

Inspiring Children's Futures

Doctoral Research Centre

Achieving the well-being of children in the COVID-19 Recovery Decade: Responding to children's distinct needs, and realising their full range of rights and opportunities.

New Funded Studentships in 2022!

Programme Type:

PhD Education or
PhD in Economics or
PhD Law or
PhD in Social Work and Social Policy or
PhD in Politics

Programme Overview:

The Institute for Inspiring Children's Futures Doctoral Research Centre (DRC) is focussing unwaveringly on 'Achieving the Well-being of Children in the COVID-19 Recovery Decade'.

Driven by the UN Sustainable Development Goals, this DRC aims to generate new knowledge, and apply this effectively in policy, professional practice environments, and the settings in which children live their lives. It will contribute to improving the global challenge of responding to children's needs, and realising their full range of rights and opportunities, ultimately to achieve peaceful, just and inclusive societies for all (SDG 16).

This applied, real-world impact is a bold aim, and achieved through collaborative, multi-sectoral internal and external partnerships, both within the UK and internationally.



The following Principles underpin the DRC's Work Programme:

- Founded in the global frameworks of: the **UN Agenda 2030 and the SDGs**, and notably SDG 16; the **UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC)**; and the **Justice for Children, Justice for All Ten Challenges**;
- Grounded in a sound theoretical and conceptual framework; based on data and evidence; and providing real world applied insights and value;
- Informed by, and contributing to, global experience and knowledge;
- Contributing to the effective implementation of programmes to advance the well-being of children;
- Embracing participatory and partnership elements.

The DRC will hold several key Attributes:

- The DRC draws together world-class scholars to study across disciplines, on complex problems that require the insights from multiple perspectives;
- It is multi-disciplinary, with doctoral students working together on common questions as a mutually supportive and joint cluster of PhDs;
- It explicitly advances the University vision to promote cross-University collective scholarship, by building on the immense potential for joint engagement and for the joint analysis of the critical societal challenges;
- DRC Doctoral students engage in the global challenge questions of how best to realise SDG 16, and in particular children's well-being, around the world;
- They also draw together those across the campus who are working to achieve children's well-being from multiple perspectives, learning from each other and sparking innovations and ideas;
- The research themes are drawn together to form a complementary and coherent set of studentships' research questions; that is, the overall Research Programme explicitly reflects the highly integrated and dependent nature of the children's well-being, economic and governance perspectives, and the criticality of bringing these perspectives together in a coherent focussed manner.
- Supervision is collectively undertaken, with both a systematic supervision of each individual, as well as a less formal supervision of the cluster as a whole, drawing on a broader set of experts from both the academic and practitioner worlds. These include academic experts and individuals with experience of real-world policy and implementation.



The Research Programme:

The DRC focuses on children who experience the greatest marginalisation. This is based on the imperative of the UN Agenda 2030 vision, that is, that no child should be left behind, and that those furthest behind should be addressed first.

The DRC captures multiple themes:

From the perspective of **children’s rights and well-being** there are four broad themes:

- **Children in Contact with the Law**
- **Children in Alternative Care**
- **Children Experiencing Family Poverty**
- **Children Experiencing Family Violence**

From **the economic perspective**, there are three broad themes:

- **The Economic Determinants of Children’s Vulnerability and Well-being**
- **The Returns to Investing in Children’s Well-being: Understanding the societal and personal net value**
- **The Economic and Political Challenges to Effective Implementation**

A further complementary theme of sustained **Governance and Public Policy Implementation** is explored as mechanisms for real world impact.

In principle, the research themes that make up the overall Research Programme of the DRC could be drawn from any cell of this diagram, or indeed embrace several cells:

Children’s Rights and Well-being Dimensions

Children in Contact with the Law				
Children in Alternative Care				
Children Experiencing Family Poverty				
Children Experiencing Family Violence				
	Economic Determinants of Children’s Vulnerability and Well-being	Returns to investing in Children’s Well-being	Economic and Political Challenges to Effective Implementation	Governance and Public Policy Implementation Approaches’

Economic and Governance Dimensions



Dimensions:

These themes are considered in relation to dimensions that reflect the potential 'well-being journey' of a child, namely:

- **Preventative factors: Anticipating the future**
- **Mitigative factors: Enhancing the present**
- **Responsive factors: Enhancing the future**

We welcome proposals for projects from applicants interested in the specific focus of the Research Programme set out above, and with suitable qualifications. We especially welcome interdisciplinary projects that bring together these disciplines.

