

University of Kent, Centre for Health Services Studies

PhD Scholarship in Applied Health research supported by the Applied Research Collaboration Kent, Surrey and Sussex (ARC KSS).

Using data science to explore health inequalities and wider determinants of health in ‘places’.

The University of Kent, in collaboration with the NIHR Applied Research Collaboration Kent, Surrey, Sussex are offering a PhD scholarship (3.5 years full-time) to be based in the Centre for Health Services Studies. We welcome applications to undertake research focusing on the use of data science to understand health inequalities and wider determinants of health in populations focusing on neighbourhoods or ‘places’ and in line with the areas of interest below commencing in October 2026. The studentship is linked to the [NIHR Applied Research Collaboration Kent, Surrey and Sussex](#) which aims to develop applied health and social care research across the region for the benefit of patients and the public.

About CHSS, University of Kent

The Centre for Health Services Studies (CHSS) is a centre of research excellence in the School of Social Policy, Sociology and Social Research at the University of Kent. CHSS undertakes high quality research into a wide range of health systems and health service issues at local, national and international levels. CHSS also supports and advises health and care staff to develop and undertake research in practice. CHSS collaborates with a wide range of partners in Kent, the UK and in other countries to improve the links between research, policy and practice.

About NIHR ARCs

The [National Institute for Health and Care Research \(NIHR\)](#) is the nation's largest funder of health and care research and provides the people, facilities and technology that enables research to thrive. [NIHR Applied Research Collaborations \(ARCs\)](#) support applied health and care research through partnerships that responds to, and meets, the needs of local populations and local health and care systems. ARC KSS covers Kent, Surrey and Sussex and aims to increase evidence generation and mobilisation to improve health, wellbeing and care whilst building sustainable research capacity. From April 2026, the new NIHR ARCs will support the transformation set out in the NHS 10-Year Plan, the Life Sciences Sector Plan and the Government's Health and Growth Missions by tackling some of the UK's most pressing health and social care

challenges through high quality applied health and care research drive effective interventions and models of care into practice at pace. ARCs will deliver research which is applicable and scalable across the health and social care sectors across England.

Criteria

The studentship opportunity is open to all candidates with the following requirements:

- Have completed a health- or social work/care-related postgraduate training course at Master's level equivalent to merit or distinction.
- A combination of qualifications and/or experience that is equivalent to a relevant UK Master's level degree may also be accepted.
- This studentship is available for eligible UK home-rate fee candidates only.
- The studentship is available for full time candidates only.

Scholarship information

The research studentship is funded by the University of Kent in collaboration with the NIHR ARC KSS. The successful student will be based within the Centre for Health Services Studies at the University of Kent Canterbury campus. We welcome applications from prospective students interested in using data science to explore health inequalities and wider determinants of health in general or specific populations focusing on neighbourhoods or 'places'.

In particular, we welcome projects using wider determinants of health, and population survey datasets to understand the early onset of long-term health conditions. Data linkage of datasets at geographical levels should be a feature of the project in order to explore how wider determinants of health inform population health and services within neighbourhoods or places. Current areas of interest include but are not limited to the following:

- using NHS and national administrative data to understand health and/or long term conditions with respect to health, wider determinants and their geographies such as housing or housing insecurity, local neighbourhoods or community assets, aspects of socioeconomic deprivation.
- using data to understand early onset of long-term conditions through understanding prevalence and/or the wider determinants of health and how they interact at place level.
- using routine data to understand inequalities in health and/or wider determinants of health.
- using a place-based approach in settings such as:
 - Neighbourhoods in line with the 10-year plan for the NHS
 - Specific under-served populations
 - Coastal communities

- Rural and isolated communities
- Deprived communities within a largely affluent locality.

Areas of work may also be linked to other themes which are summarised here but should have a data focus around wider determinants of health and early onset of health conditions, with a view to creating novel data linkages which can answer new research questions:

We are looking for students who are enthusiastic about applied health research and can become part of the research communities within ARC KSS and the University of Kent. The research studentships will be linked to the [ARC KSS academy](#) and benefit from research training, placements and support across the Kent, Surrey and Sussex area as well as regional programmes of applied health and social care research.

How to apply:

Submit an [online application](#), selecting the PhD in Applied Health Research (full time). Applicants **MUST** include the following upload to supplement their application form:

- a clear and succinct research proposal uploaded as a word document (maximum of 4 pages in total in Arial font, point 11). In your proposal use the following headings:
 - Introducing the topic
 - Research question and aim of the proposed research
 - Datasets for exploration
 - Methodological approach (including relevant analysis plans)
 - Potential impact of the doctoral research

Please note that we require applicants to submit all documents, including references where available, by the deadline of 23:59 BST, Sunday 12th July 2026. This includes the research proposal, supporting documents including a CV and relevant transcripts.

Questions regarding the **online application process**: scholarships@kent.ac.uk

We encourage potential applicants to have a 15-minute conversation about your research proposal content prior to submitting an application with: Dr Melanie Rees-Roberts: m.rees-roberts@kent.ac.uk

Scholarship Value

- The studentship will cover tuition fees for the full time duration at the standard postgraduate Home rate (£4,980 for 2026/27) rate plus an annual maintenance stipend of £20,013 per annum (in line with the UKRI rate for 2026 with yearly inflationary uplift).

- Annual Research Training Support allowance of £750 to cover conference attendance, training courses, equipment and books is available.

Deadline

- 12th July 2026, 23:59 BST
- Interviews to be held in late July/early August 2026