

3-year ESRC/McPin PhD Scholarship

People bereaved by suicide and support from their family and friends: understanding social network interactions and their impact

Application deadline Thursday 16th February 5pm 2017

Interview dates Friday 3rd March 2017

Lead supervisor Dr Brynmor Lloyd-Evans, Senior Lecturer – Division of Psychiatry UCL

Funding and award This 3-year, full time PhD studentship is jointly funded by the ESRC UCL, Bloomsbury and East London Doctoral Training Programme (UBEL DTP) and the McPin Foundation. Funding covers university course fees, an annual maintenance stipend (currently £16,296 per annum) and limited research expenses.

Eligibility ESRC studentships are open to all UK applicants. Applicants are also eligible for a studentship if they have been an ordinary resident in the UK for three years prior to the start of the studentship grant. For instance, if the applicant applies for a studentship to start in October 2017, they must have resided in the UK since October 2014. Please note: if the applicant is from an EU-country, these three years may include time spent studying however if the applicant is from outside the EU (international), these three years cannot include time spent studying at a Higher Education institution. For more details, please read the ESRC UBEL DTP Residential Guidelines: <https://ubel-dtp.ac.uk/eligibility-2/>

General description This is an exciting opportunity to undertake a full-time PhD in the Division of Psychiatry at UCL. The PhD topic is the informal support provided to people bereaved by suicide: understanding the interactions between a bereaved person and their family and friends, the needs for support and how barriers to providing support for family and friends may be addressed. The project will include a literature review, and qualitative interviews with people bereaved by suicide and their family and friends. It will involve close collaboration with an advisory network of people with personal experience of bereavement by suicide. It is planned that this project will lead to development of resources for family and friends to help them support a person bereaved through suicide, within the course of the PhD programme.

The successful student will be based mainly in the Division of Psychiatry at UCL, where academic supervision and broader skills training and career development support will be provided. For about 25% of the project, the student will be based at the McPin Foundation. McPin will provide specialist support with patient and public involvement and qualitative

interviewing skills, and an opportunity to learn about mental health research in a voluntary sector context.

Person specification

Essential criteria

- Masters degree in mental health sciences or another relevant social science
- Evidence of outstanding early academic career and track record
- Experience of conducting high quality academic literature reviews
- Experience of conducting research using qualitative methods in relevant area.
- Understanding of Public Involvement in research and working with people with relevant lived experience on research projects
- Some knowledge and understanding of the difficulties caused by bereavement and suicide
- Evidence of excellent interpersonal and communication skills, and of excellent emotional awareness and sensitivity in talking to people about highly upsetting events
- Evidence of excellent organisational, problem-solving and analytical skills
- Ability to work independently as well as in a collaborative research team

Desirable criteria

- Good first degree in psychology or a relevant social science
- Personal experience of bereavement through suicide or supporting people bereaved by suicide
- Knowledge and experience of using qualitative analysis software programmes (e.g. NVivo)
- Knowledge of relevant national and UCL research governance procedures

How to apply

Please submit applications in the following format:

- A CV, including full details of all University course grades to date.
- Contact details for two academic or professional referees (at least one academic).
- A personal statement (750 words maximum) outlining (i) your suitability for the project with reference to the criteria in the person specification, (ii) what you hope to achieve from the PhD and (iii) your research experience to-date.

Please include a contact telephone number and an email address where you can be easily reached. References will be taken up for all short-listed candidates.

Please send electronic applications to:

Contact name: Dr Brynmor Lloyd-Evans, Senior Lecturer - Division of Psychiatry, UCL

Contact details / enquiries: b.lloyd-evans@ucl.ac.uk

Further information

The project

This PhD project aims to address two identified gaps in current knowledge. First, we need a better understanding of the views of the friends/family of those bereaved by suicide; their experience and perspectives on supporting their friend or family member and the barriers and facilitators to doing this. Second, we lack understanding of the dynamics of relationships between a person bereaved by suicide and others in their social network; the extent to which appraisals of each other's views or wishes are accurate; and the barriers experienced within network groups to giving and receiving support.

