

# The Davis Scholarship

## Durham University PhD Studentship on Contextual Safeguarding for a Care-Experienced candidate

The Department of Sociology at Durham University is launching 'The Davis Scholarship' – an enhanced PhD studentship, 3-year PhD (plus one-year Masters if required) reserved for candidates with experience of care<sup>1</sup>.

The successful candidate will undertake a PhD (and MA) program based within the Sociology department under the academic supervision of Prof. Carlene Firmin, Social Work (Sociology Department) and senior researchers from the Contextual Safeguarding research programme which she oversees.

**Funding:** Subject to eligibility, funding for this scholarship covers:

Three-year PhD period

- A PhD studentship stipend totaling £60,645 over three years
- A stipend booster of £7,000 p.a plus inflation
- Annual conference attendance/travel budget 1,500 p.a
- 1 X PhD (3 year) HOME Studentship fees totaling £15,465.45
- An annual clinical supervision budget of £5,000 p.a
- Funded access to a peer support care experienced researcher group up to £3,000 p.a

One-year Masters Period (if required)

- 1 year tuition fee (at the home rate) - £12,250
- 1 year stipend - £20,780
- Accommodation costs at St Aidan's College for the academic year 2025/26

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<sup>1</sup> We use the term 'care experience' or 'care experienced' to be inclusive of the range of care settings an applicant may have experienced, such as:

- living with foster carers
- living in a residential children's home
- being looked after at home under a supervision order
- living with friends or relatives in kinship care – either through a formal arrangement (e.g. a Special Guardianship order) or an informal arrangement without local authority support

**Hours:** Full time

**Starts:** 1<sup>st</sup> Oct 2025

### **The Davis Scholarship**

We created the Davis Scholarship to realise both the benefits of higher education for people with experience of care (Harrison, 2022) and the unique perspectives care-experienced people bring to a range of research disciplines (Alliance for Care Experienced People in Higher Education). We recognise that despite these potential benefits for individuals, universities and societies, academia is riddled with a range of hurdles that, if left unaddressed, create significant barriers for care experienced people to fully participate in university life. As such this scholarship features an enhanced funding model, providing additional resources to further support with living costs, clinical and peer support.

The Davis Scholarship is named after Jahnine Davis, National Kinship Care Ambassador and Founder of Listen-Up, a national research and training organisation established to amplify the experiences of Black and racialised children in child protection research, policy and practice. Jahnine is a care-experienced research leader whose work has significantly influenced the values and goals of the Contextual Safeguarding programme, and whose contribution to knowledge (and it's impact) exemplify the various benefits of increasing the numbers of care-experienced people in the academy and amplifying their voices.

### **The Project**

Contextual Safeguarding is an approach to understanding, and responding to, young people's experiences of significant harm beyond their families. It recognises that relationships that young people form in their neighbourhoods, schools and online can feature harm. Parents and carers have little influence over these contexts, and young people's experiences of extra-familial harm can undermine parent-child relationships. Therefore, children's social care practitioners, child protection systems and wider safeguarding partnerships need to engage with individuals and sectors who do have influence over/within extra-familial contexts, and recognise that assessment of, and intervention with, these spaces are a critical part of safeguarding practices. Contextual Safeguarding, therefore, expands the objectives of child protection systems to build safety for young people beyond their front doors.

The Contextual Safeguarding programme launched in 2015. Since then the team behind the programme have completed 23 research projects to understand, and improve, safeguarding responses to extra-familial contexts and young people harmed within them. We have collaborated with young people, parents and carers, practitioners, policymakers, funders and service leaders to impact significantly on child welfare systems nationally and internationally. Despite progress, there remains much to understand, and even more to change. Our 2024-2027 strategy includes: collaborative projects with young people on redesigning approaches to commissioning local services, and with parents of adolescents, on whether/how Contextual Safeguarding reforms might work for them; ongoing work to co-design alternative child protection pathways for risks outside of the home; first attempts to test Contextual

Safeguarding with organisations supporting young people who are unaccompanied and seeking asylum and with those working in hospitality; and work to build more inclusive school environments following incidents of sexual harm.

We are keen to see what the recipient of the Davis Scholarship brings to this portfolio of work, and where they believe research needs to go next if we are to realise our vision of a future where young people feel safe beyond their homes because their communities and child protection systems can, and will, protect them from harm.

### **Eligibility**

The ideal candidate must:

- Be care-experienced as defined for this process
- Hold an Honours degree, potentially in one of the following subjects (but not necessarily) sociology, social work, youth and community work, psychology, education or criminology (min 2.1)
- Hold a Masters degree (if not, application will be considered for one-year Masters followed by three-year PhD)
- An interest in childhood and youth welfare, safeguarding or adolescent well-being

### **How to apply**

Applications should be made via the Durham University online application system: <https://www.dur.ac.uk/study/pg/apply/> quoting program code L3A001 – Sociology and Social Policy

Please state on your application under the section on Finance and Funding which scholarship you are applying for – please select ‘Other’ and enter ‘The Davis Scholarship’

Selection will be based on application documents and interview.

Supporting Documents:

- 1) A 3-page (maximum) proposal for a study on a topic relevant to the Contextual Safeguarding research programme. We encourage you to review the Contextual Safeguarding website to see how current and previous projects, as you develop a novel idea.  
Your proposal should include (i) A short section on why you are interested in conducting research in this area, (ii) A longer research proposal. This part of the proposal should include a brief review of relevant literature, a rationale for why this work is needed, aims, proposed study design, and expected outcomes. You may include figures, diagrams, or tables to illustrate any aspects of study if you feel it is helpful. Please contact us if you would like to discuss this with a potential supervisor; we can provide some assistance in developing the proposal.
- 2) An example of previously written work (e.g. Dissertation / Written coursework, Published Paper, Report, Blog).

- 3) Two letters of references – at least one from an academic source
- 4) CV (no more than 2 pages).
- 5) Transcripts of qualifications
- 6) For candidates where English is not their first language, we require English Language Evidence – please refer to following web page for details of accepted evidence <https://www.dur.ac.uk/learningandteaching.handbook/1/3/3/3/>

Enquiries regarding the application process should be forwarded to [sociology.pgradmin@durham.ac.uk](mailto:sociology.pgradmin@durham.ac.uk) . Applicants are encouraged to contact us should they wish to speak to Prof. Carlene Firmin in more detail about the scope of this opportunity.

**Closing Date: Friday 18<sup>th</sup> April 2025**

**Interview Date: Tuesday 13<sup>th</sup> May 2025**