

Centre for Regional Economic and Social Research (CRESR)

1.1. Study at CRESR

A PhD in CRESR is a unique experience. PhD candidates are treated as integral members of the CRESR team, located directly alongside academic staff in the Centre. Students benefit from and contribute to a thriving, collegiate research environment.

CRESR has a strong commitment to academically rich, applied social policy research which provides a particularly enriching research environment for postgraduate scholars, affording insights to the world of policy and practice through an academic lens.

1.2. About CRESR

The Centre and its members hold an enduring commitment to academic rigour through applied policy research. In the most recent Research Excellence Framework (REF 2014), 81 per cent of our research was rated as world-leading or internationally excellent in terms of originality, significance and rigour, the highest ranked post-1992 University in architecture, built environment and planning.

We have five vibrant research clusters:

- Housing and place
- Inclusive economies
- Sustainable futures
- Voluntary and community sector
- Policy evaluation and research

Our staff and students represent a broad range of disciplinary interests, including geography, economics, sociology, politics, policy studies, planning and evaluation. We are also methodologically diverse, with specialisms in qualitative analysis, ethnographic methods, econometrics, spatial analysis and mixed-method research designs.

Each year the Centre successfully secures in the region of £2 million research income from a range of local, regional, national and international funding bodies. It works with central and local government, research councils, charitable trusts, and various other research bodies to deliver research of the highest quality.

1.3. The CRESR Postgraduate Programme

Continuing researcher development is a core component of a PhD at CRESR. Although it is expected that applicants will have already completed some research training, CRESR

doctoral researchers will normally undertake additional research training in their first year, usually taking modules on the University's MA in Social Research Methods.

The research environment for PhD candidates includes opportunities to engage with regular cross-Centre academic discussion groups; a high profile Seminar Series; research conferences and workshops hosted by CRESR; an annual doctoral research showcase; and a PhD Forum dedicated for discussion and development. We also have a successful open access journal [People, Place and Policy](#), which provides a supportive environment for graduate students to gain experience in academic publishing, reviewing and editing.

The University offers a range of researcher development modules and successful applicants will also have the opportunity to engage with a suite of networking and development activities led by the ESRC White Rose Doctoral Training Partnership. Candidates will therefore become part of a cross-institution cohort of high-achieving doctoral researchers with similar research interests. Doctoral researchers are also routinely provided opportunities to engage in teaching and research within the University, providing experience critical to future employability. The Postgraduate Research Programme within CRESR is overseen by the Centre's Postgraduate Tutor, [Dr. Sadie Parr](#). It is a wide-ranging programme reflective of the diverse research interests of CRESR staff.

1.4. Areas of Study

We welcome applications in any areas connected to our five research clusters (see above). However, we are particularly keen to invite proposals to develop doctoral research projects that would address the following issues.

Economic geography, housing and labour markets, and transport connectivity

Until Covid-19, and since the emergence of a new urban policy for England at the end of the 1990s, the development of residential housing has followed two distinct trajectories – on the one hand, the (re-)densification of city centres as viable and desirable locations for residential use together with property- and state-led regeneration programmes, and, on the other hand, a dispersed model of new housing often on greenfield sites opened up by large scale transport infrastructure interventions. The housing markets associated with these patterns of development have had distinct socioeconomic and demographic gradients. At the same time these long-term trends in housing development have been accompanied by a spatial bifurcation of labour markets – with 'high value' knowledge intensive jobs in professional, business, digital and creative services favouring an agglomeration model focused on city centres whilst lower-waged employment in sectors like logistics, certain forms of light manufacturing, public services, retail and back office functions have disproportionately moved to low density new employment land on the fringes of the conurbation or smaller settlements.

We would be particularly interested in proposals for PhD research projects set within the context of this pattern of economic and housing market geography. Such projects could, inter alia, empirically test the impact of this pattern of development on housing affordability and jobs accessibility; explore the interrelationships between housing and transport costs for households; appraise the prospects for mitigating or reversing the externalities of this pattern of development (for example, in terms of environmental impacts or social inequalities); or develop options for policy in housing, transport, economic development and other areas which might reflect new normative economic and societal models post-Covid. We would welcome the application of innovative qualitative or quantitative methods to these problems.

For further information or discussion about prospective projects in these areas, please contact [Professor Ed Ferrari](#).

Young people and green recovery in economically disadvantaged places

The economic and employment impacts of Covid-19 have hit young people hardest. It has been estimated that over 600,000 young people will be pushed into unemployment by the current crisis, and reduced demand in the medium-term will also impact on pay and conditions.

Much has been made of the idea that green jobs, in low or zero carbon sectors or biodiversity enhancing activities, will necessarily be better jobs in terms of their pay and conditions. Evidence that this may be the case is mixed at best. More likely is that new forms of economic activity will both create and destroy employment across the full range of sectors. Nonetheless, new investment in low carbon and sustainability initiatives may create a turning point to reset employment opportunities.

Our interest is in to what extent any new jobs translate to good quality opportunities for young people; and to what extent will they provide opportunities for those who need them most in places that need them most? Investment in 'green' initiatives might not necessarily mean that jobs are created for young people struggling to find work: there are skills shortages across most sectors central to green technological development and rollout and investment in training and employment support will be required to bring young people into these jobs. Not enough is understood about the operation of 'green' labour markets and the place of young people within them; nor about the quality of jobs that are created within these sectors for young people.

This PhD will contribute towards better understanding of the nature of 'green' jobs, and their potential for creating good quality employment. It will investigate existing and potential routes to employment in 'green' jobs for young people seeking to understand supply and demand side processes that enable or constrain opportunities for young people in economically disadvantaged places.

