

Psychology Graduate Teaching Assistant post

A key part of the role of a GTA is to complete a research degree (MPhil/PhD). You will be required to submit a short research proposal related to one of the areas outlined below as part of your application. Please keep the research proposal to the equivalent of two sides of A4. Your research proposal should demonstrate that you are aware of the literature in the area, and you have considered a methodological approach. Please contact Professor Mandy Robbins (m.robbins@glyndwr.ac.uk) if you have any questions regarding your application.

Topic areas

Inter-generational relationships – benefits of nursery children visiting residential care homes

There are many benefits associated with intergenerational relationships between children and older adults, which have been highlighted by the recent rise in young children visiting care homes as part of their nursery provision. The developmental and cognitive benefits seen in children include: confidence dealing with unfamiliar environments; improved language development; positive growth in ability to show empathy. In the older adults who reside in care homes, these visits from children have a positive effect on happiness, confidence and feelings of self-worth; positive direct social interaction helps to form friendships; as well as helping to delay mental decline. In addition to these benefits, the social interactions and friendships that can form have been shown to help reduce levels of ageism. However, a lot of the information from within the UK is anecdotal and this could be an opportunity to contribute to a growing global field of research.

Early Years Outcomes Framework Wales (focus on 0-18 months)

The Early Years Outcomes Framework brings together all the policies and programmes that have an effect on children in the early years and how we measure progress. Within this framework early years is defined as the period of life pre-birth to the end of foundation phase (0-7 years). The framework intends to generate improved outcomes for children in the early years in Wales, therefore influencing the outcomes throughout their lives. The early years outcomes for Wales are that all children: are and feel safe; are cared for supported and valued; are resilient, capable and coping; are healthy; learn and develop; do not live in and are not disadvantaged by poverty. There is a gap within the framework for the 0-18 month age group in terms of outcomes and whether what was set out to be achieved has been met. There is an opportunity to conduct research that could inform Welsh policy.

The Teenage Brain

During the earliest years of childhood, children's brains form neural connections at a speed not replicated later in life. This is seen as the first window of opportunity, where we are able to influence children's brain development through nutrition, stimulation and protection from harm. There is however, a growing body of research that shows our experience and environment continue to combine with genetics to adapt developing adolescent brains. This is seen as a second crucial window of development, and is particularly important when we consider adolescents who are facing risks to well-being, including poverty (for the 3 year period ending in 2018/19 29% of children in Wales were living in poverty), deprivation, conflict and crisis. In addition to these external factors the development of the adolescent brain is also affected by stress, technology use and cultural differences. Resiliency can be taught, and the adolescent brain can benefit from mindfulness as well as learning positive

behaviours that reduce risk-taking decision making. This is a growing area of research and of particular interest is the application of findings to interventions, whereby we aim to understand the complex relationship between developmental biology and the environment.