

ABOUT LOUGHBOROUGH UNIVERSITY

SCHOOL OF SOCIAL, POLITICAL AND GEOGRAPHICAL SCIENCES

**RESEARCH ASSOCIATE – CENTRE FOR CHILD AND FAMILY RESEARCH
(CCFR)**

REQ16012

JANUARY 2016

As part of the University's ongoing commitment to redeployment, please note that this vacancy may be withdrawn at any stage of the recruitment process if a suitable redeployee is identified.

JOB DESCRIPTION

Job Grade: Research Grade 6

Job Purpose:

The Centre for Child and Family Research is a well-established research centre, undertaking a programme of national and international research on the effectiveness of services for vulnerable children. The Centre has a reputation for developing innovative methods for conducting research and evaluation in social policy and specifically child welfare. The current funding comprises both competitive research grants and single tender projects from a range of Government departments, children's charities and philanthropic organisations.

The Research Associate appointed will work on projects related to the costs and outcomes research programme, including the development of the Cost Calculator for Children's Services (CCfCS). The Research Associate will work as part of a team and contribute to all aspects of the research cycle, from data collection to dissemination of findings.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

In 2000 the Centre for Child and Family Research (CCFR) at Loughborough University was commissioned by the Department for Health to undertake a research study to explore the relationship between needs, costs and outcomes of services provided to looked after children (Ward, Holmes and Soper, 2008). One of the key outputs from this work has been the development of a software tool: the Cost Calculator for Children's Services (CCfCS). The CCfCS is an award winning, purpose designed software tool that estimates the costs of social care processes and placements for looked after children. The CCfCS calculates costs from the

bottom up. Starting with the child, the CCfCS explores what support and services each child has received over a given time period, and uses the child level data (based on data that is routinely collected by local authorities) to build up the costs over time from the bottom up. These unit costs are brought together with data concerning placement fees and allowances, management and capital expenditure along with routinely collected data on children's needs, characteristics and placements to estimate the costs of placing looked after children for a given time period. The CCfCS facilitates comparisons between the relative value of different types of care, making it easier to estimate the potential benefits of introducing a range of alternative care packages. Analyses of costs with respect to the outcomes variables included in the CCfCS are also available.

The CCfCS, and the methodology that underpins it, form the basis of an ongoing, and growing international programme of research and development. Work continues to adapt the CCfCS for different service areas and countries, and the research has been extended to explore the needs, costs and outcomes for all vulnerable children and their families, with a range of projects focused on specific services areas or interventions. The appointee will be required to work across a range of projects in the costs and outcomes programme, including the secondary analysis of existing data sets.

Job Duties:

- Liaise with local authorities and other organisations to organise access to data and to arrange data collection
- Collect, clean and check quantitative data, and carry out linking and matching data across different data sets
- Coordinate the field work to be undertaken in Children's Services Departments and other agencies
- Develop research questionnaires and proformas
- Conduct interviews with vulnerable children and families, for example, children at risk of significant harm
- Conduct interviews, including focus groups, with selected staff from social care and other agencies
- Conduct primary and secondary analysis, including analysis of existing data sets
- Apply the CCFR unit costing methodology to cost calculations (training will be given)
- Undertake analysis of quantitative data (descriptive, bivariate and multivariate analyses)
- Prepare presentations and reports including data presentations

- Disseminate the methodology and findings from the research programme on a local, national, and possibly international basis
- Interpret research findings to identify key messages for policy and practice
- Write papers for funders and papers for academic journals and texts
- Contribute to the development and costing of research proposals to maximise income into the Centre
- Develop a reputation as a researcher in the social care field both by sustaining and developing links with other organisations and through conference presentations
- Participate fully in the development of the research centre and the academic life of the university, including helping to develop student research skills
- Undertake additional tasks undertaken by the Centre as and when requested

Special Conditions:

- Willing and able to travel extensively in the UK and spend periods away from home
- Prepared to work beyond normal working hours when necessary
- The post is subject to a satisfactory enhanced Disclosure statement

Other:

All staff have a statutory responsibility to take reasonable care of themselves, others and the environment and to prevent harm by their acts or omissions. All staff are therefore required to adhere to the University's Health, Safety and Environmental Policy & Procedures.

