



**Economic
and Social
Research Council**



Transdiagnostic Neurodiversity and Young People's Mental Health: Squaring the Circle

ESRC DTP Collaborative Studentship

University of Birmingham and Forward Thinking Birmingham

The Midlands Graduate School is an accredited Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) Doctoral Training Partnership (DTP). One of 15 such partnerships in the UK, the Midlands Graduate School is a collaboration between the Universities of Warwick, Birmingham, Nottingham, Aston, Leicester, Loughborough, De Montfort and Nottingham Trent.

University of Birmingham as part of Midlands Graduate School is now inviting applications for an ESRC Doctoral Studentship in association with our collaborative partner Forward Thinking Birmingham to commence in October 2025.

One of the foremost challenges facing society is the rapid growth in mental health problems experienced by young people. How best to characterize and understand such difficulties in a changing world has been the topic of both rigorous research and highly-charged social and political discourse. Concurrent to this youth mental health challenge has been a vast increase in the diagnostic rates of neurodivergence; most obviously in Autism and Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD). Surprisingly, though diagnostic rates of young people's mental health and neurodivergence have both increased substantially, such experiences are rarely approached within a consistent framework, nor with the appropriate mix of social science methods to provide a rich understanding of their complex nature.

The School of Psychology and Forward Thinking Birmingham have partnered to try and address this need. The successful applicant will work under the supervision of Dr Andrew Surtees, Prof. Ian Apperly and Dr Rory Devine at the University of Birmingham, and Dr Katy Robson with Forward Thinking Birmingham. They will use quantitative methods to look at how best to characterise neurodiversity in young people with mental health problems and how neurodiversity might impact treatment. They will use qualitative methods to try to understand the experiences of neurodivergent young people in mental health services. They will work with clinicians across a multi-disciplinary team to understand key decision-making in clinical practice. They will work with an experts by experience group to shape research questions that are meaningful for service users. They will work towards a programme of research and impact to support meaningful outcomes.

We are keen to work with a candidate who has a strong passion for research, and an interest in the intersection between neurodiversity, mental health and developmental science. The successful applicant will have strong analytical skills, good knowledge of research and theory in psychological science, and a strong work ethic.

Application Process

To be considered for this PhD, please complete the Collaborative Studentship application form [available online here](#). Shortlisted applicants will also be required to provide transcripts and two references.

Application deadline: Wednesday 19th February

Midlands Graduate School ESRC DTP

Our ESRC studentships cover fees at the home rate, a maintenance stipend, and extensive support for research training, as well as research activity support grants. Support is available to both home and international applicants. For further details, visit: www.mgsdtp.ac.uk/studentships/eligibility/.

Informal enquiries about the research or the School of Psychology at the University of Birmingham prior to application can be directed to Dr Andrew Surtees (A.Surtees@bham.ac.uk).