By addressing these questions, this PhD project can increase understanding of the challenges of giving and receiving support following a bereavement by suicide, and suggest ways in which social support to people bereaved by suicide may be optimised, and recovery and resilience be promoted. By thus developing evidence about how to provide better support for those bereaved by suicide, this PhD can address a public health policy priority identified in the English National Suicide Prevention Strategy.

The successful candidate will be expected to develop specific research questions within the aims of this broad theme of enquiry:

1. To understand through qualitative interviews:

- The experience and perceptions of family and friends of supporting someone bereaved by suicide
- How the interaction of the attitudes and actions of the bereaved person, and those of their social network, can impact on support given and received
- How barriers may be overcome and effective support may be provided by family and friends to people bereaved by suicide

2. To use these insights to develop guidance for family and friends and for helping organisations in how to optimise social network support for people bereaved by suicide.

The project is likely to comprise three phases:

- i) Literature review, consultation with individuals and organisations with relevant experience of bereavement through suicide, and project planning
- ii) Qualitative interviews: with individuals bereaved through suicide and nominated family and friends
- iii) Resource development: developing one or more draft resources to promote support from family and friends to those bereaved by suicide

All phases of the project will be supported by a PPI advisory group of people with lived experience of bereavement by suicide, recruited through the McPin Foundation networks.

The supervisory panel:

Dr Brynmor Lloyd-Evans would act as the primary supervisor for this project, with Dr Nicola Morant as secondary supervisor.

Dr. Brynmor Lloyd-Evans is a Senior Lecturer at the Division of Psychiatry at UCL. He has worked as a mental health social worker and retains a current HCPC social work registration. He brings considerable experience of collaborating and working on mixed methods studies in a range of mental health settings.

Dr. Nicola Morant is a Lecturer in Qualitative Mental Health Research in the Division of Psychiatry at UCL. Her background is in social psychology. She is the qualitative lead in a number of NHS-based research projects funded by National Institute for Health Research programmes, and will provide qualitative methodological expertise to supervision.

In addition to the two main supervisors, a supervisory panel will bring additional expertise and perspectives to supporting the student.

Dr. Vanessa Pinfold is the Research Director of the McPin Foundation www.mcpin.org. She has been working in mental health research for 20 years and has published studies on stigma and discrimination, families and carers, social inclusion, experiences of the mental health system, wellbeing networks as well as more recently co-production in mental health research.

Dr Alexandra Pitman is an Honorary Research Associate in the UCL Division of Psychiatry and a consultant psychiatrist in oncology liaison psychiatry. She completed an MRC

Population Health Scientist Fellowship in 2014. Her PhD investigated whether sudden bereavement was a risk factor for suicide attempt in young adults and she has published several papers from this work. Her clinical and research interests are the care of people who feel suicidal and the prevention of suicide attempt and she brings this specialist subject-area knowledge to the team.

Dr Jo Billings is a Clinical Senior Lecturer in the UCL Division of Psychiatry. She has considerable qualitative research experience and a leading role in managing the large Masters courses in the department, including overseeing supervision and support to students. She works clinically as a Consultant Psychologist at an NHS Trauma Service, and has a clinical and research interest highly relevant to this project in resilience and recovery from traumatic experiences.

Dr Marc Serfaty is a Reader in Psychiatry in the UCL Division of Psychiatry and a consultant psychiatrist in an inpatient mental health service. He brings research experience in the field of suicide and experience of leading large NIHR funded projects.

More information about all supervisors is available via their institutional profiles:

Lloyd-Evans <https://iris.ucl.ac.uk/iris/browse/profile?upi=BLLOY83>

Morant <https://iris.ucl.ac.uk/iris/browse/profile?upi=NMORA50>

Pinfold <http://mcpin.org/dr-vanessa-pinfold/>

Pitman <https://iris.ucl.ac.uk/iris/browse/profile?upi=APITM02>

Billings <https://iris.ucl.ac.uk/iris/browse/profile?upi=JLBIL35>

Serfaty <https://iris.ucl.ac.uk/iris/browse/profile?upi=MASER32>

The student for this project will be able to draw on the relevant research already conducted by the research team, and in particular, the work of Dr. Pitman on the experience and views of those bereaved by suicide. Within this active research group at the Division of Psychiatry at UCL, Drs. Serfaty, Billings and Pitman have plans in preparation to seek research funding for studies of interventions to support those bereaved through suicide. This PhD project offers opportunities for informing and involvement with these projects. The PhD project can also directly link with McPin's current collaboration with the Judi Meadows Memorial Foundation, and their ongoing work in developing methods of public involvement and coproduction.

