Postdoctoral Research Fellow

School of Health

Job Reference: REQ0002203



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School of Health

Salary:	**Grade 7 £45,641 - £51,258**
Contract:	**Fixed term to February 2029**
Location:	**City Campus**
Department:	**School of Health**
Responsible to:	**Principal Investigator**
Working Pattern:	**Full time**

Purpose of role

The Childhood Obesity Prevention Initiative (COPI) is an international, multi-city programme, funded by Novo Nordisk, that establishes local coalitions to tackle the root causes of childhood obesity. In each of six cities, the local coalition co-designs and delivers a package of interventions suited to its own context. It is a pragmatic, time-limited initiative, delivered within real-world constraints.

This project will study COPI through a systems-informed process evaluation. The evaluation aims to understand how COPI works, under what conditions, how it interacts with the wider system shaping childhood obesity, and whether its effects are likely to be sustainable. Throughout, we draw on the core conditions of a systems approach (NELP) to gauge how comprehensive and mature each city's efforts are. We work lightly across all six cities and in depth within three.

The purpose of this role is to lead the day-to-day delivery of the evaluation, under the direction of the Principal Investigator and co-investigators, and situated within the School of Health. The work spans eight phases, from understanding how the programme was intended to work and mapping the system that drives childhood obesity in urban areas, through describing the local coalitions and setting out how their interventions are intended to act upon that system, to in-depth fieldwork and a cross-case synthesis across the six cities. The role is highly applied and predominantly qualitative and calls for strong systems thinking throughout. The post-holder will undertake qualitative fieldwork and analysis, help to build causal loop diagrams and, from these, systems-informed theories of change, assess each coalition's maturity against these core conditions, and draw the evidence together through cross-case synthesis, while contributing to publications, reports and practical learning outputs and maintaining an appropriate professional and research profile.

Key Responsibilities

1. To interview stakeholders at local and international level to understand how COPI was intended to work, and to carry that understanding through the evaluation.
2. To help build a shared picture of the local system driving childhood obesity through causal loop diagrams.

Key Responsibilities (continued)

3. To reconstruct each city's programme from existing records, describe how the local coalitions are configured, and assess each coalition's maturity against the core conditions of a systems approach.
4. To develop and test systems-informed theories of change for each city, setting out how the interventions are intended to work.
5. To lead the qualitative fieldwork in the deep-dive cities, including interviews, focus groups and Ripple Effects Mapping workshops, both in person and online.
6. To analyse qualitative data using framework and thematic approaches, and to contribute to the cross-case synthesis across the six cities.
7. To apply systems thinking and systems-informed methods, such as the Action Scales Model or the Waters of Systems Change, to assess how far the interventions reach the root causes of the problem.
8. To support research ethics, governance and data management across the participating countries.
9. To contribute to publications, reports and a practice-oriented learning product, and to present findings to academic and practice audiences.
10. To feed learning back to key stakeholders through regular check-ins, supporting improvement in implementation and sustainability.
11. To work closely with the programme's global and local partners and with coalition members, building trusted relationships, and to support coordination with the other COPI partners so that the work is complementary.
12. To plan, organise and monitor own work with minimal supervision in order to achieve tasks and meet deadlines.
13. To undertake personal and collaborative research in line with the University's Research and Enterprise strategy, and to maintain appropriate professional and scholarly activity.
14. To demonstrate a commitment to personal and professional development and to undertake appropriate development activities identified through the Performance and Development Review (PDR) process.
15. To undertake other such duties commensurate with the post and grade as agreed with the Principal Investigator and Head of Subject.

Your application

The Person Specification sets out the essential and desirable criteria for this post and forms the basis on which applications are assessed. In your application, please provide clear, concise evidence of how you meet each of the essential criteria; applications that do not do so are unlikely to be competitive. The essential criteria will also be explored in detail at interview, so you should be ready to give specific examples of how you meet them.

We would welcome an informal, confidential conversation with anyone considering the post. Please contact the Principal Investigator, Dr James Nobles, at j.d.nobles@leedsbeckett.ac.uk.

