



**UNIVERSITY OF LEEDS**

**Early-Stage Researcher (PhD position) in Childhood Deafness and Communication Research Marie Skłodowska-Curie Innovative Training Network (ITN)**



**Salary: In line with the Marie Skłodowska-Curie ITN requirements for Early Stage Researchers  
Leeds vacancy reference: ESDEL1077**

**Fixed term for three years (36 months).**

**The preferred start date is 1 October 2020, although some allowances might be possible for a later start date for exceptional cases.**

## **Early-Stage Researcher (1 PhD position) in Communication for Children with Hearing Impairment to optimise Language Development (Comm4CHILD), Marie Skłodowska-Curie Innovative Training Network (ITN), School of Education Faculty of Social Sciences**

**Could you make an outstanding contribution to childhood deafness and communication research? Would you like to contribute to a cutting-edge European research network? Do you want to develop your research career and study for a PhD in one of the UK's leading research intensive Universities?**

An opportunity exists for an outstanding early stage researcher to join an interdisciplinary research team from the School of Education, the School of Medicine at the University of Leeds (UK) and the Yorkshire Auditory Implant Centre, to receive supervision for the preparation of a PhD thesis, and to benefit from the combined resources of a major international training network (Comm4CHILD).

As a Marie Skłodowska-Curie Fellow, you will receive generous benefits, including a fixed salary/living allowance, plus mobility, travel or career exploration allowances according to the requirements for EU-funded Early Stage Researchers. Individual allowances may vary according to personal factors (such as family status and place of origin) and are calculated in Euros. They may vary, or be adjusted, according to the prevailing rate of Euro/Sterling exchange. There are strict eligibility and residency requirements that must be met.

The researcher will be appointed on a full-time, fixed-term contract at the University of Leeds for a period of three years, which may include internship at one of our network partner organisations in another European country, and travel for research fieldwork. Availability to travel (including internationally), for the purposes of the research and training activities, is a requirement for this post and is fully funded.

The ESR will be supervised by experienced researchers from across the network, collaborate in research, attend joint training events, and contribute to workshops and conferences. The training position is funded for three years, during which time you will pursue a doctoral degree (PhD).



## What does the role entail?

As an Early-Stage Researcher, your main duties will include:

- Executing internationally excellent research focussed on childhood deafness, early interaction, communication and language development, through training and development of a personal project associated with one of the research topics below
- Developing initiative, creativity and judgement in applying appropriate approaches to research activities;
- Actively participating in relevant activities organised by the network, the University, Faculty, School of Education and research partners according to a Personal Development Plan agreed with your supervisor(s);
- Attending meetings as required to discuss your training and research. This will involve some international travel, primarily in Europe;
- Ensuring good day-to-day progress of work, and maintaining good records;
- The development of an original empirical research project that employs rigorous methodological and analysis approaches;
- Writing up results for publication and attending suitable conferences for their dissemination;
- Working both independently and also as part of a larger team of researchers, including interacting with and providing assistance to other staff in the research group and the Comm4CHILD network and engaging in knowledge-transfer activities where appropriate and feasible;
- Contributing to joint discussions within the wider research group and network;
- Maintaining your own continuing professional development.

These duties provide a framework for the role and should not be regarded as a definitive list. Other reasonable duties may be required consistent with the grade of the post.



## What will you bring to the role?

As an Early Stage Researcher, you will have:

- A personal commitment to the aims of the network to enhance communicative skills and social inclusion of children who are deaf, including an awareness of relevant aspects of childhood deafness and development;
- An excellent undergraduate degree and/or a Masters Degree, or equivalent, or expect one by September 2020, in one or more of the following areas: deafness and child development, language and communication analysis, multimodality, speech and language therapy, audiology.
- Satisfy the eligibility requirements for an Early Stage Researcher funded by the Marie Skłodowska-Curie programme and you must be eligible to be appointed as an Early Stage Researcher in the UK - this means:
  - At the time of recruitment, you must not already hold a doctorate degree and must be within the first four years of your research career (measured from the date of obtaining the degree which entitles you to embark on PhD studies);
  - At the time of recruitment, you must not have resided or carried out their main activity in the UK for more than 12 months in the 3 years immediately prior to your start date;
- Satisfy the eligibility requirements to enrol on a PhD degree in the Faculty of Social Sciences. This includes acceptable English language requirements if English is not your first language;
- The flexibility to travel throughout Europe;
- Good time management and planning skills, with the ability to meet tight deadlines and work effectively under pressure;
- Excellent written and personal communication skills including presentation skills;
- Proven ability to manage competing demands effectively, responsibly and without close support;
- A proven ability to work well both individually and in a team;
- A strong commitment to your own continuous professional development.

You may also have:

- A proven track record of academic and/or practice based publications.



## The Research - Communication for Children with Hearing Impairment to optimise Language Development

Comm4CHILD will examine and develop innovative approaches for optimising the communicative skills and social inclusion of children who are deaf. Research will centre on the challenges of the delivery of effective intervention programmes that adequately address (1) the developmental heterogeneity of children who are deaf in terms of audiological, linguistic and cognitive profiles, (2) the challenges of different social and individual contexts for communication, (3) the variable and unpredictable interaction between individual audiological needs and the application of the new hearing technologies. Comm4CHILD addresses the challenges of planning an effective intervention that recognises the above issues of heterogeneity and diversity through an interdisciplinary examination of the language and communication development of children who are deaf that is conceptualised within three focus areas:

1. Biological diversity in plasticity: the extent and limits of brain plasticity of the auditory system and its influence on auditory restoration and linguistic abilities
2. Multimodality and optimisation of cognitive resources: how cognitive skills important for language learning can be optimised to enhance communication
3. Environment and enhancement of language skills: how individual language and learning resources affect spoken and written communication and facilitate daily-life interaction

Each researcher will pursue a personal project, linked to these overarching themes with the aim of bringing significant advances at scientific level to improve children's quality of life and inclusion opportunities. The two projects available in Leeds centre on the language and communication development of young deaf children in diverse linguistic contexts.

- The multilingual language and communication development of young deaf children
- Multimodal communication among deaf and hearing interactants in the presence of sensory and communication asymmetries.



Your preferences and suitability for either of these projects will be discussed at interview.

## **Project 1 (ESR 11): The multilingual language and communication development of young deaf children**

You will be employed, and register for a PhD, in the School of Education with supervisory input from the School of Medicine and the Yorkshire Auditory Implant Centre. Your research will concern young preschool deaf children growing up in multilingual contexts where the prevalence of childhood deafness has significant implications for education, health, and social participation.

**Objectives:** You will analyse and describe the multilingual language and communication development and assessment of young deaf children fitted with cochlear implant (CI) and identify implications for educational and clinical support and intervention.

**Description:** Young deaf children fitted with a CI from multilingual contexts are increasingly exposed to, and use, two or more spoken languages in their daily lives. However, it is not clear which approaches/strategies are most effective for the identification and support of this diversity. This vulnerable group of learners is thus at risk of failing in school and encountering subsequent problems relating to health, social participation, and employment. The language and learning needs of multilingual children need addressing as early as possible and that this can most effectively be done using an investigative approach that takes into account the full ecology of the child's life and a multi professional (education and health) perspective. You will examine CI users' exposure to and use of multiple languages in their daily lives and the different contexts for the multilingual communication and language development. Descriptions of individual profiles will include audiological profiles, technologies in use, and (sign and spoken) language biographies and repertoires.

Planned secondments will take place at Bradford Royal Infirmary, Yorkshire Auditory Implant Centre in the UK (M18-M20) and at Centre Comprendre et Parler in Belgium (M21-M23).



