

Candidate Information

Position: Research Fellow (part time 0.4 FTE)
School/Department: School of Nursing and Midwifery
Reference: 25/112506
Closing Date: Monday 19 May 2025
Salary: £39,922 - £42,341 per annum (pro-rata)
Anticipated Interview Date: Wednesday 28 May 2025
Duration: Available until 31 March 2027

JOB PURPOSE:

People with intellectual disabilities have poorer health outcomes than those without intellectual disabilities, with higher rates of secondary health conditions, leading to them dying almost 20-years younger. Being overweight/obese can make these existing health conditions worse. Physical activity (PA) is a modifiable risk factor for overweight and obesity. Yet, globally, over 80% of adolescents are not meeting the recommended PA guidelines. Being physically active during childhood and adolescence is associated with many health benefits. PA behaviour established during adolescence often tracks into adulthood, alongside these corresponding health benefits. Children and adolescents with intellectual disabilities experience a range of individual, interpersonal, and contextual barriers to, and facilitators, of PA. Indeed, existing interventions often fail to consider these unique challenges faced by people with ID.

The environmental context such as family, school, community, and society, also need to be considered during intervention development. Youth with intellectual disabilities depend highly on their school to help them to engage in sufficient PA. Within schools, a lack of time is often considered one of the main barriers to the promotion of additional PA opportunities. High-intensity interval training (HIIT) has been proposed as a time-efficient mode of activity which has been effective for improving physical, mental and cognitive health in adolescents. However, little empirical evidence exists on the effectiveness of HIIT to improve health outcomes within the adolescent with intellectual disabilities population.

The post holder will take the lead and be responsible for the project management of the clustered randomised controlled feasibility trial Project HIIT: a school-based intervention for adolescents with intellectual disabilities targeting physical activity and body composition outcomes.

The research fellow will be required to work within the Faculty of Medicine, Health and Life Sciences and will be responsible for leading on the planning, delivery and evaluation of Project HIIT within Special Education Needs Schools throughout Northern Ireland.

MAJOR DUTIES:

1. Responsible for the day-to-day management of the project staff, setting tasks and monitoring progress.
2. Provide advice to the research team (PIs, collaborators, research assistants, placement students, teachers, students) as required throughout the trial period.
3. Take a leading role in the co-ordination and collection of data outcome measurements at baseline, mid-intervention, and 3 and 6 months follow-up from all students and school staff.
4. Outcome measures include: i) accelerometry; ii) body composition outcome (i.e., body mass index, waist circumference); iii) 6-minute walk test, and ii) Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire.
5. Take a leading role collating and analysing pre / post data outcome measures, attrition and retention rates, reporting adverse events, and report writing.
6. Develop, conduct and analyse a study process evaluation to include both qualitative and quantitative outcomes.
7. Identify and train suitable school staff who will lead on the delivery of Project HIIT to their students.

8. Lead on the co-ordination and setting up of Project HIIT procedures within intervention schools, ensuring processes are standardised across sites.
9. Lead on the collection and analysis of qualitative data as part of the intervention refinement, fidelity checks and process evaluation.
10. Any other duties appropriate to the grade and nature of the post.

ESSENTIAL CRITERIA:

1. Degree or equivalent in an area related to sport, health, education or psychology.
2. Have or be about to obtain* a PhD with a physical activity or behaviour change component for children with intellectual disabilities/autism.
(*must be obtained within 3 months of the closing date for the post).
3. Experienced in developing and delivering behaviour change interventions utilising both individual and systems change theories alongside key stakeholders, within the intellectual disability/autism population.
4. Experience of conducting feasibility/RCT's with children with intellectual disability/autism.
5. Experience of conducting feasibility/RCT's within schools.
6. Experience of supervising students and staff, including delivering training on research methodologies.
7. Substantial relevant research experience in the field of behaviour change interventions with children with intellectual disability/autism.
8. Experienced qualitative and quantitative researcher with evidence of ability to plan, conduct, analyse and disseminate feasibility/RCT's.
9. Experience in designing and conducting process evaluations within physical activity research in schools for children with intellectual disabilities/autism.
10. Proven track record of publishing research within the field of intellectual disabilities/autism.
11. Experience of managing the planning, delivery and successful completion, and reporting of a behaviour change intervention in the area of intellectual disabilities/autism.
12. Sufficient breadth and depth of specialist knowledge in the area of physical activity research within the field of intellectual disabilities/autism. This includes having an understanding of the existing methodological barriers/enablers of school-based physical activity interventions within this population.
13. Experienced in the administration, collection, analysis and reporting of physical activity outcomes (specifically accelerometry) in children with intellectual disability/autism.
14. Experience in the assessment of body composition/anthropometric measures in children with intellectual disability/autism.
15. Ability to communicate complex information clearly.
16. Ability to build contacts within school settings with Principals, teachers, parents and children with intellectual disabilities/autism.
17. Excellent organisational skills and ability to meet deadlines.
18. Evidence of ability to work on own initiative.
19. Excellent oral and written communication skills
20. Evidence of ability to work effectively as part of a team.
21. Must hold a valid driving license or ability to meet the mobility requirements for the post.
Willing to travel to meet the needs of the post.
22. Appointment to this post is subject to the successful candidate's Enhanced Criminal Record Check.

DESIRABLE CRITERIA:

1. Experience of working collaboratively or in co-production with key stakeholders to design, deliver and test behaviour change interventions.
2. Experience of utilising implementation science methodologies, including conducting readiness for change evaluations in intellectual disability/autism populations.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION:

Informal Enquiries to Peter Mulhall: p.mulhall@qub.ac.uk