textual (e.g., animation, film) outputs of national/international standing.

Project management
- Participate in and help to organise research activities, seminars, research meetings and events including within the study sites and the university and partner universities.
- The candidate will be responsible for managing the day-to-day activities of the project including planning and organising research activities, scheduling, monitoring and reporting on progress of research.
- Managing data in accordance with GDPR, institutional and professional ethical requirements
- Data curation and archiving in national data archives

Liaison and Networking
- Liaise with internal and external collaborators – the partner universities, project advisory group and national and local policymakers and stakeholders

Continuous Professional Development
- We will support the candidate to undertake continuous professional development activities in line with the post.

Skills and experience

Essential:
Qualifications
- PhD or equivalent in social science or related discipline (good candidates may be accepted with a PhD pending, subject to publication record)
- Extensive knowledge specific to project/area (e.g., Children’s Geographies, Sociology of Childhood, Youth/Community studies)

Experience
- Experience of relevant research methods e.g., qualitative research
- Direct work with children in communities with experience working with children in contexts of disadvantage desirable

Skills and Knowledge
- Ability to conduct qualitative research in communities
- IT literacy: data management and storage and compliance with ethics and GDPR; Experience of, or desire to learn, data analysis software
- Excellent written communication, including the ability to write reports and research outputs
- Ability to prioritise own workload and work to specified deadlines under pressure
- Ability to understand and communicate complex subjects using visual, written and oral formats
- Skills specific to project/area e.g., children’s geographies, work with marginalised communities, cultural sensitivity and researching sensitive topics

Competencies and Personal Attributes
- Flexible approach to workload
- Ability to work on own and as part of a team
- Enthusiasm and commitment

Desirable:
Experience
- Knowledge and experience of research ethics with children
- Use creative and participatory action research methods
- Authorship of research outputs of national/international standing
- Working with children in contexts of disadvantage
- Research in specific study area

**Competencies and Personal Attributes**
- Be a car driver

*The successful candidate will undertake or hold current and acceptable DBS clearance*

If you would like further details about the role before making an application then please email your query through to Resourcing-Hub@open.ac.uk quoting the reference number and job title or contact [insert name of RA and direct telephone number]