We invite **self-funding** applicants to propose a 3pg research project proposal, including the research analysis that these questions might constitute, and that align with the Principles, Attributes, Themes, Dimensions and Focus of this DRC.

Periodically, **fully-funded** studentships become available and advertised. We invite applicants for these studentships to propose a 3pg research project proposal which is focused on the advertised research questions.

Engagement with External Partners:

Our studentships are taken forward in partnership with organisations such as:

The **Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD)**, is an international organisation that works to build better policies for better lives. The work of the Institute for Inspiring Children's Futures engages with the OECD WISE (Well-Being, Inclusion, Sustainability and Equal Opportunity) Centre, with possibilities of collaboration and Paris-based links.

Through the 'Justice for Children, Justice for All' project, the **Institute for Inspiring Children's Futures** works closely with the **Pathfinders for Peace, Just and Inclusive Societies**. DRC students may engage with their aims and work, based in New York, hosted by NYU and aligned with the United Nations agenda.

Illustrative Examples of Research Questions:

To guide applicants, the following are illustrations of the sort of questions that would be appropriate from the children's rights and well-being perspective, as set out above. The illustrations highlight the manner in which the economic perspectives, could also be integrated into the research proposals.

A core set of questions could apply to each of the themes:

- What are the early common trajectories of children who subsequently are deemed the focus of this theme? To what extent and in what ways are these common/ differ across countries?
- What are the critical moments in a child's journey, in which families and public services have the greatest opportunity to enable these children to diverge from the trajectory into adversity?
- Which economic elements and processes are at play in these trajectories? How and why do these processes work?
- What is the return on investment in preventative / mitigative / responsive interventions for both the individual child and for the wider society? What are the applied lessons for public services and policies?



- How might these complex trajectories be addressed through policy? What are the implications of these findings for public services and national policies?
- What are the economic and political challenges to effective and sustainable implementation of policy? What mechanisms can be applied across government and society to enable a coherent and sustained implementation of these most effective policies? How might these implementation mechanisms be applied to make a daily felt difference in children's lives?
- In what ways might participative methodologies with children, families, practitioners, policymakers, inform these research questions?

Funding

Self-funding applicants are invited to apply at any time.

Fully-funded DRC studentships are advertised when available. These studentships cover Home (UK) fees, and a stipend for living costs of circa £15,285 (full time) per annum for the duration of 3 years.

Eligibility

Prospective applicants should:

- 1) Hold a strong undergraduate degree in a relevant discipline at 2:1 (or equivalent) or better;
- 2) Hold a Masters' degree (or equivalent) in a broadly relevant discipline (for Economics Doctoral applicants, this includes the following core classes: microeconomics, macroeconomics, econometrics, a dissertation and a range of relevant options);
- 3) Demonstrate an interest in, and knowledge of, a global outlook and a real world impact for children.
- 4) Demonstrate the ability to undertake independent research;
- 5) Have an interest in acquiring and/or further developing skills in translation of research into policy.

Additionally, candidates who are not native English speakers will be required to provide evidence for their English skills (such as by IELTS or similar tests approved by UKVI, or a degree completed in an English speaking country).

How applicants can apply

We invite **self-funding** applicants to propose a 3pg research proposal that aligns with the Principles, Attributes, Themes, Dimensions and Focus of this DRC, including the research analysis that these questions might constitute.

Likewise, when available, we also invite applicants for **fully-funded** studentships to propose a 3pg research project proposal. These funded studentships will have an advertised focus on specific research questions. **Please see below for details of the Funded Studentships available in 2022.**

For informal enquiries in the first instance, please contact Professor Jennifer Davidson (iicf-hello@strath.ac.uk).

New! Inspiring Children's Futures Doctoral Research Centre Funded Studentships in 2022:

To complement the areas of focus of our current doctoral students, we are specifically seeking proposals for projects from applicants with suitable qualifications who are interested in one of these two areas:

- 1. PhD in Law, with a focus on child friendly justice systems**
- 2. PhD in Politics, with a focus on government policy implementation for children's well-being**

Apply now for two fully funded PhDs with stipend. See below for detail.

Project on child friendly justice systems

This #ICFDRC studentship is hosted in partnership with the Strathclyde Centre for Sustainable Development; and the Children and Young People's Centre for Justice at the University of Strathclyde; with support from the Scottish Government; and aligned with our partner, the Pathfinders for Justice, hosted by New York University.