Using Artificial Intelligence (AI)

Whilst using AI in our work has many benefits, we would encourage you to write your application without AI input. This will give us a much better insight into your experience and let your own strengths shine through in the application process. We value the uniqueness of every colleague and believe it makes our university a better place to work.

Person Specification & Performance Attributes

Person Specification Criteria	Essential	Desirable
1. A PhD (awarded, or due to be awarded imminently) in public health, health services research, systems, behavioural or social science, or a related discipline.	✓	
2. An understanding of the complexity of public health and of public health interventions, and of systems thinking as applied to public health.	✓	
3. Demonstrable experience of qualitative research methods (semi-structured interviews, focus groups, and thematic or framework analysis), of qualitative analysis software (e.g. NVivo), and of synthesising findings across multiple cases.	✓	
4. Excellent written communication, including academic publication, and strong interpersonal skills, with the ability to build trusted relationships with a range of stakeholders. Evidence of high-level interpersonal and communication skills, including the ability to communicate complex information to academic and non-academic audiences, and to publish.	✓	
5. Experience of evaluating complex public health interventions, or of process evaluation.	✓	
6. Knowledge or experience of systems-informed evaluation methods, including systems methods such as group model building, Ripple Effects Mapping, and the Action Scales Model.		✓
7. Knowledge of childhood obesity, obesity prevention, or the wider determinants of health.		✓
8. Experience of international or cross-cultural research. A track record of peer-reviewed publication, and experience of public and community involvement in research. Experience of social network analysis.		✓

Performance Attributes
SERVICE DELIVERY 9. Ability to lead and deliver applied, predominantly qualitative research to agreed timelines, with high standards of research conduct and rigour. A commitment to research integrity and reflexive practice, and a working understanding of research ethics and data protection.
TEAMWORK, LEARNING & DEVELOPMENT 10. Ability to work collaboratively as part of a research team and with a range of external partners, building trusted relationships with diverse stakeholders. A commitment to continuing professional development and to keeping current with developments in systems-informed evaluation and public health. A willingness and ability to undertake occasional international travel, which will not be a significant component of the role.

Terms of Appointment

Pension

You will automatically be enrolled to become a member of the West Yorkshire Pension Fund (WYPF)

Annual leave

Annual leave entitlement is 38 days.

Pre-employment checks

We have a legal responsibility to ensure that you have the right to work in the UK before you can start working for us.

If you do not have the right to work in the UK already, any offer of employment we make to you will be conditional upon you gaining it.

Probationary Period

Appointment to this position may be subject to a probationary period of up to 12 months, in line with our probationary policy.

A copy of our probationary policy is available on our website or on request from Human Resources.

References

Offers of employment will be subject to the receipt of satisfactory references.

Salary

On appointment staff will normally be placed on the first point of the substantive grade for the post. Appointment above this will only be on an exceptional basis and subject to approval in line with our University's Pay Policy.

Pre-employment Health Assessment

Our University aims to ensure that all employees are placed in a job that is compatible with their health and physical abilities. In accordance with the Equality Act, questions relating to health are asked following an offer of appointment. All offers of appointment are subject to pre-employment health assessment.

Qualifications

In accordance with our pre-employment processes, it is University policy to verify qualifications for successful candidates. We will need evidence of those qualifications required by the employee specification and claimed on the application form.

Equal Opportunities

We are committed to providing a non-discriminatory and harassment-free working environment for our employees. All our employees are expected to have due regard for those policies when carrying out their duties.

Safety, Health & Wellbeing

You will maintain a positive attitude to Safety, Health and Wellbeing in carrying out personal responsibilities and co-operate with policy/local rules/codes of practice.

Information if you have a disability

The University welcomes applications from individuals with disabilities. We are committed to ensuring fair treatment throughout the recruitment process. We will make adjustments to enable applicants to compete to the best of their ability wherever it is reasonable to do so and, if successful, to assist them during their employment.

We encourage you to declare any disability that you may have, and any reasonable adjustments that you may require, in the section provided for this purpose in the application form. This will enable us to accommodate your needs throughout the process as required. However, applicants and employees may declare a disability at any time. If you prefer to discuss any special arrangements connected with a disability, please contact us.