The proposed supervisory team have undertaken research for many of the major organisations working in the field of zero carbon economies and youth employment. Depending on the precise focus of the PhD we would be able to support the development of links with a range of partner organisations in the public, private and third sectors.

The PhD would suit someone with a background in any social sciences discipline, but with at least some prior interest and understanding of propositions for a net zero / environmentally sustainable economy and an interest in place. Applicants are encouraged to develop proposals that take this broad theme, but applying their own conceptual, methodological and empirical ideas and perspectives. We welcome proposals adopting quantitative, qualitative and mixed methods research designs.

Proposed supervisory team: [Dr Will Eadson](#) and [Professor Peter Wells](#).

Governing Homeless Mothers

Research indicates that being a mother (who may live with or without her child/ren) intersects with numerous other individual, systemic and structural factors to trigger the loss of home and/or shape the course of women's journeys through homelessness. For instance, inadequate housing or homelessness can be a factor in judgments about women's caring capabilities and subsequent child protection intervention; living in temporary accommodation prevents women from maintaining family relationships, routines and rituals; access to appropriate housing for homeless women can prevent children being returned to their care after a period of living apart; and, the stigma of 'spoilt' motherhood is an ever-present feature

of mothers' homelessness experiences and choices. Yet, issues of mothering and motherhood rarely come to the fore in the specific context of homelessness research.

The PhD will focus on homeless mothers' experiences within the English housing context. It will focus on the ways in which macro and/or micro governing structures (such as those associated with children's social care, homelessness policy and practice, or housing allocation) operate through and on women's status as mother. The research will examine the questions driving the proposed doctoral study using an in-depth, qualitative methodology. We envisage a theoretically informed approach which takes due consideration of the critical social policy literature. This establishes housing and homelessness policy as part of a wider welfare landscape underpinned by binary understandings of mothers as both containers or producers of 'risk' which has led to the intense scrutiny of women's mothering capabilities. In this context, the 'home' has become a place where 'deficient' mothers are regulated by the government, shifting the boundaries between the family and state; public and private.

For further information or discussion about prospective projects in this area, please contact [Dr Sadie Parr](#).

The Role of 'Lived Experience' in the Governance of Multiple Disadvantage

People with 'lived experience' or 'experts by experience' are those individuals who share a common experience of a social and/or health issues, such as homelessness or addiction. They are considered 'peers' who, because of common experiences, are considered better able to provide various types of support for someone who is 'new' to or unable to 'recover' from that same experience.

Over the last decade a general consensus has emerged that services designed to support those with multiple and complex needs, should value and utilise the skills and experiences of those with 'lived experience'. This represents a major shift in the way in which care and support is provided to people facing extreme adversity, and is one that has been driven by a range of ideological, pragmatic and economic factors.

While the engagement of those with lived experience is generally welcomed as a progressive response to the needs of vulnerable adults, the shifting role of the non-professional in the governance of 'problem' populations can also be understood as part of a de-professionalisation of social care within the wider context of neoliberalism. This raises important questions about professional identities as well as the status, value and apposite role of different 'knowledge(s)' and 'expertise' in the support provided to those described as vulnerable and multiply disadvantaged.

We call for PhD research proposals that aim to increase our understanding in this area. The doctoral student will be expected to develop research questions that explore and evaluate the role of 'lived experience' in the support of people with 'complex needs' through engagement with critical governance scholarship and through appropriate qualitative methodologies.

For further information or discussion about prospective projects in this area, please contact [Dr Sadie Parr](#).

The voluntary and community sector

Over the past twenty years the voluntary and community sector in the UK has moved from the margins to the mainstream in policy terms, with the sector now considered a significant player in the reform of health, social care, children's services and welfare, as well as

increasing recognition for the potentially transformative role it plays in communities and for people facing multiple disadvantage. Under austerity, and the social and economic challenges leading to and moving beyond Brexit, and the COVID 19 pandemic, many voluntary and community organisations face heightened expectations and deeper struggles - meeting increasing demands amidst highly constrained resources. CRESR has one of the largest groupings of academics in the UK researching the interface between the sector and public policy at local and national level.

We welcome proposals for qualitative, quantitative or mixed-methods studies from a range of theoretical perspectives that seek to explore the varied and contested roles, experiences and value of the voluntary and community sector at the nexus of policy, communities and multiple disadvantage, linked (but not limited) to the following broad topics:

- Funding and finance in the voluntary and community sector, including social investment
- Commissioning and public service markets
- Collaboration, partnership working and co-production
- Voluntary sector and community responses to the COVID 19 pandemic
- Voluntary action, cultural values and populist politics
- Campaigning, advocacy and policy influence
- The changing role of the voluntary sector's infrastructure
- Management, leadership, governance and accountability of voluntary and community organisations

This year we are also interested in hearing from applicants who may be interested in undertaking a PhD co-supervised with the **Advanced Wellbeing Research Centre (AWRC)** as part of its **Healthy and Active 100** research theme. Such a PhD could explore the role of community-based approaches such as social prescribing in enabling people to stay physically active and socially connected at different stages of the life course.

Successful applicants will receive the additional benefits of involvement with the White Rose Doctoral Training Partnership pathway on Civil Society, Development and Democracy or Health, Wellbeing and Communities.

For further information about undertaking a PhD in this area please contact [Dr Rob Macmillan](#). If you are interested in the AWRC option, please contact [Chris Dayson](#).