



## **Social mechanisms of self-harm in adolescence ESRC DTP Joint Studentship**

### **University of Birmingham and University of Nottingham**

The Midlands Graduate School is an accredited Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) Doctoral Training Partnership (DTP). One of 14 such partnerships in the UK, the Midlands Graduate School is a collaboration between the University of Warwick, Aston University, University of Birmingham, University of Leicester, Loughborough University and the University of Nottingham.

We are now inviting applications for an ESRC Doctoral Joint Studentship between the University of Birmingham (where the student will be registered) and the University of Nottingham to commence in October 2019.

#### **Project description: Social mechanisms of self-harm in adolescence**

Recent concerns over the rise in self-harm among UK adolescents are based on large population-based cohort studies (Morgan et al. 2017). Intensifying these concerns is the suggestion that self-harm could potentially be directly socially transmitted (Whitlock et al., 2006). However, other potential mechanisms exist, including indirect social transmission (Giletta et al. 2013), homophily, and common external causation (Shalizi & Thomas, 2010). Better understanding of the individual and social context and meaning of self-harm is imperative to support young people.

This PhD project will investigate potential causal mechanisms driving changes in young people's self-harm over time using multiple methods and approaches: (1) **Patient and Public Involvement** (PPI), involving people with lived experience in shaping research design and questions. (2) **Qualitative, person-centred measurement** of social and individual self-harm triggers, investigating the key distal and proximal factors leading to self-harm in young people (Townsend et al 2016). (3) **Longitudinal social network analysis** using RSIENA (Snijders et al. 2010), to explore the temporally contiguous relationship between self-harm and peer interactions. (4) **Community and clinically self-harming samples**, encompassing both the bulk and the tip of the self-harm 'iceberg' (Hawton, 2012).

Key research questions are: (1) To what extent do young people who self-harm view social influence as important in self-harm instantiation, maintenance and recovery? (2) Can changes across time in self-harm be causally attributed to changes in social interactions? (3) To what extent do the above relationships apply across community and clinical samples?

#### **Practicalities of joint supervision**

The student will be based at the University of Birmingham (School of Psychology and Institute of Mental Health), where the primary supervisor (Dr Stephanie Burnett Heyes) and mentor (Prof Matthew Broome) are based. The student will attend meetings with the second supervisor (Prof Ellen Townsend) at the University of Nottingham.

**Skills and training**

The student will have access to a wide range of training opportunities through the ESRC DTP. The student will receive essential training in public engagement methods and longitudinal social network analysis.

**Application Process**

To be considered for this PhD, please complete the Joint Studentship application form [available online here](#) and email this to Parveen Chahal at [pg-psychology-admissions@contacts.bham.ac.uk](mailto:pg-psychology-admissions@contacts.bham.ac.uk).

Shortlisted applicants will be required to attend an interview on Monday 25<sup>th</sup> February or Tuesday 5<sup>th</sup> March and to provide two references.

**Application deadline: Monday 11<sup>th</sup> February at 12 noon**

**Midlands Graduate School ESRC DTP**

Our ESRC studentships cover fees and maintenance stipend and extensive support for research training, as well as research activity support grants. Support is available only to successful applicants who fulfil eligibility criteria. To check your eligibility, visit:

[www.mgsdtp.ac.uk/studentships/eligibility/](http://www.mgsdtp.ac.uk/studentships/eligibility/)

Informal enquiries prior to application should be directed to Stephanie Burnett Heyes:

[s.burnettheyes@bham.ac.uk](mailto:s.burnettheyes@bham.ac.uk)