Leeds Social Sciences Institute  
PGR Placement Fellowship Opportunity  

‘Impact of Welfare Reforms on Voluntary and Community Organisations in the Region’  
with Involve Yorkshire and Humber  

(10 hours per week for 13 weeks from December 2012)

The Leeds Social Science Institute successfully launched the PGR placement scheme in 2011, and now has a range of new placement opportunities for post graduate researchers from across the social sciences who are interested in working in a research capacity in a range of local organisations. The Scheme encourages social science post graduate researchers to engage with the needs of external organisations and to build the knowledge gained from the placement into their future research plans.

The successful applicants will receive a bursary funded by University of Leeds Higher Education Innovation Fund. In time it is hoped that the University and the partner organisation will co-fund the fellowships. The student will be employed by the University of Leeds throughout the placement.

Research Organisation: Involve Yorkshire and Humber  

Project Title: Impact of Welfare Reforms on Voluntary and Community Organisations in the Region  

Length of Fellowship: 10 hours per week for 13 weeks  

Proposed start date: December 2012  

Location of Fellowship: Leeds City Centre

BACKGROUND

Involve Yorkshire & Humber supports the voluntary and community sector (VCS) to create a strong society and fair communities for all. As a charity supporting charities across Yorkshire and Humber, Involve Yorkshire and Humber is very interested in the impact of welfare reforms on voluntary and community organisations (VCOs) in the region. In September this year we held a conference attended by around 80 organisations to consider this topic and it was felt that there are two strands of information currently not being collected and which VCOs felt was important to record and put into a bigger picture to feed to policymakers, the public and the sector. Firstly, the impact of the measures contained in the Welfare Reform Act 2012 on voluntary and community organisations and, in particular, the effect on demand for services and acuteness of need presented to charities. Secondly, examples of positive actions, new initiatives etc that VCOs are undertaking to address the effects of welfare reform on their communities.

We have already recruited around 30 VCOs who have agreed to act as Action Trackers, who will provide information to us. We would like to recruit some more.

Involve Yorkshire and Humber offers a supportive working environment with flexible working arrangements. Our offices are in the city centre. We would be able to offer travel expenses within Leeds and a capped lunch expense on days the student was working a day in the office. We are committed to ensuring the development of volunteers and staff.
EXPECTED TASKS

The researcher will be asked to:

- Engage in interviews with our Action Tracker groups to gather information;
- Assess the impact of welfare reforms on VCOs;
- Analysis of positive actions taken by VCOs to address the effect of welfare reforms on their communities;
- Produce a full evaluation report of the findings including common themes, case studies and policy recommendations.

Where the student would be involved in working with vulnerable groups they would have to undergo relevant CRB checks. Any research involving the student in direct contact with the public (e.g. interviews) would also have to be approved by the University Ethics Committee.

SKILLS REQUIRED

- Excellent communication and interpersonal skills
- Proven qualitative and quantitative research skills
- Written skills – ability to write accurately and engagingly
- Organisation and time-management
- A knowledge of the voluntary sector and/or welfare policy would be desirable
- An interest in policy-making and government is also be desirable

The student will work with the Director of the Leeds Social Sciences Institute to evaluate the success of the placement and identify other opportunities for placements within Involve Yorkshire and Humber and partner organisations.

Leeds Social Sciences Institute will fund the placement through HEIF funds, providing a bursary of £1950, and the placement must be completed by the 31st July 2013.

This project supports the Institutes' strategic objective to enhance partnerships between social scientists and the public and third sector, to maximise the impact of our research and to make a valuable contribution to society. It is also in line with the ESRC’s strategic objective to extend and deepen knowledge exchange networks across the public, private and third sectors.

The student will be able to use the results of this study (suitably anonymised and with ethical approval from the appropriate University of Leeds committee) to produce a range of academic publications and presentations.

The closing date for this call is 4 January 2013.

Applicants should submit a short CV plus a statement explaining why they would like to take up this opportunity, what experiences and skills make them suited to the position and what this work will contribute towards their research plans to Sophia Kennedy at s.kennedy@leeds.ac.uk. Applications will be considered by the panel and successful applicants will be notified within two weeks of the application closing date. Written confirmation of support from the applicant's supervisor will be required with the application.

Any enquiries please contact Sophia Kennedy at s.kennedy@leeds.ac.uk OR Jenny Westaway at Jenny.Westaway@Involve Yorkshire and Humber.yorkshirehumber.org.uk