UNIVERSITY OF SUSSEX

1 Advertisement

Post Title: Research Fellow  
School/department: School of Psychology  
Hours: full time or part time hours considered up to a maximum of 0.8 FTE. Requests for flexible working options will be considered (subject to business need).  
Contract: Fixed-term 27 months  
Reference: 3046  
Placed on: 2 January 2020  
Salary range: starting at £33,797 and rising to £40,322 per annum, pro rata  
Closing date for applications: 23 January 2019. Applications must be received by midnight of the closing date.  
Expected interview date: week beginning 3 February 2020  
Expected start date: 17 February 2020

A 0.8 FTE Research Fellow is needed for a new Public Health Research project funded by the National Institute for Health Research. Titled ‘STrAWB: Shared Training and Assessment of Well-Being for looked-after children’, this project is the feasibility study for a potential trial of an intervention designed to support the mental health and well-being of looked-after children. The intervention involves bringing together designated teachers in schools with foster carers to receive training and bespoke feedback from assessments of the mental health and well-being of children in foster care.

The project is led by Dr Nikki Luke (Rees Centre, University of Oxford) and Professor Robin Banerjee (School of Psychology, University of Sussex). The post will involve working collaboratively to implement the shared training and assessment approach with relevant staff in the local authorities and schools involved, along with the foster carers of the children selected for participation. All children will be aged between approximately 8 and 11 years old, and a combination of quantitative and qualitative data will be collected, both to understand the psychological profiles and needs of the participating children and to evaluate the feasibility of a large-scale RCT of the intervention.

In particular, 35 looked-after children, and their foster carers and designated teachers, will receive the STrAWB intervention, and 35 will receive care as usual. We will use mixed methods (post-training and service use surveys, interviews with participants and stakeholders, documentary evidence, activity monitoring sheets, and case studies) to assess acceptability of randomisation and the intervention, recruitment and retention rates, intervention fidelity, and data completion rates. We will also test two multi-informant measures of mental health to assess which is more comprehensible, developmentally appropriate, and useful for measuring impact in this population. The Research Fellow at the University of Sussex would be expected to work closely with another Research Fellow working on this project who is based at University of Oxford.

The University of Sussex is a leading teaching and research institution and is ranked within the top 20 in the UK and the top 150 in the world. The School of Psychology at the
University of Sussex is one of the largest centres for the study of psychology in the UK with considerable strengths in both research and teaching. The School was rated 10th in the 2014 Research Excellence Framework and receives excellent student ratings for its undergraduate and postgraduate teaching. The School offers a highly rated undergraduate degree course, a suite of PGT courses and has a substantial group of doctoral students, supported in part by an ESRC Doctoral Training Centre. The Foundation Year provision at Sussex is very highly regarded, having been awarded a Collaborative Award for Teaching Excellence in 2019. Detailed information about the School is available at www.sussex.ac.uk/psychology.

For further details or informal discussion about this position, please do not hesitate to contact the project lead at the University of Sussex, Prof Robin Banerjee, email: r.a.banerjee@sussex.ac.uk.

For full details and how to apply see our vacancies page

The University of Sussex values the diversity of its staff and students and we welcome applicants from all backgrounds.
2. The School of Psychology

Psychology at Sussex combines cutting-edge, discovery-oriented research and strong engagement with policy-makers in health and social care, non-governmental organisations and the private sector. In this way we tackle contemporary challenges in mental and physical health, social inclusion and well-being. Psychology at Sussex ranked 10th out of 82 in REF 2014 (7th for impact), with 100% of research rated as internationally recognized or better, and 45% of research recognized as world-leading. Detailed information about the School is available at www.sussex.ac.uk/psychology.

