PhD project title
Community resilience in an age of austerity – examining volunteering as a response to public sector cuts

Supervisors
Martina McGuinness and Geoff Nichols

Project description
This research will examine community response to cuts in local government support of traditional leisure services through the theoretical frameworks of social capital (1), the big society (2, 3), community resilience (4,5) and how these are constructed and understood in the context of disruption to local community structures arising from austerity measures. More broadly, its theoretical contribution will be to explore how community activism can contribute to social inclusion (6) and social capital (7), potentially enhancing resilience at a local level.

The research will focus on how community groups have taken responsibility for management and delivery of public libraries in Sheffield. In September 2014 management and delivery of ten Sheffield libraries was transferred from local government to community groups. The groups are supported by a three year grant to cover running costs. After that time they will need to become economically independent. They will also need to sustain the enthusiasm of volunteers who originally developed as a campaigning group but have had to transform to one capable of delivering a library service.

The research builds on work supported by a research stimulation grant; which led to an ESRC Festival of Social Science event in November 2014, the dissemination of sport related cases studies through the Chartered Institute for the Management of Sport and Physical Activity and conference presentations (8). The proposed project will focus on the sustainability of transfer of libraries because of the examples available in Sheffield and because national data is available showing the considerable replacement of paid employees by volunteers 2008 – 13 (9).

References


PhD candidate profile
The PhD candidate should meet the following requirements:
- Be enthusiastic, well-organised and have good inter-personal skills.
- High motivation and a keen interest in the research area.
- A first degree that is equivalent to a UK classification of upper second class honours or above. In addition, a good masters level qualification of merit or above, with a minimum of 60 per cent in the dissertation, research project element or equivalent experience. We also accept an MBA from an accredited school where the candidate can demonstrate that a significant research element has been undertaken. For further information on entry requirements, please see: http://www.sheffield.ac.uk/management/study/researchdegrees/howtoapply

Duration and start dates
Full or part time study for 3 or 6 years is available, and remote location study is also possible. We have two start dates a year for PhD students. Our preferred start date is 1 October, however we do recognise that not everyone will be able to commence studies at that time, so we also offer a second start date of 1 February. If you are unable to start in October or February, it may be also possible to start your PhD at a different time of the year.

Closing date for applications
Applications will be considered until a suitable candidate has been identified. For the 1 October start date, a full application must have been received by 15 July. For 1 February start date, a full application must have been received by 15 November.

How to apply
See http://www.sheffield.ac.uk/management/study/researchdegrees/howtoapply for full details of how to apply

For an informal discussion about this opportunity, please contact Tina McGuinness at m.mcguinness@sheffield.ac.uk, or Geoff Nichols at g.nichols@sheffield.ac.uk.