School of Social Sciences and Humanities
Criminology, Sociology and Social Policy

Research Associate/Data Analyst for the project "A postcode lottery of SEND provision? Analysing and explaining variability in the education of children with SEND since the Children and Families Act"

The position is full-time (FTE1.0) and fixed term from 1st July 2023 – 31st December 2024.

REQ230200

As part of the University's ongoing commitment to redeployment, please note that this vacancy may be withdrawn at any stage of the recruitment process if a suitable redeployee is identified.

https://www.lboro.ac.uk/subjects/social-policy-studies/about/

Project Description

Dr Fran Azpitarte (Loughborough) and Professor Louise Holt (Loughborough) have been awarded funding from the Economic and Social Research Council to investigate the extent, drivers, and implications of the postcode lottery for the education of children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) in England since the 2014 Children and Families Act. Regarded as the most radical reform in decades, the Act proposed a holistic approach to SEND provision placing new responsibilities on Local Authorities. Unfortunately, recent evidence indicates is failing too many children with SEND with large spatial inequalities in the education of children with SEND. The project will create a new spatially harmonised dataset integrating data sources from the National Pupil Database which will be accessed via one of the SafePods within the network of the National Statistics Secure Research Service in the UK. The harmonised dataset will be used to investigate spatial inequalities in SEND provision pre- and post- the 2014 Children and Families Act, with particular attention to the extent and drivers of differences in school provision, inclusion, and outcomes of children with SEND across Local Authorities in England.

We are seeking a Research Associate/Data Analyst (RA) to work with the lead investigators and the Special Advisory Group including the Department for Education, academics with expertise in education and quantitative methods, and experts from Schools and Local Authorities with experience in SEND provision. Under the supervision of the lead investigators, the RA will actively contribute to the administration of the project, the data harmonisation and analysis, preparation and dissemination of research outputs, and impact activities. The project will use a range of quantitative methods including spatial and non-spatial measures, graphical analysis, and multilevel regression models to generate new evidence on spatial inequalities in SEND provision and outcomes to inform which will be used to inform debates about the effectiveness of the current policy and the implications of place for the education of children with SEND in England.

Job Description

Job Grade: Specialist and Supporting Academic Grade 6

Job Purpose
The researcher's primary responsibilities will be to (1) play a central role in the construction of the new harmonised dataset and quantitative data analyses; (2) the preparation and dissemination of research outputs, and the

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preparation and implementation of impact activities; and (3) support the administration of the project and the communication with the Special Advisory group.

Job Duties:

- To collaborate with the investigators in the design and implementation of the research project.
- To regularly feedback to lead investigators on the progress of the project and inform decisions during its implementation.
- To contribute to the administration of the project and communication with the Special Advisory Group.
- To play a central role in the harmonisation of datasets to be accessed via one of the twenty-four SafePods in the network of the National Statistics Secure Research Service in the UK.
- To conduct quantitative analyses using data from the new dataset including spatial and non-spatial analyses and multilevel modelling to generate the evidence needed to address the research questions.
- To write and document the codes that will be used for the statistical analyses, and which will be made publicly available to the research community.
- To contribute to the writing of project reports, journal articles, policy briefs and other research outputs, taking on the role of lead, co-author, or assistant as appropriate.
- To attend and contribute to conferences and forums included in the dissemination plan of the project.
- To actively participate in the organisation, preparation, and implementation of impact activities linked to the project.
- To engage in training programmes at Loughborough University (or elsewhere) to develop the skills required by the project and taking into consideration the professional development of the RA.
- To maintain an up-to-date awareness of current and emerging research and policy developments relevant to SEND provision and education.
- To undertake other duties as may be reasonably requested and that are commensurate with the nature and grade of the post.

Points To Note

The purpose of this job description is to indicate the general level of duties and responsibility of the post. The detailed duties may vary from time to time without changing the general character or level of responsibility entailed.

Special Conditions

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.

Successful completion of probation will be dependent on attendance at the University's mandatory courses which include Respecting Diversity and, where appropriate, Recruitment and Selection.

Organisational Responsibility

Reports to the Lead Investigators.

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Person Specification

Your application will be reviewed with respect to meeting the essential and desirable criteria listed below. Your application will be reviewed against the essential and desirable criteria listed below. Applicants are strongly advised to explicitly state and evidence how they meet each of the essential (and desirable) criteria in their application. Stages of assessment are as follows:

1 – Application
2 – Test/Assessment Centre/Presentation
3 – Interview

Essential Criteria

Area	Criteria	Stage
Experience	Background in Social Policy, Geography, Education, Sociology, Criminology or other relevant social science	1,2,3
	Experience of using cross-sectional and longitudinal large-scale surveys and administrative datasets and linking existing datasets for creating new ones	1,2,3
	Experience of quantitative research methods and analysis, particularly regression analysis and multi-level modelling	1,2,3
	Experience of conducting analyses using statistical software (Stata, R or Python)	1,2,3
	Experience of leading and conducting social research projects involving quantitative forms of data and analysis	1,2,3
Skills and abilities	Excellent written and oral communication skills	1,2,3
	Ability to conduct quantitative analysis using large scale datasets	1,3
	Ability to write code using statistical software (Stata, R or Python)	1,2,3
	Ability to author original research work and make presentations	1,3
	Self-motivated with ability to meet deadlines	1,2,3
	Excellent interpersonal, and organisational skills	1,2,3
	Excellent time management skills and ability to complete agreed work commitments on time	1,3
	Knowledge of relevant Ethical issues in social research	1,2,3
Training	A willingness to undertake further training as required by the needs of the project	1,2,3
Qualifications	PhD (or nearing completion) or other relevant qualifications and/or experience	1,2,3
Other	Commitment to observing the University's Equal Opportunities policy at all times.	1,2,3
	Ability and willingness to travel	1, 3

Desirable Criteria

Area	Criteria	Stage
Experience	Experience in conducting quantitative research on education and children, particularly children with SEND in England	1,3
	Experience of using the National Pupil Database or other datasets available in the National Statistics Secure Research Service	1,3

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	Experience with handling and analysing geocoded data using software such as GeoDa, QGIS, ArcGIS or equivalent software for spatial analysis	1,3
	Authoring original work for academic journal papers, conference papers or policy reports	1,3
Skills and abilities	Knowledge of education and SEND policies in England	1,3
	Ability to conduct spatial statistical analysis using GeoDa, QGIS, ArcGIS or equivalent software for spatial analysis	1,3
	Authoring original work, in the highest quality refereed academic journals	1,3
	A publication track record	1,3

Conditions of Service

The position is FULL TIME and FIXED TERM from 1st July 2023 to 31st December 2024.
Salary will be on Specialist and Supporting Academic Salary Grade 6 (£33,348 - £43,155), at a starting salary to be confirmed on offer of appointment. The appointment will be subject to the University's Terms and Conditions of Employment for STAFF GRADES 6 AND ABOVE, details of which can be found here.

The University is committed to enabling staff to maintain a healthy work-home balance and has a number of family-friendly policies which can be found here.

The University offers a wide range of employee benefits which can be found here.

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/childcare-information---page.html

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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