

# PhD Opportunity

“Getting On With It!”: Ensuring Safe and Compassionate Supervision and Thinking Spaces for Practitioners in Child Protection Practice.

## Director of Studies

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## Supervisors

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**Research Group:** Interpersonal Relationships and Wellbeing Research Group

## The PhD Opportunity

The research should consider the importance of facilitating a safe and compassionate culture of supervision and reflective practice within professional contexts of child protection practice. The emphasis is on the need for organisations to promote safer spaces for practitioners to express emotion and to reflect on their thoughts and feelings, in response to their practice in supporting victims of child abuse and neglect.

The intended qualitative research should focus on the challenges and the enabling factors in organisational safeguarding cultures in consultation with front line practitioners and their line managers/supervisors. These personal/professional narratives may offer critical insights on how to enhance safe and compassionate organisational cultures. Feminist pedagogy enables critical and insightful feminist perspectives on gender justice to challenge oppressive cultures (McCusker, 2017) in female dominated professions, where emotion and kindness can be seen as a professional deficit.

A critical examination of the need to ensure nurturing reflexive and resilient dispositions within practitioners, highlights the importance of this attribute to enhancing professional practice in supporting victims of abuse. Importantly, there is a recognition of the more troubling aspects of practice which silence or limit the

authentic voice of the practitioner in expressions of sadness or anger within professional discussions and supervision. Bourdieu's concept of the Field (Bourdieu, 1989a, McLoone-Richards, 2021) gives scope to appraise the implications for organisational culture in promoting reflective and resilient practitioners in advocating for *their* safe spaces within safer and emancipatory spaces in their professional contexts.

### **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 3<sup>rd</sup> 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.

### **Interpersonal Relationships & Wellbeing Research Group**

The Interpersonal Relationships and Wellbeing Research Group draws together internationally renowned academics from across Psychology, Business and Criminology, with partners in Industry, third sector organisations and local government. Research activity is organised around four themes: Wellbeing for Life; Customer Interactions; People and Work; and Trauma and Violence Prevention.

We study interpersonal relationships, wellbeing and their inter-connectivity from an inter-disciplinary perspective, to generate applied, solution-focussed research. Our research explores how individual, social and environmental factors influence relationships and wellbeing within different contexts, such as in workplaces, schools and online spaces. We are interested in understanding how interpersonal relationships contribute to mental health (construed as both trauma/mental ill-health, and as wellbeing) and how they shape individual and team behaviour in consumer and organizational settings. In doing so, we explore both the 'dark' and 'light' side of relationships and human behaviour more broadly.

### **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 on this project, please contact Dr Claire McLoone-Richards (Director of Studies) via email at [c.richards@worc.ac.uk](mailto:c.richards@worc.ac.uk)