The primary supervisor will offer meetings at least monthly to the student (and more frequently if needed at specific points of the project, e.g. start-up; preparing for PhD upgrade). The secondary supervisor will offer meetings at least quarterly, and other members of the supervisory panel at least twice a year. Joint supervisory meetings will be arranged at least twice a year, with Vanessa Pinfold from the partner organisation invited too, along with other members of the advisory panel as necessary, to review progress and the student's support needs.

Proposed training and support

An induction programme for the student will include meeting the UCL supervisory panel members and guidance with the UCL procedures for planning and recording PhD progress (e.g. the student electronic research log), as well as the McPin induction programme described below.

The UCL process of upgrading from study for an MPhil to a PhD will be followed: this involves the student compiling an upgrade report, a viva examination, and a presentation to the Division at a point 12-18 months into the PhD. The supervisors will support the student in preparing for and arranging this process.

Students and their supervisors will use the DTP's Training Needs Analysis procedures to identify training needs, especially in relation to their research skills. Within the Division of Psychiatry, a social psychologist delivers regular teaching open to PhD students on using software to analyse qualitative data. Other in-house provision will be developed where the needs analysis suggests this is required. In addition, training will draw on relevant advanced courses elsewhere within the DTP, including those on qualitative methods available within the Life Course and Social Epidemiology, Demography, and Health and Wellbeing pathways; and also within the MRC DTP. More generic aspects of advanced training will be provided through UCL's Doctoral Skills Development Programme and the Bloomsbury Postgraduate Skills Network. These courses may be selected by the student according to their needs, in discussion with supervisors. Relevant courses are likely to include: general skills development training (e.g. PhD planning, time management, writing for publication, getting the most from supervision) and training in specific relevant research skills (e.g. systematic reviewing, qualitative data analysis, use of qualitative data management software).

The student will be supported to integrate into the academic community at UCL and maximise their learning and career development opportunities. They will be offered an individual mentor separate from their supervisory panel during their PhD studies, arranged through the Divisional mentoring scheme. The student will have access to a network of about 40 PhD students in the Division of Psychiatry at UCL, who meet regularly to plan talks and training of interest and provide mutual support. A weekly postgraduate student journal club is chaired by PhD students, who support MSc students in preparing to present. A twice monthly Division seminar hosts a wide range of guest speakers. We also deliver a series of

events open to all postgraduates and junior research staff on topics such as career pathways in mental health research and strategies for engaging the public and disseminating findings. PhD students who wish to gain teaching experience currently assist with our undergraduate teaching and our core methodological teaching at MSc level. They are strongly encouraged and supported to present their work at national and international conferences and it is usual for them to do so. They also gain experience in methods of dissemination from presenting research findings to policy makers, clinicians and the public.

Additional specialist training in public involvement and qualitative research skills will be provided by McPin. The student will be based at McPin about 25% of their time. This will be more concentrated during an induction period, periods of PPI consultation and during development of outputs from the study.

Dr Vanessa Pinfold will support and manage the student at McPin, where office space and facilities will be provided. The student will also have access to a range of senior staff at the Foundation, including others with a PhD and experience of collaborating on large research projects. The main roles of the McPin collaboration will be to provide expert guidance and training with public involvement, training in qualitative research methods, and supporting dissemination. The programme of support provided by McPin will involve:

1) An induction:

i) Meetings with senior McPin staff and lived experience experts, and exposure to ongoing McPin research. This will provide opportunities to explore the culture of research within a voluntary sector organisation; to understand how working for a charity is different to doing research in a university; and to see how lived experience involvement and peer research principles can be embedded into research projects.

ii) Initial visits to families and organisations connected to bereavement by suicide: to provide initial orientation to the topic and promote understanding of the key concerns and sensitivities involved.