The Key Focus of the Doctoral Studentship in Law

Children's interactions with formal justice systems remains an immense problem throughout the world in both high- and lower-income countries. Few nations uphold the globally agreed rights of children in this respect, and this is a major element in reducing children's well-being and their prospects and opportunities for the future.

Justice for children is critical, but so too is the justice that can preclude children ever coming into contact with the legal system in the first place: that is, the upstream social and economic justice that can prevent a child's journey bringing them into these highly challenging and problematic circumstances.

The Children who Form the Focus of the Project

Children may come into contact with the law and justice systems as victims, witnesses, and offenders or a combination of all, or because of other reasons where judicial, state, administrative or non-state adjudicatory intervention is required because of decisions regarding their well-being, custody, care or protection. In these instances, children require child-friendly, child-centred justice systems that are specialised, meeting their needs when children are in conflict with the law as well as preventing future injustice by ensuring access to justice for children when their rights are violated.

Justice systems and related processes and services must therefore be differentiated and specialised, developed in accordance with internationally agreed guiding principles and guidance so that children's needs, rights and capacities can be fully respected. For children, justice is not solely about children's interaction with the formal legal system – and indeed the informal justice systems – but also about their fundamental access to equal opportunities, notably through a fair



and equal access to the range of services beyond formal justice, such as health and education. It therefore encompasses economic, social, environmental and cultural justice too.

This project is concerned particularly with those children whose needs are not met, and whose access to meaningful opportunities and rights are not upheld and for whom there is profound and sustained injustice. Importantly, there is a particular focus on those children who, for various reasons, may be 'hidden' children – made invisible by adults and the authorities around them – and the challenge of how to identify them. That is, those children who are most likely to be 'left behind'.

Defining the Challenge to be Addressed by the Project

For children who come into contact with the justice system on offence grounds, the criminalisation and penalisation of children in most situations creates more problems than brings solutions. This is exacerbated by the wide range of definitions of "child" across the world, with many nations failing to observe the United Nations obligation to see children as those of less than 18 years of age, with critical implications for their age of responsibility. Such policies bring children into a judicial system that damages them and pushes them into more criminal behaviour. There are also gendered dimensions. With girls, criminalisation is disproportionately linked to morality while with boys, it is associated with cultural constructs of masculinity such as anti-social behaviour.

Children's involvement in justice systems often results in children being stigmatised and discriminated against by society, and can hinder their development and participation in education and employment on the path to adulthood. Children who are older can be seen as troublesome, difficult, or worse, ignoring their status as children and their need for support and protection. This can result in a blurring of which systems and processes are appropriate for children, and which ones for adults. For example, children whose age cannot be 'proven' – children with no formal identity – can end up in adult justice systems. In these instances, children can be detained in adult prisons or be subject to adult court systems even though this is not in accord with international treaties and guidance and is a denial of children's human rights.

These strategies are counterproductive. They can entrench offending behaviours instead of contributing to rehabilitation and reintegration into society. Children are more vulnerable to the negative psychological impacts of harsh punitive measures. The majority of children's challenging behaviours can be resolved and addressed without the need for punitive intervention or involvement of justice systems.

Taking a different approach by using diversionary and upstream preventive mechanisms avoids the danger of trapping children in a pattern or culture of offending behaviour. It recognises the particular vulnerabilities of children who offend.

Educational systems, health systems, alongside family and community strengthening efforts, are key components of an integrated child-centred system which delivers justice in all the many forms noted above. Integrated child protection services which focus on the well-being of children and their families have the potential, along with other specialised approaches, to support children and help bring about changes in their behaviour, helping children to assume a constructive role in society which is in everyone's interest.



By supporting children upstream in securing their familial and personal well-being before there is an increased risk of coming them into contact with the law, and by supporting them through services, family and community support, therapeutic interventions and non-custodial responses, short- and long-term costs to individual children, their families, communities and the State will be significantly reduced. These costs, and the benefits, are economic as well as social and cultural. In the longer term, these costs bring lifelong benefits for all, as children become adults and therefore economic contributors to society – and less of a cost to society than otherwise would have been the case – as well as parents of the next generation themselves.

Taking the Project Forward:

A trans-disciplinary approach is needed to generate the evidence that takes into account the complexity of the problem, and the necessary solutions.

Our knowledge of how to address this – and the critical evidence that must underpin this understanding – is inadequate, or focussed on a very partial analysis of the problems that overlooks the complexity that a trans-disciplinary approach can provide.

