

Candidate Information

Position: Research Assistant (part time 0.6 FTE)
School/Department: School of Nursing and Midwifery
Reference: 25/112508
Closing Date: Monday 19 May 2025
Salary: £33,785 per annum (pro-rata)
Anticipated Interview Date: Friday 30 May 2025
Duration: Fixed Term, Part Time (0.6 hours FTE); 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 intellectual disabilities.

The environmental context such as school 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 work as part of the research team to conduct a clustered randomised controlled feasibility trial of Project HIIT: a school-based intervention for adolescents with intellectual disabilities targeting physical activity and body composition outcomes.

The Research Assistant will be required to work within the School of Nursing & Midwifery, Faculty of Medicine, Health and Life Sciences and will be responsible for supporting the team to plan, deliver and evaluate Project HIIT within Special Educational Needs Schools throughout Northern Ireland.

MAJOR DUTIES:

1. Support the co-ordination and setting up of Project HIIT procedures within intervention schools, helping to ensure processes are standardised across sites.
2. Support 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. 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.
3. Collect and analyse qualitative data as part of the intervention refinement, fidelity checks and process evaluation.
4. Support the research team to collate and analyse pre / post feasibility data such as recruitment, attrition and retention rates, reporting adverse events, and report writing.

ESSENTIAL CRITERIA:

1. Degree or equivalent in an area related to sport, health, education or psychology.
2. Experience of working in schools for children with intellectual disability/autism.

3. Experience of conducting research in schools for children with intellectual disability/autism, using both qualitative and quantitative methodologies.
4. Experience of supporting the planning, delivery and successful completion, and reporting of a behaviour change intervention in the area of intellectual disabilities/autism.
5. Experience of obtaining consent from adults, and assent from children with intellectual disabilities/autism.
6. Experience collecting qualitative and quantitative data in school settings.
7. Ability to communicate complex information clearly.
8. Ability to build contacts within school settings with Principals, teachers, parents and children with intellectual disabilities/autism.
9. Good organisational skills and ability to meet deadlines.
10. Evidence of ability to work on own initiative.
11. Good oral and written communication skills.
12. Evidence of ability to work effectively as part of a team.
13. Must hold a valid driving license or ability to meet the mobility requirements for the post.
14. Willing to travel to meet the needs of the post.
15. Appointment to this post is subject to the successful candidate's Enhanced Criminal Record Check.

DESIRABLE CRITERIA:

1. PhD
2. Experience of working collaboratively or in co-production with key stakeholders to design, deliver and/or test behaviour change interventions.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION:

Informal enquiries may be directed to Peter Mulhall at p.mulhall@qub.ac.uk