**Research assistant (Grade 7, spine point 31/32, £31020-£31948) – Preventing challenging behaviour of adults with complex needs in supported accommodation**

The Role

We are seeking to appoint a research worker to work with Peter McGill & colleagues on an NIHR School of Social Care Research (SSCR) funded study investigating the prevention of challenging behaviour of adults with complex needs in supported accommodation. This post is for sixteen months full-time, to start from the beginning of October 2012.

Challenging behaviour is a significant problem in supported accommodation for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities. While a result of many factors, it is recognised that such behaviour may be caused, provoked and exacerbated by the social care environment. Drawing on understanding of the environmental factors associated with challenging behaviour, this project seeks to intervene directly in the organisation and provision of social care with a view to altering the factors contributing to challenging behaviour, thus preventing its future occurrence. Intervention at the level of the supported accommodation setting, rather than the individual, will be evaluated by a cluster randomised controlled trial. The research worker will be a member of the team involved in delivering the intervention.

The Department

The Tizard Centre is part of the School of Social Policy, Sociology and Social Research and is one of the leading academic groups in the UK working in learning disability and community care.

The Centre’s primary aims are, through our research, teaching and consultancy, to:

* find out more about how to support and work with people effectively
* help carers, managers and professionals develop the values, knowledge and skills that enable better services
* help policy-makers, planners, managers and practitioners organise and provide better services

The Centre provides teaching through short courses, certificate, diploma and degree programmes at the University of Kent and elsewhere. It also maintains an extensive programme of research and consultancy, nationally and internationally. In all our work we are committed to acknowledging diversity and addressing issues arising from social inequality.

We seek to align ourselves with service users and to reduce the disadvantage and discrimination they experience. We support user empowerment and the development of services that are responsive to user need. We seek to achieve our mission without further disadvantaging carers and service staff whom, we recognise, are often, themselves, relatively powerless and disadvantaged.

The School of Social Policy, Sociology and Social Research is one of the largest departments of its type in the UK, and is the largest department in the Faculty of Social Science.

The University of Kent is split between the Canterbury campus and Medway campus. This post is based at the Canterbury campus.

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| **Post title:**  | **Researcher**  |
| **Reference Number:** |  |
| **Salary Scale:** | **Grade 7 spine point 31 or 32** |
| **Department:** | **Tizard Centre** **SSPSSR** |
| **Contract:** | **16 months fixed term** **: 1 October 2012 to 31 January 2014. Full time** |
| **Location:** | **University of Kent, Canterbury Campus**  |
| **Responsible to:** | **Peter McGill** |

**Job Purpose**Some people with learning disabilities display “challenging” behaviour. This may involve aggressive, destructive or self-injurious behaviours. Staff find such behaviour difficult to manage and may use restrictive practices such as physically restraining the person. It is more costly to support an individual who shows serious challenging behaviour. They may need specialist provision and their quality of life may suffer.

Challenging behaviour has many different causes. In particular, such behaviour is often related to the way in which carers support the person. Challenging behaviour is “functional” i.e. the behaviour enables people, with limited communication and other skills, to control what happens to them. One person becomes aggressive when asked to do something – carers retreat and the person “escapes” from the request. Another person hits themselves when alone – carers talk to the person, the behaviour has successfully gained their attention. In this analysis, there is no implication that the person’s behaviour is deliberate – mostly, the person is simply responding to their current and previous experiences.

As a result, the treatment of challenging behaviour often requires changes in social care arrangements. Such changes are difficult to achieve, partly because many carers’ understanding of the causes of challenging behaviour are overly focused on factors within the individual.

This analysis also raises the possibility of prevention. If social care arrangements that make challenging behaviour less likely could be routinely put in place, then there would be less need for individually-focused change. Certain kinds of changes to social care arrangements are likely to significantly reduce the likelihood of challenging behaviour. These include providing opportunities for choice, creating predictable environments, establishing positive social interactions, encouraging more independent functioning and honouring personalised routines and activities. These, and other similar, changes are consistent with high quality, personalised social care.

This project seeks to test this approach to the prevention of challenging behaviour. Social care improvements will be facilitated in a number of accommodation settings. Settings will typically include individuals who already display challenging behaviour. Changes in these settings will be contrasted with a control group where no attempt is made to change the quality of social care. Accommodation settings will be randomly allocated to experimental and control groups.

Background on Peter McGill’s work can be found on [http://www.kent.ac.uk/tizard/staff/peter mcgill.html](http://www.kent.ac.uk/tizard/staff/peter%20mcgill.html). Candidates are welcome to contact him to discuss the post further. To do this email p.mcgill@kent.ac.uk or phone 01227 823838.

**Duties**

The researcher will work with two other half-time researchers to develop and implement the intervention in experimental group settings. With support from Peter McGill, the intervention team will provide input into 12-15 different residential settings (residential care homes and/or supported living settings) where social care support is provided by *Dimensions*. The intervention will focus on improving the quality of social care. The process will be tailored to each setting and will involve the following broad steps:

1. Collaborative work with staff team to review baseline data already gathered and identify the local changes in social care provision that would be required to reduce the prevalence of challenging behaviour in the setting;
2. Development of agreed performance standards for the setting;
3. Development of agreed arrangements to monitor performance against this set of standards;
4. Use of monitoring data to provide feedback to staff teams and to identify areas of practice where additional support or training is required;
5. Provision of additional support or training.

