



University of Glasgow

School of Geographical & Earth Sciences
Institute of Mental Health and Well-being
University of Glasgow

Lord Kelvin & Adam Smith PhD Scholarship

Moving landscapes of learning disability: who chooses?
(1+3 or 3 years funding)

Further particulars

Basic summary of research project to be undertaken

This project will address the extent to which people with learning disabilities (PLD) are *mobile*, shifting their places of residence across the life-course. It will 'map' the migration histories of a sample of adult PLD, likely involving different settlements and regions across Scotland and beyond, as bound into the residential moves (or *non-moves*) of their families/care providers. For some PLD, it will also trace the geography of movements in and out of institutional settings and supported accommodation, perhaps related to relocations of family members. Attention will be given to the locational *decisions* involved: asking about *who* makes them; the extent to which perceptions of what is best for a PLD are prioritised in decision-making; and, crucially, whether PLD have any 'say' in decisions. Do they have any control over where they find themselves living, in what kinds of accommodation, with what people as co-habitants, in what part of the country?

Research project rationale and objectives

"I would like to think that in the future ... the person with a learning disability has a real choice about when they leave home, who they live with and where they live" (Family carer; in VPST, 2005: 41). *"The majority of people in supported accommodation had no choice over either who they lived with or where they lived. This was particularly the case for people with more severe learning disabilities"* (Emerson & Hatton, 2008: 7)

Most adults take it for granted that they have some control over where they live, and can reflect upon their own migration history – the places where they have lived and worked, even if in the same place for a whole life-course – as shaped by their own decisions, even if negotiated with others (family, friends, employers). For a few adults, however, notably those labelled as people with learning disabilities (PLD), such input into locational decisions impacting their lives may be wholly or largely absent. Government policy initiatives post-2000 – *The Same as You?*, *Valuing People*, and *Fulfilling Promises* (in Scotland, England and Wales, respectively) – have made serious efforts to empower PLD, in such a way that they *can* become more actively enrolled in decision-making about their lives, not least the crucial matter of *where to live*. The latter is inextricably linked to countless related issues such as accessibility of services, proximity to carers, friends and favoured activities, and hence to overall quality of life

The extent of our current knowledge about the migration histories of PLD is nonetheless limited: we know little about the 'map' of moves made or *not* made; nor about the influence that PLD can or cannot exert on such moves; nor about how and why locational decisions by others are taken *for* them or *on account* of them. Vital anecdotal evidence has been gathered by the likes of the *Valuing People* team, as in the quote above, and there are hints at more systematic findings by the likes of Emerson & Hatton when analysing the 'national survey' of PLD in England (itself designed to evaluate the impact of *Valuing People*). The evidence base for the latter derives more as a snapshot of PLD in their current settings, however, rather than being positioned in the longer-term context of tracing individuals and their migrations across a life-course. It is also hard to drill beneath the aggregate realities revealed through a large-scale survey to the more intimate details of personal lives in flux. There is hence warrant for a sustained inquiry that foregrounds the migration histories of PLD, seeking to address the identified knowledge 'gaps', combining quantifiable questionnaire survey research with more grounded qualitative findings from methods such as semi-structured interviews and ethnographic 'biographies'.

This project will hence address the extent to which PLD are *mobile*, as explained above, and it will have a Scottish focus.