The School’s flagship undergraduate programme is its BSc in Psychology, which takes approximately 500 students per annum. The School also offers a number of major/minor degree programmes via the University’s pathway system. In order to expand, diversify, and secure the excellence of our undergraduate body, the School launched a highly successful Foundation Year in 2016. Indeed, the central Foundation Year team were awarded a Collaborative Award for Teaching Excellence in 2019. The School also recruits students to a number of high-quality postgraduate taught courses, and includes a vibrant community of doctoral students.

The School of Psychology has four research groups with a total of over 70 teaching faculty and a large number of PhD students. The research groups are:

- **Behavioural and Clinical Neuroscience**: the research interests of this group include addictions, aging/dementia, affect/emotion, learning/memory, reward/motivation, decision making. The group conducts non-human animal, human and clinical research, emphasising translational links.

- **Cognitive Psychology**: the group has broad interests in language and communication, learning, memory, attention, perception, problem-solving and consciousness, with approaches that range from classic experimental psychology through to cutting-edge cognitive neuroscience techniques.

- **Developmental and Clinical Psychology**: the core objective of the group is to translate research in human development to clinical, policy and public contexts. The group’s work spans developmental and experimental psychopathology, quantitative behaviour genetics, and the development of cognition.

- **Social and Applied Psychology**: the group focuses on group and intergroup processes, identity processes, culture, well-being and health psychology. It uses a range of methodologies in laboratory and field settings, with a focus on applied relevance.

These research groups are the primary vehicles for the exchange of new research ideas, the development and informal peer review of new grant applications and articles, and the mentoring and appraisal of staff. Typically, groups meet fortnightly to discuss forthcoming conference presentations, ideas for new projects and work-in-progress. All grant applications are reviewed by senior colleagues to increase their quality and likely success rates.

All research and teaching faculty have one primary research-group affiliation. However, consistent with the interdisciplinary and collaborative ethos of the School, in practice many actively participate in more than one grouping. Indeed, the five Strategic Focus...
Areas of research within the School span across these groups: 1) Neuroscience, 2) Mental Health, 3) Sensory Systems, 4) Applied Behavioural Science, and 5) Open Science and Psychological Methods.

The quality of our research is evident from outputs in premier journals across neuroscience and medicine, through experimental psychology to social psychology, while also encompassing quantitative-behaviour genetics and developmental psychopathology. Reflecting their international prominence in their respective fields, researchers in these four groups published over 700 articles and 17 books, and won research grants and consultancies to a value in excess of £12m over the census period for REF 2014. These numbers have already been greatly exceeded in the period since 2014.

Cross-School and cross-university research centres facilitate interactions between these research groups and with other researchers in the University. Such centres are established to nurture new research activity, build more effectively on areas of academic strength and enhance the vitality of our research environment. They run research colloquia and facilitate shared access to important research populations (e.g. clinical samples, children and young people, participants in disasters and emergencies) and major items of equipment. Centres in which members of the School of Psychology play a prominent role include the following:

- **Sussex Neuroscience** pursues basic, translational and clinical neuroscience within the context of a vibrant collaborative research culture across Schools and Departments of the University of Sussex. It was established in 2013 following a £3M investment from the University of Sussex to unite neuroscience activities across campus, distributed across four Schools. It organizes various events, provides some advanced technical support, and funds a 4-year PhD program.

- **Clinical Imaging Sciences Centre (CISC)**: provision of multimodal imaging facilities, including an on-site Siemens 3T MRI scanner, with an emphasis on quantifying the function and structure of the brain.

- **Sackler Centre for Consciousness Science**: a unique interdisciplinary centre spanning informatics, engineering, psychiatry, psychology and cognitive science.

- **Rudd Centre for Adoption Research and Practice**: developing new insights into the cultural, social-relational, cognitive and emotional processes in the development of adopted children.

- **Centre for Innovation and Research in Childhood and Youth (CIRCY)**: based in the School of Education and Social Work, but with strong links to Psychology.

- **Sussex Addiction Research and Intervention Centre (SARIC)**: a merger of pre-clinical, clinical, and psychological research in drug addiction to pursue translational projects.