Follow up data collection will be conducted by an independent research worker. The researcher currently sought will, at the end of the intervention period, participate in qualitative data gathering and analysis through systematic reflection in conjunction with participating service users, staff and the provider organisation.

**Key Accountabilities / Primary Responsibilities**

* *working with Peter McGill and other researchers to prepare the intervention protocol*
* *working as part of the intervention team in a number of residential settings*
* *keeping good records of the work done*
* *participating in qualitative data collection and analysis.*

**Key Duties**

The postholder will be responsible, as part of the research team, for:

* preparing the intervention protocol
* ensuring the project keeps to timetable
* maintaining good relationships with research participants
* undertaking fieldwork in a variety of settings
* keeping good records of fieldwork
* troubleshooting
* participating in qualitative data collection and analysis
* (where possible) co-writing articles and other research outputs drawing on the analysis
* (where possible) disseminating findings in academic and policy/practice forums

**Internal & External Relationships**

Internal: the postholder will be responsible to Peter McGill. They will be made welcome in the Tizard Centre and will be encouraged to take part in its wider academic life.

External: the postholder will be responsible for negotiating and maintaining good relations with the agencies and individuals in the study. In addition (s)he will liaise with and develop relations with various stakeholders.

**Person Specification**

The person specification details the necessary skills, qualifications, experience or other attributes needed to carry out the job. Applications are assessed against each of the criteria either at application or interview stage. Applications will be deemed unsuccessful if an essential criterion is not met. This may also help you self-select if you are suitable for the role.

While this is a research associate post, the person sought needs to primarily have skills and experience in working with adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities (including those who display challenging behaviour) and in supporting change in residential environments. Experience may have been gained through involvement in direct service provision and management and/or in the provision of support and consultation to direct service providers as a behaviour support or other peripatetic professional.

* **Qualifications / Training**

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|  | **Essential** | **Desirable** |
| Masters or equivalent in a relevant social science subject |  | **✓** |
| Professional qualification (e.g. nursing, social work, clinical psychology, applied behaviour analysis) |  | **✓** |

* **Experience / Knowledge**

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|  | **Essential** | **Desirable** |
| Knowledge and experience in field of learning disabilities | **✓** |  |
| Knowledge and experience of residential settings for adults with learning disabilities | **✓** |  |
| Knowledge and experience in field of challenging behaviour | **✓** |  |
| Experience of using a positive behaviour support approach  | **✓** |  |
| Experience of consulting to and/or training of staff working in adult residential settings | **✓** |  |
| Knowledge and experience of quality improvement systems such as periodic service review |  | **✓** |
| Knowledge and experience of qualitative research methods |  | **✓** |
| Experience of writing for publication |  | **✓** |

* **Skills / Abilities**

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|  | **Essential** | **Desirable** |
| Ability to work collaboratively and effectively with staff groups | **✓** |  |
| Ability to work as a member of a team | **✓** |  |

**Application Process**

To apply for this post you will be asked to complete a short form and upload your CV, a one page summary (covering letter) and any other supporting documents. The link to the application procedure can be found by returning to the position details page and clicking on ‘click here to apply for this job’.

Applications must be received by the closing date and unfortunately late applications cannot be accepted.

Your application should provide clear evidence and examples demonstrating where you meet the criteria of the post.

If you are invited to attend an interview we will contact you by email confirming the arrangements.

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| **Closing date:**  | **2nd August 2012** |
| **Interviews are expected to be held on:** | **23rd or 24th August 2012** |

**Redeployment Policy:**Please note that applicants currently on the University of Kent redeployment register will be considered for this post prior to other applicants.  For further information on our redeployment policy please visit<http://www.kent.ac.uk/hr-staffinformation/policies/redundancy-redeployment.html>

**Two Tick Symbol:** The University of Kent is proud to operate within the ‘Positive about Disability’ Employment Pledge (Two Tick Symbol) and guarantee an interview to candidates who declare a disability and meet the essential criteria listed in the person specification.

If you have a disability and require information regarding accessibility of our campus facilities please visit <http://www.disabledgo.com/en/org/university-of-kent>

**Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) disclosure check:** Please note this post will require a CRB disclosure check.

**Job Share:** Applications to job-share this post are welcomed. If you wish to apply on a job-share basis indicate this on your application and include:

* If you are applying as part of a job-share team (please give name of sharer) or as an individual.
* The proportion of the job you would wish to work, expressed as a percentage.
* Whether you would be interested in the job on a full-time basis if a suitable sharer does not come forward.

**UK Border Agency Immigration regulations:** The University of Kent is unable, under current immigration law, to employ candidates who are not eligible to live and work in the UK.

For academic and research vacancies, or posts that require very specialist skills we can apply for a Certificate of Sponsorship (although there is no guarantee that this will be granted) if there are no suitable ‘resident’ candidates available to appoint.

Please refer to the Home Office website if you require further information on their Certificate of Sponsorship procedure/requirements at <http://www.bia.homeoffice.gov.uk/>

**Equality and Diversity **

The University of Kent is committed to the provision and support of an inclusive and balanced environment that respects and celebrates diversity. The University has comprehensive Equality and Diversity policy that states our commitments to the various equality strands. Furthermore, we have Single Equality Scheme that outlines our intentions and actions with regards to the race, gender and disability equality duties. Both of these documents alongside other useful guidance can be found on [www.kent.ac.uk/equalityanddiversity](http://www.kent.ac.uk/equalityanddiversity)