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| **Project:**  |
| **Title: PhD student placement opportunity –** *“The environmental impact of plastic containing wet wipes and alternative products on the market”* |
| The Environmental Protection Division in the Welsh Government is seeking a PhD student for a placement opportunity within its Local Environment Quality policy team. The teams’ remit falls under the portfolio of the Minister for Climate Change and supports objectives under the Environment Act and Wellbeing of Future Generations Act. The team is responsible for delivering a programme of work which focuses on improving the local environment of communities, targeting issues such as single use plastics and littering reduction, fly-tipping, dog fouling and other forms of environmental anti-social behaviour. Wet wipes, especially those containing plastic, present an environmental hazard and are amongst the most littered items. To illustrate their extensive use, the Great British Beach Clean reported an increase from 1.7 wet wipes per average 100m of beach to 18 wet wipes between 2005 and 2020. Wet wipes cause plastic and microplastic pollution in the terrestrial and aquatic environment. They are also responsible for sewage blockages when disposed incorrectly. According to Water UK, wet wipes made up more than 90% of the material causing sewer blockages in 2017. The Welsh Government is committed to addressing the problem of littering in Wales and preventing the environmental damage caused by products such as wet wipes. Whilst initial evidence gathering and desk-based research has been already undertaken on wet wipes, a number of gaps in our understanding remain. This includes the composition and viability of alternative products, particularly in relation to possible environmental impacts once in the wider environment. This placement will assist officials in exploring policy options and support the understanding of the environmental and social implications of future proposals. The PhD student is expected to play an instrumental role in collating and assessing the available evidence.**Key Tasks**The post holder will work within the team, supporting the policy development by undertaking the following tasks: * Undertake a rapid review of existing evidence base and data sources
* Gather evidence to strengthen our understanding of wet wipe composition, particularly plastic content
* Engage with relevant internal and external stakeholders during the data collection and policy development stages
* Assess available policy options with recommendations
* Draft briefing papers for senior officials and Ministers
* Develop longer-term policy and strategic direction
* Explore potential communication and behaviour change messaging

The post holder will benefit from a range of development opportunities including supporting Ministers; working at pace within a high-profile policy area and working with a wide range of stakeholders and departments across Welsh Government; building valuable working relationships; broadening their knowledge and understanding of Welsh Government policy work and have the opportunity to identify areas to add value to the delivery of evidence-based policy. With support from their Welsh Government supervisors, the post holder will be expected to take responsibility for management and delivery of work commitments, providing opportunity to develop team working and project management skills. |
| **Details**  |
| **Skills required:** | Essential SkillsStrong critical thinking, data analysis/manipulation and presentation skills; Ability to produce concise, well written documents presenting technical material in an accessible format; Ability to work confidently with a range of stakeholders; Ability to use research to deliver evidence based policy; Ability to work at pace, delivering against tight deadlines |
| **Outputs:** | As agreed with line manager and in relation to the above priorities |
| **Host Organisation:**  | Welsh Government |
| **Placement Start Date** | ASAP |
| **Development Opportunities** | The placement provides an opportunity to gain insight into the functioning of Welsh Government and evidence-based policy development at the highest level. The post-holder will work in an interesting and diverse team, contributing to the delivery of a cross-government programme in an area of policy in which, through its legislative framework, Wales leads the UK. The post-holder will be expected to work independently within parameters and guidelines provided by the Welsh Government. Working closely with a wide range of colleagues the successful candidate will build valuable working relationships, broaden their knowledge of public policy-making and enhance their existing transferable skills.The student will join an analytical team managing a diverse evidence-base and delivering technical and advisory support across the policy area. This is an interesting and diverse role, working on a high-profile programme across Welsh Government portfolios which will allow the student to gain a broad knowledge and understanding of Welsh Government policy work. With support from their Welsh Government supervisor, the student will be expected to take responsibility for managing and delivering work commitments during the placement period. |
| **Duration, location, working arrangements and environment:**  | The role will be full-time and is normally based with the policy team in one of Welsh Government’s regional offices. In view of current Covid-19 restrictions, the post-holder will likely be required to work from home, however, office working may be permissible and individual circumstances can be discussed. This is in-line with working arrangements for all Welsh Government employees. Post-holders will be provided with a laptop to facilitate regular contact with the policy team members and line management, other policy teams and external partners. Due to the remote nature of working, the policy team will ensure that the post-holder is fully supported during the placement and will endeavour to ensure that the placement is as close to the in-team office-based experience as possible.The placement will be for a 3 month period and will focus on delivering the objectives set out in this specification. The option to extend for a further 3 months is possible if the project team feel there is merit in doing so and if it is compatible with the post-holder’s university research schedule and DTP/CDT arrangements. The Welsh Government is a bilingual organisation and Welsh language skills are considered an asset to the organisation. We encourage and support staff to use their Welsh language skills during a placement. Start date will be agreed following successful Welsh Government security clearance. |
| **Application criteria** | **Welsh Government can only accept applications to the PhD student placement programme from registered students**.**All applicants must seek approval from their academic supervisor before applying** |
| **Funding** |
| The placement will be funded by Welsh Government; will match the current minimum UKRI PhD stipend rate; will be payable in one sum at the end of the placement; and is in addition to the stipend a student normally receives from their university. The payment process aims to compliment PhD student university stipend payment structures, i.e. WG pay the university and the funds are passed-on to the student’s account. **Please note:  we do not pay students directly** |
| **Contact**  |
| **Name:**  | Caroline Fallone (Academic Engagement Manager) via ResearchPlacements@gov.wales  |
| **Application process**  |
| Please submit CV and covering letter to the above mailbox. **NOTE: All applicants must confirm that they have received authorisation to take an interruption of studies from their academic supervisor** If you have an impairment or health condition, or use British Sign Language and need to discuss reasonable adjustments for any part of the placement programme, or wish to discuss how we will support you if you are to be successful, please contact the above mailbox as soon as possible to discuss your requirements and any questions you may have. |