The School works strategically and in close collaboration with the Brighton and Sussex Medical School on many of these research enterprises. In addition, the School has extensive and diverse links in the area of mental health with the Sussex Partnership NHS Foundation Trust, including numerous research collaborations and clinical trials, as well as a portfolio of professional postgraduate courses.
The School has excellent laboratory facilities to support its research. Specialist facilities include:

- **Behavioural Neuroscience laboratories**: sole use of a microscopy and histological suite and two laboratories dedicated to electrophysiological studies in brain slices; shared use of molecular biology laboratories, all of which have seen significant recent investment. We are a major user of the University’s animal unit, which comprises breeding, holding and experimental facilities for rodents and includes a surgery equipped with digital stereotaxic equipment for both rats and mice. The behavioural laboratories are equipped for sophisticated operant and observational studies with rats and mice.

- **Clinical Imaging Sciences Centre**: CISC is a research facility that houses 3T and 1.5T MRI Siemens scanners and a PET/CT scanner. CISC is staffed by a full complement of radiographers with on-site medical cover and capacity for experimental medical investigations. Structural, diffusion, neurochemical and functional MRI is supported by ancillary equipment that includes world-leading capacity for integrating functional MRI with multi-axis physiological and neurophysiological measurements. It is also a centre for scanning patients enrolled into Phase II and III interventional treatment trials for neurodegenerative and neuro-inflammatory disorders and, through clinical scanning of patients from memory clinics across Sussex, is building the UK’s largest high-quality neuroimaging research dataset of patients at the onset of dementia.

- **Sussex Child Research Hub**: The hub comprises ten research rooms, including a child-interaction observation unit with one-way mirror, a room with CCTV for videoing child sessions, two rooms for experimental infant techniques with coding facilities, and a developmental psychophysics and eye-tracking room. The suite also includes multiple waiting and play areas appropriate for infants, toddlers and older children, and tea/coffee facilities for visiting parents.

- **Human Psychopharmacology laboratory**: two medical rooms, a wet lab, 12 specialised testing cubicles, Eyelink eye-trackers, and a fully equipped kitchen for the preparation of food for research on human ingestion.

- **Human Psychophysiology and Psychoacoustic laboratories (129 m2)**: six cubicles, two acoustic booths and a reception area. Equipment includes both Neuroscan and EGI rigs for EEG/ERP, a Magstim TMS rig, and three Eyelink II eye-trackers.

- **Vision laboratories**: A suite of six rooms – of which some are designed to exclude all natural light – include specialist equipment for presenting visual stimuli.

- In addition to these dedicated facilities, Psychology also has 85m² of new general-facility, bookable lab space, including 11 test cubicles for faculty and student research projects and other research, a meeting-room, waiting area and kitchen facility.
3. **Job Description**

**Job Title:** Research Fellow  
**Grade:** Grade 7  
**School:** Psychology  
**Location:** Pevensey Building  
**Responsible to:** Robin Banerjee  
**Direct reports:** Robin Banerjee  

**Role description:** Research Fellow I is an early career-grade research position. Post-holders will be expected to contribute to the work of the research team, and also to develop their research skills with support from more experienced members of staff.

The purpose of this particular post is to use mixed methods to implement the STrAWB intervention and assess the feasibility of a large-scale RCT of this intervention.

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**PRINCIPAL ACCOUNTABILITIES**

1. To engage in individual and/or collaborative research activity resulting in high-quality publications; and to develop research funding and knowledge exchange income individually or in collaboration with others, as appropriate, depending on the size and scope of the bid.

2. To contribute to School teaching activities.

**KEY RESPONSIBILITIES**

1. **Research, Scholarship & Enterprise**

2.1 Develop research objectives and proposals for own or joint research, at acceptable levels, with assistance if required.

2.2 Conduct research projects individually and in collaboration with others.

2.3 Analyse and interpret research findings and draw conclusions on the outcomes.
2.4 Produce high-quality research outputs for publication in monographs or recognised high-quality journals, or performance/exhibition, as appropriate, and contribute to the School’s REF submission at acceptable levels of volume and academic excellence.