- (1) It will utilise the bespoke PLD database recently constructed by Cooper in the Greater Glasgow & Clyde region, with data (including contact data) for over 5,000 PLD from which a sample can be drawn, as the basis for a *questionnaire survey* eliciting 'factual' migration histories (noting both moves made and ones considered but declined) as well as accounts of the locational decision-making process. A total response of 250 returns will be sought from adult PLD and/or their families/paid carers living at private addresses: most PLD with mild or moderate disabilities will be able to contribute to the completion of the survey, and we anticipate families/paid carers responding on behalf of PLD with severe or profound disabilities. Returns will be analysed using standard statistical packages and qualitative linkage analysis, allowing the production of migration maps (at a scale preventing any identification of individual households), alongside 'profiles' of factors underlying decisions taken and different modes of decision-making (particularly looking for the extent of PLD participation).
- (2) A *semi-structured interview* strategy will also be used, aiming to secure an in-depth perspective on the issues, views, struggles, hopes and fears as perceived by PLD themselves (where possible) and their families/paid carers with respect to their migration histories. Participants would be recruited from survey respondents willing to participate further in the project, and also through the Scottish Consortium for Learning Disabilities (a PLD charity and advocacy group) and via provider organisations for support such as Enable, Capability Scotland, Key Housing. Circa 25 'transcripts' of these qualitative encounters would enable detailed coding and discourse-contents analysis, with the assistance of NVIVO software.
- (3) A further aim will be to work closely with two or three PLD and their families/paid carers to produce *ethnographic 'biographies'* – authored narratives, supplemented by recollections, photographs (eg. of past 'homes' and neighbourhoods) and artefacts (eg. what PLD have carried with them from past locations) – that would be made available digitally, via a dedicated website or on DVDs, as a graphic introduction to the broader themes of the project. The goal would be to bring the migration histories of PLD 'to life', and to underscore the many policy implications and also the ethics of giving PLD a 'voice' in making decisions about, and then representing, their own lives

Supervisors and supervisory arrangements

The project will be supervised by Professor **Chris Philo**, an historical and social geographer of mental health, who has also written on PLD (eg. Philo & Metzger, 2005),

and Professor **Anna Cooper**, an acknowledged leader in the epidemiology of LD, especially as co-morbid with mental ill-health (eg. Cooper *et al.* 2007). Philo will lead on the geographical focus of the project, given his detailed grasp of literature and methods across the subfields of health, medical and (specifically) mental health geographies, and will also major on the use of qualitative elements in the research designed to unearth 'life stories' within the migration histories. Cooper will lead on the LD focus of the project, providing a rigour in clinical definitions and wider conceptualisations of LD, as well as majoring on the quantitative dimensions of the dataset from which the project will sample – a dataset which she has been instrumental in constructing – and also the quantitative elements of the survey. Both supervisors will be active presences in the supervision process, meeting regularly with the student, commenting on written work, engaging in workshop-type sessions analysing quantitative and qualitative data, and liaising fully with one another (to ensure a consistent 'message' and sets of instructions to the student).

Most supervision meetings will require some form of written work from the student: annotated bibliographies; working papers on themes subsequently to be incorporated into thesis chapters; research reports relating to the empirical work (questionnaires, interviews, biographies); draft chapters at various stages; and other materials (eg. briefing reports or website postings for policy, practitioner and public audiences). Joint supervision meetings (with both supervisors present) will be held monthly in the earliest stages of the project when undertaking literature reviews, project design, ethical review preparation, setting up contacts, etc., but with the student encouraged to keep in touch informally, face-to-face and/or by e-mail, to ensure that they feel properly 'launched' into the project. Meetings will then move to a six-weekly basis for the remainder of the project when the student is actively researching, processing findings and writing through the thesis. Nonetheless, the student should feel empowered to call a joint supervision meeting whenever they feel that one might be beneficial.

Depending on the student's prior learning, they may require additional and specialist training in disability issues and awareness, specialist courses for which are now run by the University of Glasgow as part of its Disability Policy. They will likely also require some specialist training in LD issues, covering the physical and social dimensions of LD, which will be organised by Cooper in connection with her colleagues in the Mental Health and Well-Being team. Other specialist training that might be required, such as in the use of particular research methods and/or computer software packages, can be organised on an *ad hoc* basis.

The student's support, base and facilities

The student will be in receipt of a Lord Kelvin & Adam Smith Scholarship from the University of Glasgow, with a stipend paid directly to the student at national UK Research Council rates of £13,590 in 2011-2012 (maybe rising a little in subsequent years). There will be no fees for the student to pay, and the award comes with some 'consumables', worth £3,500, to cover research costs and conference attendance (the expenditure of which is to be decided with your supervisors).

