



Faculty of Business, Law and Social Sciences

<p>Proposed Title: Design, Creation & Evaluation of a Social Prescribing 'App' for Smartphones</p>
<p>School: Social Sciences</p>
<p>Proposed Supervisory Team: Dr Angela Hewett (DoS), Dr Atiya Kamal (2nd Supervisor), Dr Pelham Carter (Advisor)</p>
<p>Abstract:</p> <p>Primary care faces considerable challenges including an increase in long-term conditions, high GP consultation rates, and widening health inequalities (Bertotti, Frostick, Hutt, Sohanpal & Carnes, 2018). Interventions in this setting indicate they are effective for modifying risk factors to provide support for reducing non-communicable diseases. Popay et al. (2007) identified the role GPs have in helping people deal with wider psychosocial problems relating to their health but also identified the limitations in their response to these problems. Social prescribing has come about as a way to increase the options for problem resolution for both GPs and patients (Brandling & House, 2009).</p> <p>This project aims to design and deliver a social prescribing smartphone application (app), which would be part of a wider initiative and collaboration with the Birmingham City Council (BCC). The aim of this collaboration is to increase the availability and ease-of-use of social prescribing for general practitioners (GPs) to use with their child and adult patients across Birmingham. Despite the increases in the use of technology for health promotion, few projects have been informed by behaviour change models (Arps, 2014; King et al., 2013). The use of behaviour change theory and techniques is imperative for creating an environment where people can change their health practices (Webb, Joseph, Yardley, & Michie, 2010). This project therefore aims to use behaviour change theory to inform the design of the social prescribing app.</p>
<p>Research Environment:</p> <p>The Centre for Applied Psychology (CAP) research has the following mission statement, "Our Centre produces high quality psychological research and theory that seeks to explain healthy and abnormal human behaviour throughout the lifespan. This work will help to address important real world problems that span a variety of areas...". This research tackles the real life problems of increased burden of mental and physical illness due to rising psychosocial problems and health inequalities. It not only seeks to prevent illness across the population, but also to alleviate pressures on GP surgeries by facilitating the uptake of activities, to promote physical and mental health, at home as well as community and 3rd sector initiatives. It would seek to provide health education as well as highlighting local opportunities to access community and 3rd sector programming.</p>

There are several research clusters in CAP; however, this research aligns most closely with the Health and Wellbeing Cluster. The student would become a member of this cluster. The cluster's remit includes research on social factors and wider environmental determinants of health such as health services. This research will tackle the psychosocial factors that influence the primary care help-seeking by providing an avenue for GPs to prescribe a range of healthy behaviour activities for use by patients at home and in 3rd sector and community organisations. These activities will be designed to be better suited to the patient's problems, allowing them to benefit from non-medicalised attention and maintenance. As social prescribing is found to have a positive effect on a range of health and wellbeing outcomes, it will be of great interest to this cluster, and would provide the basis for a range of further research.

Applicant Requirements:**Essential:**

- Upper second class BSc (Hons) Degree in Psychology, Public Health, Health Studies or related discipline
- Good understanding of both quantitative and qualitative research methods
- Good communication skills
- Good writing ability
- Will need to obtain the PGCert in Learning and Teaching as part of PhD studies

Desirable:

- First Class BSc (Hons) degree
- MSc in Health Psychology, Psychological Research Methods, Public Health (or similar)
- Postgraduate/advanced level quantitative statistical analysis
- Advanced experience of qualitative data analysis
- Experience of intervention design and evaluation
- Computer proficiency

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