

PhD Opportunity

Foster Care in Gypsy, Roma, and Traveller Communities. An Anglo-Irish Comparative Study

Supervisory team:

Director of Studies: Dr Peter Unwin

Supervisors: Dr Clive Sealey

External Advisor: Dr Tam Cane (University of Sussex)

Research Group: [Health Inequalities and Social Inclusion](#)

Research Opportunity

There are disproportionate numbers of Gypsy, Roma, and Traveller children in state care in England, children who are 'doubly traumatised' by being fostered out of their culture due to the absence of foster families from these cultures (this would not be the case with other ethnic minorities).

In Ireland, however, there is a history of the 'Shared Rearing Project' and a contemporary Traveller family recruitment project, which has successfully recruited Traveller foster families.

This topic has not been previously researched but builds on a considerable body of research about Gypsy, Roma, and Traveller communities carried out at the University.

A PhD student would explore and compare demographic factors, fostering legislation and protocols and carry out fieldwork in the England and Ireland with representatives of the Traveller community, Traveller foster carers and social care officers.

The PhD study will provide rich opportunities for breaking new ground in theory, policy and practice.

A project in this area will incur some additional costs that will be met by the student, for fieldwork. The exact costs will depend on the specific project and will be discussed both at interview and kept under review throughout the duration of the project.

References

Cheruvallil-Contractor S, De Sousa S, Phiri MB, Halford A (2018) *Among the Last Ones to Leave? Understanding the journeys of Muslim children in the care system in England* [Among the last ones to leave? Understanding the Journeys of Muslim Children in the Care System in England - Coventry University](#)

Chowdhury, C. (2021). 'They want to give our children to white people and Christian people': Somali perspectives on the shortage of Somali substitute carers. *Adoption & Fostering*, 45(1), 22-36. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0308575921989827>

Kirton (2016) *Ethnicity and Adoption: The gap between rhetoric and law and the role of racial neoliberalism*. <http://blogs.lse.ac.uk/politicsandpolicy/the-characteristic-that-dare-not-speak-its-name-removing-the-ethnicity-clause-in-the-children-and-families-act-2014/>

Unwin, P. et al., (2023) *Inequalities in Mental Health for Gypsy, Traveller, and Roma Communities*, London: NHS Race and Health Observatory. [Inequalities in Mental Health Care for Gypsy, Roma, and Traveller Communities, Identifying Best Practice - NHS – Race and Health Observatory \(nhsrho.org\)](https://www.nhs.uk/health-equality-topics/inequalities-in-mental-health-care-for-gypsy-roma-and-traveller-communities-identifying-best-practice-nhs-race-and-health-observatory-nhsrho.org)

Application Process

To begin the application process please go to:

<https://www.worc.ac.uk/research/research-degrees/applying-for-a-phd/>.

The Interview

All successful applicants will be offered an interview with the proposed Supervisory Team. You will be contacted by a member of the Doctoral School Team to find a suitable date. Interviews can be conducted in person or over Microsoft Teams.

Funding your PhD

For information about Doctoral Loans please visit: <https://www.worc.ac.uk/study/fees-and-finance/doctoral-loans.aspx>

During your PhD you can access the Research Conference Support Scheme to support the costs of presenting your research at an external conference.

Research at the University of Worcester

Research is central to the University's mission to make a difference in everything that we do. We are committed to delivering excellent research which extends the boundaries of human knowledge, but which also improves people's lives by enabling better health outcomes, improving food security, developing environmentally sustainable solutions for crop production and socially sustainable solutions to our ageing population, enhancing public knowledge and understanding of the past and present.

The University hence focuses its research around five high-level challenges facing society, locally, nationally and globally:

- [Human Health and Wellbeing](#)
- [Sustainable Futures](#)
- [Digital Innovation](#)
- [Culture, Identity and Social Exclusion](#)
- [Professional Education](#)

The success of our research is reflected in our continuous improvement in external research assessment processes. In the most recent Research Excellence Framework, REF 2021, the University saw a near 50% increase in the scale of its research and 12% increase in quality, building on its performance in REF 2014 when it was the UK's most improved university in terms of Research Power, a combination of scale and quality.

Research Degrees at Worcester

Our research students are central to our overall mission for research. They are working at the cutting edge of their disciplines and driving forward the quality of our research whilst enriching our research culture. We are looking to increase our research student numbers as a strategic imperative.

Our commitment to our students is reflected in the results of the Postgraduate Research Experience Survey 2023 in which we ranked 3rd for overall research student satisfaction nationally. Key to our success in this area is the Doctoral School, a focal point for all our research students.

It provides:

- day-to-day support for our students, both administrative and practical, through our dedicated team.
- a Research Student Study Space with both PCs and laptop docking station.
- a comprehensive Researcher Development Programme for students and their supervisors.
- a programme of student-led conferences and seminars.

Widening Participation

As part of its mission statement the University is committed to widening participation for its higher degrees. Although most candidates will have an undergraduate and/or a Masters degree, the University is happy to accept applications from candidates with relevant professional qualifications and work related experience.

For further information or an informal discussion about this project, please contact Dr Peter Unwin: p.unwin@worc.ac.uk