2.5 Contribute to the preparation of proposals and applications to external bodies, for example for funding purposes.

2.6 Individually or with colleagues, explore opportunities for enterprise activity, knowledge exchange income and/or consultancy, where permissible.

2.7 Build internal contacts and participate in internal networks and relevant external networks in order to form relationships and collaborations.

2.8 Continually update knowledge and understanding in field or specialism, and engage in continuous professional development.

2. **Teaching & Student Support**

2.1 Undertake teaching duties, if required.

2.2 Assist in the assessment of student knowledge and supervision of student projects if required.

2.3 Assist in the development of student research skills, for example as part of a postgraduate supervision team.

2. **Contribution to School & University**

3.1 Attend and contribute to relevant School and project meetings.

3.2 Undertake additional duties, as required by the Principal Investigator and/or Head of School.

4. **Role-specific duties**

4.1 To contribute to the intellectual development of the project, including the final design and implementation of the intervention work, and conducting the data collection and analysis for the feasibility study

4.2 To liaise with stakeholders in multiple local authorities, including education staff, educational and clinical psychologists, and social workers, as well as foster carers (including dealing with consent processes, data collection, feedback)

4.3 To deliver training on mental health in vulnerable groups to a mixed audience of foster carers and school staff, and to liaise with them about developmentally appropriate assessments of well-being and feedback from those assessments

4.4 To support a trained, care-experienced adult with conducting interviews with participating children
4.5 To plan and conduct quantitative and qualitative data entry, processing, and analysis

4.6 To liaise with partners in other organisations and educational institutions on different aspects of the project

4.7 To play a major role in disseminating the results of the work to both academic and non-academic audiences

This Job Description sets out current duties of the post that may vary from time to time without changing the general character of the post or level of responsibility entailed.

INDICATIVE PERFORMANCE CRITERIA

- A PhD or equivalent scholarly or relevant professional activity
- Pursuing a line of independent research within a research group.
- Publishing research (either from a recently completed PhD or new original research).
- Other forms of externally recognised professional practice of creative output of a standing equivalent to regular publication of original research.
- Initiating, developing or participating in links between the University and external bodies such as business and industry, the professions, community organisations and policy-makers.
- Evidence of successful engagement in teaching or supervision.
5. **PERSON SPECIFICATION**

**ESSENTIAL CRITERIA**

1. Normally educated to doctoral level, or other equivalent qualification, or appropriate level of experience, as appropriate to the discipline (see role-specific criteria below).

2. Evidence of engagement in high-quality research activity.

3. Excellent presentation skills, with the ability to communicate effectively, both orally and in writing, with students, colleagues and external audiences.

4. Ability to work individually on own initiative and without close supervision, and as part of a team.

5. Ability to exercise a degree of innovation and creative problem-solving.

6. Excellent organisational and administrative skills.

7. Ability to prioritise and meet deadlines.

8. Excellent IT skills.

**ESSENTIAL ROLE-SPECIFIC CRITERIA**

1. Knowledge and understanding of psychological research relating to mental health in children and young people

2. Experience of recruiting adults and/or children to research studies

3. Confident and enthusiastic approach to working with a diverse group of stakeholders

4. Experience and expertise in conducting mixed-methods research involving questionnaires and interviews/focus groups

5. Advanced skills in using Microsoft Office applications

6. High level of organisation and efficiency

7. Excellent communication skills
**DESIABLE CRITERIA**

1. Experience of working with public services intended to meet the needs of looked-after children, in education and/or social care
2. Experience of working with primary school children, parents/carers, school staff and/or other practitioners in education
3. Experience of providing training on mental health to practitioners working with children
4. Skills in using SPSS, R, or other software for statistical analysis, and NVivo or other software for qualitative analysis
5. Experience of writing research up for publication