Hybrid working

Working in a hybrid way, where colleagues spend some of their working hours or days on campus, and some of their time working from home is well established at Leeds Beckett. Some roles remain fully campus based. Working arrangements are dependent on the job role, team and University requirements and will be discussed with candidates at or after the interview.

Our Strategy

LEEDS BECKETT UNIVERSITY

STRATEGIC PLAN 2026–2031



PURPOSE

We make a positive and decisive difference to people, organisations and communities through excellent education, research, and service.

ANCHOR IMPACT

As a Leeds Anchor with global reach, we work in partnership to drive inclusive, sustainable, social, economic, and cultural benefit for the diverse communities we serve.

OUR VALUES

Inclusive. Teamwork. Integrity.
Pragmatism. Ambition. Purposeful.

You can read more about our strategy here.

LEEDS BECKETT UNIVERSITY

Working at Leeds Beckett University

Our Vision

Our students are a diverse community with different needs and aspirations. Teaching excellence is at the heart of our culture and academic practise, focussing on the provision of an outstanding education and experience for our students.

We are proud of our polytechnic roots, and proud to have built on our heritage as a vital source of professional, vocational and applied learning, underpinning the social, economic and cultural life of our city and region.

We are a community of around 23,000 students from over 140 countries and 2,800 staff. Our history dates back to the founding of Leeds Mechanics Institute in 1824.



Working with Us

What can you expect from a career with Leeds Becket University.

We offer membership of a Local Government Pension scheme, Teachers Pension Scheme and USS scheme, dependant on your role and circumstances. More detail of the schemes is available on their website pages and will be provided during the offer process.

Occupational Maternity/Adoption and Shared Parental Leave is available to our colleagues (subject to meeting the conditions).

Onsite Gym Facilities – with memberships for our colleagues, that let you take part in activities at the Carnegie Sports Centre, Headingley Campus and City Campus Gym. They offer traditional gyms, fitness classes and swimming.

If you travel to work by car, we have car parking available at our Headingley campus and free transport, during term time, for travel between campus.

And in addition, to the above, we offer a range of Benefits and Discounts through our partners, as part of our overall benefits package.

Your development and growth

Whatever you do at Leeds Beckett and whatever you aspire to, we are committed to supporting you to develop your skills and build your career. We pride ourselves on providing interesting opportunities to equip all colleagues to thrive and fulfil their potential and have a range of development opportunities to stretch and support throughout the different stages of any career.



Our Wellbeing Commitment

We know that working and studying in a mentally healthy community supports us all to attain good wellbeing, feel happier, have clarity of purpose, and meet our goals and at Leeds Beckett University we are working to achieve this through a whole university approach. We have recently been awarded the University Mental Health Charter, putting wellbeing at the heart of everything we do.

Together, we actively encourage healthy behaviours to improve wellbeing. You can find out more about how we support colleague's physical, mental and financial health and wellbeing on our *website*.

Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion is integral to our culture and at the core of how we work with all members of our community.

Leeds Beckett University is proud to be a Stonewall Diversity Champion and a Disability Confident Employer. The University holds an Athena Swan Bronze Award for gender equality and is working towards a Bronze Award with Advance HE's Race Equality Charter.

Join Our Community

We actively encourage all our colleagues to explore what is happening across the university community and to come along to our events and support your colleagues and students.

Working on a Campus keeps all of us connected with the wider university and the amazing teaching that is delivered every day. We have state of the art buildings on our city campus, whilst Headingly is more traditional with lovely green spaces and sport facilities that we can all enjoy.

Our Campus locations offer a range of facilities including Beckett Food and you can get your hands on a reward card to enjoy loyalty rewards and access exclusive offers.

Welcome to Leeds

Leeds is a vibrant, modern city with a rich industrial past and on the doorstep of natural beauty. It is the cultural, financial, and commercial heart of West Yorkshire and has one of the most diverse economies of all the UK's employment centres. Leeds is, and always will be, open for business and talent.

Please read our application guide to ensure that you have the best chance for success. You can find the guide here.

Thank you for your interest in working with us at Leeds Beckett University.

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