2) Organising a PPI advisory group. McPin will help the student to contact and recruit a group of advisors with lived experience of bereavement by suicide and/or of supporting a family member or friend bereaved through suicide. This group will help with refining the focus and questions for the research, reviewing qualitative interview information sheets and topic guides; problem-solving any difficulties with recruitment or conducting interviews; refining/validating key themes from analysis of interviews and developing guidance/outputs from the research which are accessible and helpful to members of the public and those working in supporting organisations.

Due to the sensitive and inherently distressing nature of the topic, this lived experience group will be vital to ensuring the research is acceptable to participants and outputs are acceptable and accessible to their target audiences. McPin bring specialist expertise in

setting up and supporting PPI advisory groups, and will coach the student through this process.

3) Qualitative research methods: The student will receive supervision and training in qualitative research methods at UCL. McPin will be able to bring additional support in two areas of expertise:

i) Reflexivity: the researcher's own experience and perspectives inevitably influence the development and conduct of interviews, and analysis of qualitative interview data. This may be particularly relevant to research into bereavement, where the researcher may bring personal, emotionally salient experience. It is also an important and recurring issue in McPin's peer research approach, where researchers' relevant lived experience is valued as an asset but must not overshadow what is being communicated by participants. McPin provide specific training in awareness of and addressing reflexivity in qualitative research, which the student can take advantage of.

ii) Collaborative analytic approaches: Analysis of qualitative data can be enhanced by ensuring stakeholders' perspectives inform the development of an analytic coding frame and the description/synthesis of main themes within the data. McPin will support the student in developing a strategy for involving people (from the PPI advisory group or others) in developing/validating a coding frame and presenting results – in a way which is meaningful but manageable, and which maintains confidentiality of all concerned.

4) Dissemination: A main aim of this project is to develop outputs aimed at non-academic audiences – family and friends of those bereaved by suicide, and helping organisations supporting those bereaved by suicide. McPin will support the student in planning an iterative process of developing these outputs, using feedback from the PPI advisory group and wider consultation with relevant stakeholders to refine these resources.

McPin will also support the student in reaching wider audiences with academic outputs from the study: e.g. writing blogs summarising peer-reviewed papers from the study; using social media to disseminate these, and potentially to generate further discussion/feedback on outstanding questions.

ESRC studentship employment guidance

ESRC studentship award holders are encouraged to undertake a certain amount of paid teaching or other research work during their studentship provided that they spend a minimum of 1,800 hours each academic year on their doctoral research and research training.

Their programme of postgraduate training must be compatible with such work and their supervisor must approve.

Please note that the figure of 1,800 is based on recommendations about the difference between full and part time. It equates to a 37.5 hour week for 48 weeks. Please note that ESRC allows for eight weeks' holiday per year and when this is taken into account, the figure of 1,800 hours is reduced to 1,650.

Further to this, demonstrating, teaching, or other types of employment should not be a compulsory element of research training, and ROs should seek to provide a range of development opportunities for their students. In coming to this decision, the Council considered the following:

- a stipend is a tax-free award for the purposes of undertaking a period of education and training. Income earned from employment duties is taxable in the normal way
- the Council would expect to see the contribution of research students to demonstration or teaching work formally recognised and recorded as employment by an RO, with appropriate contractual obligations and training
- research students should be given information about their entitlements and responsibilities in undertaking a postgraduate research programme at the outset of their studies.

Students may undertake a small amount of other paid work either in term time or during holidays. The ESRC does not encourage such work especially during the times when students are expected to be fully engaged in research training and thesis preparation.

Full-time ESRC studentship award holders cannot hold either a full-time job, or a permanent part-time job, during the period of their award. Part-time ESRC studentship award holders cannot hold a full-time job.

If a part-time student wishes to suspend their award for a period because of a temporary employment opportunity which is relevant to their area of research, the maximum period of suspension will be based on whether the employment is full- or part-time. As a result, the normal maximum suspension of 12 months will apply if the employment is full-time but may be calculated on a pro-rata basis if the employment is part-time.