



Doctoral Training Policy and Evidence Placement

Project: PhD student placement opportunity

Title: **Chemical threats to water quality**

Purpose of the Post

Water is one of Wales' most valuable natural assets and an essential contributor to our economy. It is however under threat from a variety of sources, including point-source and diffuse pollution, and climate change. Emerging contaminants, such as pharmaceuticals and hazardous chemicals also present a concern for environmental and drinking water quality and require more focus and research to inform future policy development.

We have recently developed a list of possible chemicals of emerging concern in Wales. The purpose of this placement is to better understand the sources, pathways and risks to the water environment from this shortlist of emerging pollutants. This will include primarily a desktop review of existing evidence in relation to these substances and provide recommendations to support policy and operational work to manage eventual risks.

The post-holder will actively support the development of longer-term policy direction in addressing water pollution issues and emerging threats to health and the environment. The initial assessment completed by the post-holder is expected to highlight specific issues applicable to Wales and identify areas where more research and evidence is needed.

The Chemicals team is contributing to a potentially UK-wide chemicals strategy so this placement would support work in developing policy that could be included in the strategy. Additionally, there are various activities under UK REACH, which would be supported by this placement and by any outputs from the post-holder including Restriction activities.

The remit of this placement – Emerging Chemical Threats to Water - falls under the portfolio of the Cabinet Secretary for Climate Change and Rural Affairs and supports delivery objectives identified under primary legislation such as the Environment Act and Wellbeing of Future Generations Act.

Background

Chemicals in the environment are derived from a variety of sources some of which are subject to regulation. The Chemicals regime, which includes legislation such as UK REACH, regulates the use of certain substances. However, there are substances currently in use which can pose long term risks to human health and the environment. These risks need to be properly assessed to ensure harm to people and wildlife is minimised in the future.

Over the last decades, much research has been done on emerging contaminants in the aquatic environment, most of which has focused on the identification of emerging contaminants and the characterisation of their toxic potential. The WG needs to develop a better understanding of emerging chemical threats that are relevant in the Wales context, and develop risk management options for the future. Water is a major vector in transferring such substances through the environment; subsequently hazardous chemicals can enter the drinking water supply, adversely affecting human health. Managing emerging chemicals will ensure that we minimise the potential negative impact posed by these substances on aquatic life and human health in Wales.

Key Tasks

- 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
- Development of an initial overview report
- Identification of research needs and evidence gaps
- Contribute to processes under UK REACH
- Summary of findings and recommendations

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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	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.
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

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).



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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.