

PhD studentships 2022-2027 - Project outline form

SPHR Member:

LILaC

Provisional title:

Reducing health inequalities through embedding community participation and co-production in public health systems

Brief outline: (200-300 words)

Please describe what the studentship is going to comprise in terms of the topic and methods of study.

There is an urgent need to embed participation and promote real empowerment with communities as a central component of developing equitable public health systems. Research is rapidly accumulating on the benefits in terms of the acceptability and uptake of services and positive social and health impacts of community participation in decision making. There is a large body of research on specific co-production initiatives but relatively little on co-production at a systems level.

SPHR has undertaken innovative research on community-centred approaches to local action on health equity and pioneered using complex systems perspectives in evaluation. The proposed studentship would forge theoretical and empirical links across these areas, conducting in-depth qualitative research on co-production of action on health inequalities between the wider public health workforce and lay communities from a complex systems perspective.

This is one of two PhD studentships. To provide the necessary lens on system relationships, one will be embedded within the Lancashire & South Cumbria ICS and the other in a 3rd sector organisation. As participant observers the students will conduct participative action research with a group of key stakeholders including professional staff and members of relevant communities of interest/place in each organisational context. The interactive PAR process would involve:

1. Developing a shared understanding of barriers and enablers to achieving inclusive community involvement in designing action to reduce health inequalities;
2. Using creative design approaches to develop 'interventions' to address some of the issues identified (e.g. service co-design; policy equity audit)
3. Implementing interventions and evaluating the process and impact
4. Reflecting on the learning and deciding on next steps

Data collection and analysis will involve observational notes, documentary analysis, transcripts of group discussion and mechanisms to monitor intervention impacts. The students would be based at Lancaster University and part of a diverse disciplinary group of public health researchers across LiLaC.

Supervisory team:

Should include an adviser or advisors at other SPHR member institutions. It is expected that the advisory group will include a policy or practice member though this is not required at this stage

Supervision will be shared by Leon Cruikshank Professor of Design and Creative Exchange and Jennie Popay Professor of Sociology and Public Health both part of the LiLaC team at Lancaster University.

The supervisory team will comprise:

Dr Louise LaFortune, Department of Public Health & Primary Care, Cambridge

Dr Dalya Marks, Department of Public Health, Environments and Society, LSHTM

Dr Andy Knox, GP and Director of Population Health & Engagement, Morecambe Bay ICP

The proposal also has strong support from CVS Cumbria and Lancaster CVS both of which are undertaking work on action to reduce health inequalities. Officers from these CVSs will participate as advisers to the research and both organisations would be happy to participate as field sites for the research itself.

Programmes and/or themes:

(Please select all that apply)

- Public mental health
- Children, young people & families
- Places & communities

- Health inequalities
- Changing behaviour at a population level
- Efficient and equitable public health systems

If your project does not align with a SPHR QQ2 theme, please indicate below how it is in keeping with overall remit of the School.

Contact details:

(Please let us know who we should contact about this project)

Name: Professor Jennie Popay

Email address: j.popay@lancaster.ac.uk

Member: LiLaC

Use the box below to provide any other information.