The central questions for this project will therefore include:

- What are the determinants and character of the current challenges to justice for children, that seriously and directly threaten children’s well-being?
- How can this evidence and analysis be brought to bear on the identification of evidence-based policy and programmes that address both the critical preventative and mitigative perspectives?
- How can these be effectively implemented, what are the facilitative factors and how can we overcome the barriers?
- How can evidence of the social and economic value and impact of better policy and implementation to both the child and the wider society contribute to the securing of political commitment?


In addressing these questions, this doctoral research project aims to provide the evidence for better global policy-making, which further enables the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals for children. This project’s association with the Institute for Inspiring Children’s Futures’ international organisational partners will enable immediate, eager and highly facilitative routes to impact.

Project on government policy implementation for children’s well-being

This #ICFDRC studentship is aligned with our partner, the OECD.

The Key Focus of the Doctoral Studentship in Politics, in the School of Government and Public Policy

Sound public governance is essential to ensure that policies foster prosperity, equality and well-being for all. The COVID-19 pandemic has exposed many governance gaps and challenges in addressing



needs and rights of those in already disadvantaged or in vulnerable positions, including children. The complexity of convergent crises, for example the pandemic, the climate emergency, brings added challenges and stressors on government.

Child adversity encompasses a range of individual and environmental factors having a profound effect on well-being outcomes. The strategies and measures implemented to prevent the spread of the COVID-19 are having a significant impact on children's current well-being outcomes and future opportunities and trajectories. School closures, social distancing, and confinement have increased learning gaps and the risk of poor nutrition among children and young people. They have worsened children's exposure to the impacts of poor housing quality, domestic violence and abuse, and raised their anxiety and stress, while at the same time reducing their access to vital family and care services. The scale of unmet social and economic, legal and justice needs reinforce the vulnerability of children, placing them outside the effective protection systems and make them particularly susceptible to experience poor well-being outcomes. For instance, the lack of sufficiently effective and coordinated support and treatment from state institutions (e.g. health, police, social, justice) to child victims of violence often leads to a breach of their human rights. It can affect various areas of children's existence – personal safety and security, psychological well-being, health, economic situation, access to education among others.

This is also a time of convergent crises, with the climate emergency and environmental issues posing increasing risks to all, and which are having a disproportionate impact on the children and their families who are already facing adversities. This has the potential for even greater generational impact.

Defining the Challenge to be Addressed by the Project

This particular complexity requires an effective and multi-disciplinary response from government. Putting children at the centre of systems is an essential ingredient to ensuring a resilient pandemic and climate recovery, and to mitigate long-lasting personal and societal consequences.

In many countries, silos-dominated government structures fail to engage effectively in horizontal coordination on child policies. Individual departments and agencies are often oriented towards particular and single aspects of child well-being under their mandate, losing sight of its bigger picture. Lack of overarching priorities and common agenda pose a great challenge to improving child well-being outcomes.

Ensuring an effective whole-of-government and indeed a whole-of-society response requires breaking down silos and embedding horizontal co-ordination and integration into policy design and implementation processes. At the strategic level, it considers sound mechanisms for implementation, oversight, and accountability; strong data on results for decision-making; and adequate funding. It also explores the different dimensions of child well-being, synergies, trade-offs and unintended consequences of policy actions. Institutionally, the whole-of-government approach calls for a clear distribution of roles and responsibilities across ministries and agencies at various governance levels with one ministry or a stand-alone agency taking responsibility for coordinating the collective response and ensuring overall accountability.

Key to recovery will include strengthening governance practices and capacities to meet the challenges of the UN Sustainability Development Goals for children in the coming decade; building their decision-making processes in the face of this complexity and competing priorities; and ensuring that their recovery efforts also support the delivery of high-level and cross-cutting priorities for children.

Taking the Project Forward:

An interdisciplinary approach is required which encompasses the specialism of public policy and administration on the one hand, and a detailed knowledge of the complexities of ensuring children well-being, especially in the current times of pandemic and climate change. With the aim of finding effective modes of policy



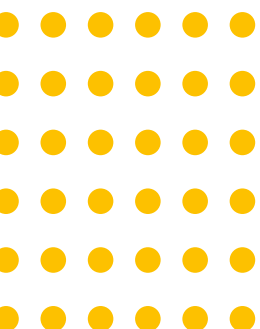
integration and administrative coordination to ensure an effective implementation of whole-of-government and whole-of-society approaches, this project will therefore include the following research questions:

- How can a whole-of-government approach in promoting children well-being be pursued in a context of multiple centres of decision making occurring simultaneously across governments, markets, and civil society, across levels (i.e., global, national, provincial/ state, and local) and policy domains?
- What types of policy goals and instruments are a better fit to achieve a whole-of-government approach to children well-being? And what types of administrative coordination reform can facilitate horizontal integration and coordination? Can these two different types of reform be designed coherently together?
- To what extent is the transformation of the (administrative) State a condition for ensuring the effectiveness of a whole-of-government approach in children well-being?
- What are the wider benefits to other national objectives, of a whole-of-government approach to children's well-being?
- How might a whole-of-government approach delivery better outcomes, and how can we analyse the comparative value and net benefit of taking such an approach?
- What are the drivers, incentives and barriers to administrative coordination reform, and policy integration and coordination, for promoting children well-being? How is such a reform then sustained and delivered consistently?
- What is the role of international organisations in promoting and facilitating a whole-of-government and a whole-of-society approach? What are the conditions for transferring and translating best practice in whole-of-government and whole-of-society approach from other geographical context and policy sectors?
- How is a child well-being whole-of-government approach integrated with a whole-of-society approach? And how can these approaches ensure an effective and multi-disciplinary service system for children?

In addressing these questions, this doctoral research project aims to engage with national and international policymakers by providing policy recommendations based on lessons and evidence drawn from the impact of administrative and policy reform on effective implementation. To do so, this project relies on the collaboration of the Institute for Inspiring Children's Futures with the OECD Governance directorate, UN agencies with a mandate for children's rights, international non-governmental children and family service delivery organisations, and international scholars specialised on policy integration and administrative coordination.

Funding

Fully-funded DRC studentships cover Home (UK) fees, and a stipend for living costs of circa £15,285 (full time) per annum for the duration of 3 years.





How to apply for these studentships

Eligible applicants interested in the specific focus of the Research Programme set out above, and interested in PhDs in the disciplines of Law or Government and Public Policy, are invited to submit their applications to the HASS Graduate School at hass-postgrad@strath.ac.uk.

Timescales

Apply by 25 April 2022

Please submit your application with the following documents as email attachments to Graduate School at: hass-postgrad@strath.ac.uk with the subject line ICF Doctoral Research Centre **by 5PM on 25 April 2022**:

1. A proposal outlining the PhD project (max. 3 pages incl. references) based on the focused themes above
2. An academic curriculum vitae
3. Degree transcripts
4. Two academic reference letters

Applications will be ranked by a selection panel and **shortlisted applicants will be notified by 5 May 2022**.

Interviews will take place in the last week of **May 2022**, with the studentship starting 1 October 2022.

Success at interview is not necessarily acceptance of the research topic. Research topics will be open for further discussion, to enable coherence across all studentships working together in this DCR.

Candidates who are successful at interview will then be asked to complete the University's online application form and submit their degree certificates and English language qualification (if required).

The following individuals will inform the selection:

Prof Jennifer Davidson, Institute for Inspiring Children's Futures
<https://pureportal.strath.ac.uk/en/persons/jennifer-davidson>

Dr Fabrizio de Francesco, School of Government and Public Policy
<https://www.strath.ac.uk/staff/romitiagnesedr/>

Prof Andrew Goudie, Special Adviser to the Principal and Chair, Fraser of Allander Institute
<https://www.strath.ac.uk/staff/goudieandrewprof/>

Prof Marion Henderson, Social Work and Social Policy
<https://pureportal.strath.ac.uk/en/persons/marion-henderson>

Prof Claire McDiarmid, School of Law
<https://www.strath.ac.uk/staff/mcdiarmidclairedr/>

Dr Agnese Romiti, School of Economics
<https://www.strath.ac.uk/staff/romitiagnesedr/>

Dr Edward Sosu, School of Education
<https://www.strath.ac.uk/staff/sosuedwarddr/>

Ms Nina Vaswani, CYCJ
<https://www.strath.ac.uk/staff/vaswanininams/>

Pending the research questions of the successful candidates, the PhD Supervisors may be amongst this panel, from amongst other Strathclyde staff, and from other institutions.

The Humanities and Social Sciences Graduate School:

The student will also be part of a vibrant postgraduate community of over 300 students across six Schools, many international, who have a dedicated work space in our Graduate School. The Graduate School provides support with research training, organizes regular events for students and runs a mentoring scheme for new students.

More information on the Graduate School is available here:
<https://www.strath.ac.uk/humanities/graduateschool/>

