

Project: PhD student placement opportunity

Title: “How does antimicrobial resistance (AMR) enter and spread via the water environment, impacting on animal and human health?”

Purpose of the Post

The Water and Flood Division of Welsh Government (WG) is seeking a PhD student for a placement opportunity within one of its teams. Water is one of Wales’ most valuable natural assets and an essential contributor to our economy. The Water team is responsible for developing bespoke policy for Wales for sustainably managing its water systems, including inland waters, estuaries and coastal waters. The team also oversees the effective functioning of Wales’ water industry and safeguards drinking water quality in line with statutory specifications.

The team’s remit falls under the portfolio of the Cabinet Secretary for Climate Change and Rural Affairs which supports delivery objectives identified under primary legislation such as the Environment Act and Wellbeing of Future Generations Act. The team works closely with a wide variety of internal and external stakeholders and representatives of the UK Government and the other Devolved Administrations.

There are many challenges facing our water bodies and the effective functioning of our water systems. The continuous supply of safe and clean water is under pressure from climate change, extreme weather events, increased pollution levels and population growth. An emerging threat to healthy water systems comes from the pharmaceutical industry and the over-use of antibiotics, leading to the prevalent antimicrobial resistance (AMR) in living organism and the wider environment. AMR is regarded as a global and complex threat to human health.

The Welsh Government considers AMR in the wider context of the One Health Agenda, integrating the areas of health, animal health and the environment. How the environment and water act as vectors for AMR is not well understood. Under commitments of the UK AMR Five Year National Action Plan 2019-2024 and the Welsh Government’s implementation plan

(<https://www.gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2019-07/antimicrobial-resistance-in-animals-and-the-environment-implementation-plan.pdf>) the water policy team has commissioned a series of studies focusing on the role of the water environment and factors which can lead to the increased presence of antibiotic resistance genes.

The successful candidate would be expected to consider and evaluate the findings of the previous studies, developing policy recommendations for managing the AMR risk in water, and identifying gaps in evidence as well as areas for further investigation.

The Welsh Government has been actively involved in developing the 2024-2029 UK National Action Plan which is expected to be published imminently. The postholder will also be tasked with developing a delivery plan for meeting the environmental commitments within the five year action plan. Contribution to briefings, cross-departmental meetings and supporting procurement exercises may be required.

The post-holder will also actively support the development of longer-term policy direction in addressing water pollution issues and emerging threats to health and the environment. This area of research overlaps with other policy areas such as animal and human health, environmental standards and monitoring and waste management. For example, the post holder will help to manage the Water Policy Team’s Research and Development Database, to ensure that Welsh Government policy is up to date with recent findings.

Key Tasks

- Critical evaluation of AMR studies
- Identification of evidence and future research needs
- Collation and review of relevant research and data sources
- Analysis of complex information and data trends
- Engagement with internal and external stakeholders
- Drafting of briefing papers for senior officials and the Minister

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- Development of policy recommendations
- Development of longer-term policy direction

The exact tasks required of the student will be dependent on the particular focus of the team at the time of the placement and the student will likely have the opportunity to become involved in other work areas where they have a specific interest.

Details

Skills required:	<p><u>Key Skills</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Excellent research skills • Ability to analyse complex information and data • Ability to write clearly and concisely • Ability of presenting technical material in an accessible format • Presentation skills • Creative thinking • Ability to apply an innovative approach
Outputs:	As agreed with line manager and in relation to the above priorities
Host Organisation:	Welsh Government
Placement Start Date	TBC – Aug 2024
Development Opportunities	<p>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 shaping of a future policy direction. 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.</p>
Duration, location, working arrangements and environment:	<p>The role will be full-time and is normally based with the policy team in one of Welsh Government's regional offices. In line with the flexible working policy, the post-holder will be able to work from home, and office working will also be an option.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>The placement will be for a 3 month period and will focus on delivering the objectives set out in the job 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.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>Start date will be agreed following successful Welsh Government security clearance.</p>
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



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Funding

The placement will be funded by Welsh Government and will match the current UKRI PhD stipend rate, payable in one sum at the beginning of the placement (to minimise financial administration).

To avoid delays to students receiving payments, it is preferable that the student's PhD stipend is not paused during the placement and that, instead, it continues and that WG reimburse the university for the time the student is not undertaking research. **Please note: we do not pay students directly**

Contact

Name:

Contact Stephany Aymerich (Research & Academic Engagement Manager) via researchplacements@gov.wales

The Welsh Government takes the protection of your data seriously. If you contact the Welsh Government then our **Privacy Notice** explains how we use your information and the ways in which we protect your privacy.

Application process

Please submit CV and covering letter to Stephany Aymerich. **NOTE: All applicants must confirm that they have received authorisation to undertake a placement from their programme manager.**

We welcome receiving correspondence in Welsh. Any correspondence received in Welsh will be answered in Welsh and corresponding in Welsh will not lead to a delay in responding

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 Stephany Aymerich as soon as possible to discuss your requirements and any questions you may have.