All staff should hold a duty and commitment to observing the University's Equality & Diversity policy and procedures at all times. Duties must be carried out in accordance with relevant Equality & Diversity legislation and University policies/procedures.

The University is committed to enabling staff to maintain a health work-home balance and has a number of family-friendly policies which are available at: <http://www.lboro.ac.uk/services/hr/a-z/family-leave-policy-and-procedure---page.html>

We also offer an on-campus nursery with subsidised places, subsidised places at local holiday clubs and a childcare voucher scheme (further details are available at: <http://www.lboro.ac.uk/services/hr/a-z/>). In addition, the University is supportive, wherever possible, of flexible working arrangements.

We also strive to create a culture that supports equality and celebrates diversity throughout the campus. The University holds a Bronze Athena SWAN award which recognises the importance of support for women at all stages of their academic career. For further information on Athena SWAN see <http://www.lboro.ac.uk/services/hr/athena-swan/>.

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PERSON SPECIFICATION

Job Title: Research Associate

Job Grade: Research Grade 6

	Essential	Desirable	Stage to be Assessed
Experience	<p>Up-to-date knowledge of children's services roles and responsibilities</p> <p>Experience of data analysis and presentation using spreadsheets, statistical packages or databases</p> <p>Experience of collecting, managing and analysing large data sets</p> <p>Demonstrate an understanding of both quantitative and qualitative research methodology</p> <p>Experience of working effectively as part of a team</p>	<p>Experience of working at all stages of the research cycle (planning, negotiating, undertaking field work, analysing data and writing papers)</p> <p>Experience of liaising with policy makers and/or social workers and other child welfare professionals</p> <p>Experience of working with confidential data and adhering to the Data Protection Act 1998</p>	All assessed at stages 1,2 and 3
Skills and abilities	<p>Good analytical skills and knowledge of research methodology</p> <p>Excellent IT skills (including Excel and SPSS)</p>		All assessed at stages 1, 2 and 3

	<p>Quantitative analysis skills (descriptive, bivariate and multivariate analyses)</p> <p>Demonstrate good verbal and written communication skills and have the ability to liaise with professionals from a range of disciplines</p> <p>Able to write to the standard required for the production of academic papers and government reports</p> <p>Able to organise their time and prioritise appropriately</p> <p>Excellent attention to detail</p>		
Training	Demonstrate evidence of having undertaken further training		Assessed at stages 1 and 3
Education and Qualifications	Educated to Degree standard (2:1 or above) in Social Policy, Psychology, Sociology or other relevant discipline	Hold a relevant Masters and/or PhD	Assessed at stage 1
Equality and Diversity	Evidence a good working knowledge of equal		1, 3

	opportunities and understanding of diversity in the workplace		
Other	<p>The provision of an acceptable enhanced Disclosure statement is a requirement of this post</p> <p>A willingness to travel extensively in the UK and spend periods of time away from home</p> <p>Prepared to work beyond normal working hours when necessary</p> <p>Willing to work as a member of a team and to observe the University's Equal Opportunities policy at all times</p>	Willing to travel abroad if required	Assessed at stages 1 and 3

Stages in assessment:

1: Application form at short listing, 2: Selection test – i.e. presentation, in-tray exercise, data analysis, 3: Interview

Conditions of Service:

The appointment will be on a full-time, one-year fixed-term contract. Salary will be on Research, Grade 6 (£28,982 - £37,768 per annum) at a starting salary commensurate with experience and qualifications.

The appointment will be subject to the University's normal Terms and Conditions of Employment for **Academic and Related** staff, details of which can be found at:

<http://www.lboro.ac.uk/services/hr/a-z/conditions-of-service.html>

Informal Enquiries:

Informal enquiries should be made to **Lisa Holmes, Director, Centre for Child and Family Research** by email at: **L.J.Holmes@lboro.ac.uk** or **Sam McDermid, Research Fellow, Centre for Child and Family Research** by email at: **S.McDermid@lboro.ac.uk**, or telephone the Centre on +44 (0)1509 228758.

Application:

The closing date for receipt of applications is **17 February 2016**.

Interviews:

Interviews will be held on **Wednesday 30 March 2016**.