

## Fully Funded PhD/GTA Studentship

Department of Sport and Physical Activity, Edge Hill University, UK

### **Mental health, education and wellbeing: a study of social inequality and family life in North-West England**

The Department of Sport and Physical Activity at Edge Hill University and Everton in the Community (the official charity of Everton Football Club) have worked collaboratively on a range of research-led education, health and wellbeing projects for over four years. One such project is *Tackling the Blues*, a sport- and education-based mental health project which has been running since 2015 and delivered to over 300 children and young people weekly in north-west England. Delivered jointly with the Faculty of Education, *Tackling the Blues* was winner of the Outstanding Contribution to the Local Community category at the 2016 Times Higher Education Awards, and its impact on the lives of children and young people was highlighted recently by the BBC's *Match of the Day* programme.

This inter-disciplinary project builds upon existing work conducted as part of *Tackling the Blues* and will be aligned to the University's Institute for Public Policy and Professional Practice. More specifically, it will examine the mental health and wellbeing of families, children and young people living in socially deprived regions of north-west England where the prevalence of mental illness, educational disadvantage, and poor health outcomes are increasing. In doing so, the project will explore the mental health (and other) costs of political and policy decisions which disproportionately impact the most vulnerable groups in society. Drawing on the skills and knowledge of experienced practitioners and professionals in education and family/children's services, the project will also examine how social inequality, educational disadvantage and mental health are being impacted by the reshaping of public services.

The project will bring together research from sociology, psychology, social epidemiology, and policy analysis in education, health and family services to provide a systematic, theoretically-informed, empirical analysis of mental health and wellbeing in times of austerity. Accordingly, you will have previous experience undertaking research in one or more of these areas and will have an interest in how sport and education can be used as part of broader public health policies and programmes to address social inequalities in mental health and illness. You will also have the opportunity to join an expanding team of academic researchers who work with Everton in the Community and other organisations in north-west England with an interest in health, education and wellbeing. A clear ability to empathise with the needs of, and work alongside, professionals in the field and support their practice is therefore an essential characteristic of the successful applicant.

Your work will provide a unique insight into the production and reproduction of educational and (mental) health inequalities in local communities, and how these are connected to family and parental practices. These insights will be used to explore how education, health and other social outcomes can be improved through joint working and collaborative practice across the public sectors. You will also have a clearly defined approach and deep commitment towards generating sustained impact on the lives of individuals and communities through the application of rigorous, evidence-based, research of international quality.

Informal enquiries may be addressed to Professor Andy Smith (Department of Sport and Physical Activity) at [andy.smith@edgehill.ac.uk](mailto:andy.smith@edgehill.ac.uk)