

Research Proposal Summary: Social inclusion for children and young people with complex support needs

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Dr Bronagh Byrne, School of Social Sciences, Education and Social Work (SSESW)
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External Supervisor: Dr Karen McConnell, Ulster University

Charity Partner: Mae Murray Foundation
Alix Crawford (Chairperson)
Kyleigh Lough (Operations Manager)

Title: Social inclusion for children and young people with complex support needs

Background: Social inclusion is defined by the World Health Organisation as “the process of improving the terms of participation in society, particularly for people who are disadvantaged, through enhancing opportunities, access to resources, voice and respect for rights”. Disabled children and young people, particularly those with complex support needs, have been recognised as being at increased risk of social exclusion. The Mae Murray Foundation is a Northern Ireland charity that strives for true participation for all in leisure and social settings, regardless of age or ability. This project has been co-created with the Mae Murray Foundation and will underpin their work in social inclusion.

Objectives:

1. Understand the meaning of social inclusion from the perspectives of disabled children and young people, particularly those with complex support needs who live in Northern Ireland, and their parents.
2. Understand how social inclusion is understood by other stakeholders including the siblings and wider family circle of children and young people with complex support needs, non-disabled children and young people, and agencies that provide community-based services (such as sport, recreation and leisure activities).
3. Conduct an evidence synthesis and economic evaluation of shared social care for young people with complex support needs.

Methods: Sequential exploratory mixed methods. Firstly, semi-structured interviews will be conducted using participatory methods. Development of interview topic guides will be led by the Mae Murray Foundation and a young person’s advisory group, convened as part of the study. Data will be analysed using framework analysis and findings used to inform the scope of the subsequent evidence synthesis and economic evaluation.

Expected outcomes: Report to charity detailing stakeholder perspectives on social inclusion of disabled children and young people with complex support needs that will inform service development; evidence synthesis and economic evaluation of shared social care.

Additional Information: The successful applicant will have access to a supportive PhD training environment within the SoNM with additional academic input from SSESW. The student will undertake a minimum of three month’s placement with the Mae Murray Foundation over the course of the PhD that will involve attendance at their headquarters in Larne and at events across Northern Ireland. This enhanced training experience will enable the student to engage directly with knowledge users and end beneficiaries of this project. The placement will provide opportunities for the student to engage with the community and voluntary sector and gain experience of different parts of the Mae Murray Foundation’s operations.

Student eligibility: The studentships will have the normal conditions for Department for the Economy awards. Student eligibility criteria for DfE-funded studentships can be accessed [here](#).

Duration and funding: The studentship will cover a maintenance grant and fees for a maximum of three years. This PhD must be undertaken in a full-time capacity.

For further information please contact Dr Claire Kerr at c.kerr@qub.ac.uk

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