**Providing support and guidance to parents/carers to promote positive psychosocial adjustment of children and young people affected by appearance-altering conditions and injuries.**

This is an exciting opportunity to conduct an applied, fully funded, PhD. The successful candidate will be based at the Centre for Appearance Research (CAR), University of the West of England (UWE), Bristol. They will benefit from being part of a thriving university research centre focussed on psychosocial aspects of appearance, with a strong, vibrant postgraduate community, and strong links with relevant charitable organisations and health professionals. The supervisory team will include senior members of CAR and the Centre for Child & Adolescent Health (CCAH) at UWE, Bristol.

CAR is the world’s largest group of researchers focusing on the role of body image and appearance in people’s lives. CAR strives to make a real difference to the lives of the millions with appearance-related concerns both in the United Kingdom and across the world and is internationally regarded as a centre for excellence for psychological and interdisciplinary research in appearance, disfigurement, body image, and related studies. More details can be found [here](http://www1.uwe.ac.uk/hls/research/appearanceresearch/events/appearancemattersconference/conferenceprogramme.aspx).

Having a child with a visible difference, whether present from birth (e.g. a craniofacial condition such as cleft lip/palate) or acquired later in life (e.g. following injury or disease) can be extremely distressing for parents. Their child can experience social stigma (teasing, bullying, peer rejection, unwanted attention from strangers) and body image dissatisfaction, which are associated with low self-esteem, social anxiety, depression and negative effects on social engagement/development and school performance. However, not all those affected struggle to adapt to the challenges of looking different, some minimise its impact and even report positive outcomes as a result. Research exploring the factors and processes associated with psychosocial adjustment has yet to focus on the role of parents in their child’s adjustment.

Evidence-based advice and support for parents/carers of a child with a visible difference is lacking but needed, both to help parents manage their own related challenges and to provide guidance on how they can contribute towards their child’s successful adjustment. With strong Public and Patient Involvement (PPI) throughout, this PhD will follow the Medical Research Council (MRC) guidelines for the development of interventions and will be an important step towards providing materials to address this gap in provision.

The PhD will likely involve:

* conducting a systematic/literature review and scoping support materials that are currently available
* conducting a mixed methods study to identify the support and advice needs of parents/carers of children affected by any appearance-altering condition or injury
* developing and testing the acceptability of materials/interventions to meet parent needs.

However, there is room for the candidate to offer their own ideas and thoughts to shape the PhD.

Upon completion of the PhD, the student would have expertise in the psychology of appearance, visible difference, and intervention approaches to promote positive adjustment, and could be in a position to continue work in this field at a post-doctoral level and establish themselves as a future leading figure in this research area.

The proposed supervision team is Dr Heidi Williamson, Professor Diana Harcourt, Dr Toity Deave and external supervisor Dr James Kiff.

For an informal discussion about the studentship, please contact Dr Heidi Williamson [Heidi3.Williamson@uwe.ac.uk](mailto:Heidi3.Williamson@uwe.ac.uk).