The student will have two bases with office space and related facilities (access to a networked PC, photocopying, filing cabinet, shelving, etc.): one in the School of Geographical & Earth Sciences, Gilbert Scott Building, off University Avenue (where Philo works) and one in the Mental Health and Well-Being Unit, Administrative Building, Gartnavel Royal Hospital (where Cooper works). Both bases support active clusters of scholars, and the student would be able to draw upon the support, advice and collegiality of both groupings. Exactly how the student elects to spread their time between these two bases will depend on the phase of the project, but will also be something open for negotiation with the supervisors.

Background / requirements of student

There are **two** possible bases on which a student may apply for this PhD Studentship, with differing expectations about their background and qualifications:

- (i) **1+3 model**, where the student has completed or is currently completing an Honours undergraduate in Geography, Sociology, Psychology or some other degree with a clear component concerned with social issues, social policy, social methods, etc. The student should normally attain or already have attained a 2.1-class degree result or better. The first year (the '1' year) would then be spent taking the MRes in Human Geography in the School of Geographical and Earth Sciences, University of Glasgow, as an appropriate (ESRC- and AHRC-recognised) research training foundation. During this year, the student would be able to orientate some of their MRes studies towards conceptual, methodological and substantive aspects of the intended PhD project. Provided that the student successfully completes the MRes, then they can progress to the three years (the '+3' years) of the PhD project work itself.
- (ii) **+3 model**, where the student has completed or is currently completing a Masters-level research training year, such as the above-mentioned MRes in Human Geography, preferably one with formal external approval/accreditation. The student should successfully complete or already have successfully completed this Masters course, which would normally mean exiting with a 'Credit' or (preferably) better. The student would then embark directly upon the three years (the '+3' years) of the PhD project work itself, if necessary being asked to audit small elements of our MRes in Human Geography.

In terms of more *generic requirements* of the student, we will be looking for a candidate who can demonstrate: a passion for rigorous and informed inquiry into complex social issues; an interest in aspects of disability and impairment, if possible with some experience (through academia, policy work or voluntary involvement) of engaging with disabled people; a working knowledge of qualitative research methods (questionnairing, interviewing, participant observation) as well as a readiness to embrace 'mixed methods' where quantitative can be deployed alongside qualitative data; and possibly having completed a research project (an undergraduate or Masters dissertation) on 'difficult' social topics. We will need a candidate who is personally flexible, empathetic, possessed of good communication skills and prepared to travel (for instance, in order to undertake interviews).

The application process

Applicants should make a formal application in writing (electronic applications are acceptable, but please also send hard copy), addressed to **Professor Chris Philo, School of Geographical & Earth Sciences, East Quadrangle, University of Glasgow, Glasgow G12 8QQ, Scotland, UK**. An application should include the following: **(1)** covering letter (no more than 1 page of A4) indicating why you are attracted to this PhD post, why you are a highly suitable candidate for the post, and your longer-term career ambitions; **(2)** an up-to-date CV, including the names of two academic referees (who should be aware that you are naming them in this capacity); and **(3)** an *extract* (no more than 4 pages of A4) from anything that you have written in an academic vein, from a dissertation, essay or report, about disability, social policy/issues or human geography.

The deadline for applications is Friday **2nd March, 2012**. The intention will be to shortlist, call for referee's letters, and then interview, probably sometime in the week commencing Monday, **19th March, 2012**. We will endeavour to meet travel costs within reason for candidates invited for interview, if required, but unfortunately will not be able to meet accommodation/subsistence costs.

The University of Glasgow operates an equal opportunities policy, monitoring all aspects of staff/student recruitment to ensure that nobody is discriminated against on the grounds of race/ethnicity, gender, disability, health or any other criteria.

CPP/AC, 26/01/2012