## **Project 2 (ESR 12): Multimodal communication among deaf and hearing interactants in the presence of sensory and communication asymmetries.**

You will be employed, and register for a PhD, in the School of Education with supervisory input from the School of Medicine and the Yorkshire Auditory Implant Centre. Your research will concern ways in which multimodal aspects of communication can facilitate deaf-hearing interaction and support deaf children's language learning in situations where the language and communication resources of the interactants are not shared.

**Objectives:** You will examine how individuals with different experiences of language and communication draw on their multimodal communicative strategies to fulfil their communicative needs in specific situations of daily life, and how the use of hearing technologies influences the development of these resources.

**Description:** The aim of the project is to reveal the potential of multimodal strategies to facilitate interaction between deaf children and their family members, teachers and peers and for the development of their language learning; to understand how multimodal communication strategies are influenced by context, the interactional situation and the audiological variables and technologies, and how they change over time. This will involve the analysis of daily life interactions between deaf and hearing children and adults in a) family and social milieu and b) the early education context and scrutiny of video-recorded data of situated interactions among deaf and hearing children. Multimodal analysis of this interactive data will be undertaken to provide detailed annotation, analysis and documentation of the multimodal strategies in play. The application of findings will be relevant to early intervention with families, education, health, and interpreting and communication practices in deaf/hearing communities more generally.

Planned secondments will take place at Bradford Royal Infirmary, Yorkshire Auditory Implant Centre in the UK (M12-M14) and at the Universite Libre de Bruxelles (M16-M18).



## Applications and enquiries

Applications should be made through the University of Leeds online vacancy pages. Any personal information submitted may be shared with members of the Comm4CHILD network as well as the University. Final decision will be taken by the University, in consultation with the Comm4CHILD Supervisory Board.

**Closing date: 20 August 2020** (by 23.59 UK time)

1. Further details regarding the project and roles are available [here](#)
2. Apply online to the University of Leeds at: <https://jobs.leeds.ac.uk/vacancies.aspx>  
Further [details of how to apply are available here](#)

## Acceptance to study for a PhD at Leeds

Successful applicants will need to secure a provisional offer of a place to study for a PhD from the University of Leeds before commencing in the post. An additional application will be required for this purpose.

## Contact information

To explore these posts further, or for any queries you may have, please contact:

### Professor Ruth Swanwick, School of Education

Tel: +44 113 343 4582 or E-mail: [r.a.swanwick@leeds.ac.uk](mailto:r.a.swanwick@leeds.ac.uk)

### Dr Edward Killan, School of Medicine

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## **Additional information**

These positions are offered within the School of Education, Faculty of Social Sciences in collaboration with the School of Medicine, Faculty of Medicine and Health. Both Schools have research profiles internationally recognised for their excellence, scoring highly in the proportion of their published work judged as 'world leading' in the UK's Research Assessment Exercise. The School of Education is an international leader for deaf education research and education, whilst the School of Medicine has a global reputation for its high quality and impactful research addressing a number of major health and well-being challenges through innovative and effective collaborations across different specialities and disciplines.

### **Working at Leeds**

You can find out more about our generous benefits package and about what it is like to work at the University and live in the Leeds area in our [Working at Leeds](#) section.

### **Faculty and School Information**

Find out more about the [Faculty of Social Sciences and the Faculty of Medicine and Health](#)

Find out more about the School of Education and [School of Medicine](#)

### **Candidates with disabilities**

Information for candidates with disabilities, impairments or health conditions, including requesting alternative formats, can be found in our [Accessibility](#) information page or by getting in touch with us at [disclosure@leeds.ac.uk](mailto:disclosure@leeds.ac.uk).

Additional funding may be available also from the DARE network to support access and participation in its planned activities.

## **Criminal record information**

### **Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974**

A criminal record check is not required for this position, however, all applicants will be required to declare if they have any 'unspent' criminal offences, including those



pending. Any offer of appointment will be in accordance with our Criminal Records policy. You can find out more about required checks and declarations in our [Criminal Records](#) information page.

