

## **SPCR internship projects 2026**

**Name & email supervisor(s):**

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**Name & email of reviewer(s) for applicants applying to undertake this internship project:**

**Length and dates of internship:**

The internship is a 4-week placement during the summer of 2026, starting from Monday 1st June 2026. Exact start and end dates can be adjusted to accommodate the student's availability and completion of any required right to work checks with the University.

**Host department:**

Centre for Academic Primary Care, University of Bristol

**How will the internship be conducted:**

- In person at the university
- Virtual/ from home
- Both are possible, depending on preference of student

**Title internship project:**

Weight cHange for people with sERious mEntal iLLness (WHEEL): a single-arm feasibility and acceptability study

**Background:**

People with serious mental illnesses (SMI), such as schizophrenia or bipolar disorder, are more likely to be overweight, which increases the risk of diabetes, high blood pressure, and heart disease. Heart disease is a leading cause of the 15-20-year reduced life expectancy in people with SMI. This study aims to address that risk.

In the United Kingdom, general practices can refer anyone who is overweight to local weight loss programmes, which can help people lose weight. But people with SMI often report that it is hard to join or stay with these programmes, and the NHS usually does not provide extra support to help them take part.

In this study, we want to see if extra support can help people with SMI take part in weight loss programmes. Adults with SMI who are overweight and registered at participating general practice will be invited to join. General practices will look at their patient lists and contact people who they feel it is safe and appropriate to invite. Those who agree to take part will first meet a researcher to

give some information about themselves, including their weight, mood, and mental health. This is called the baseline assessment and will help us understand how things start for each person.

After baseline, general practices will refer participants to a local tier 2 12-week weight loss programme and a link worker, an NHS staff member trained to provide practical and emotional support in the practice. The study starts with a one-off “Meet Your Mentor” session”, where the link worker helps participants enrol in the weight loss programme and answers any questions. Participants will then receive weekly 30-minute “Mentor Check-In” calls from their link worker for 12 weeks to provide encouragement and support.

The main aim of the study is to see if it is possible to run this kind of support in general practices (feasible) and whether participants and link workers find it helpful (acceptable). After 14 weeks from baseline, we will check how many people joined and stayed in the study, as well as the number of “Mentor Check-In” they attended. Participants and link workers will be invited to interviews to share their experiences. Participants will meet again with the researcher for a follow-up assessment, where we will repeat the weight, mood, and mental health measures.

This study was designed with people who have lived experience of SMI and being overweight, and with link workers, to make sure it is helpful and relevant. If it shows that link worker support helps people with SMI take part in weight loss programmes, we will plan a bigger study to see if it also helps them stick with the programme and lose weight more successfully than those referred without link worker support.

**Summary of the internship project:** *(max 250 words, can include hyperlinks to further information)*

This internship offers an exciting opportunity to contribute on a clinical study, with two options available depending on the progress of the study, and the student’s skillset and interests.

**Option 1: Quantitative Data Management**

The intern will gain hands-on experience in electronic data capture, management, and quality assurance. They will support the team by building and piloting the study database in REDCap and entering baseline study data. The intern may also lead on summarising key feasibility outcomes including uptake, engagement, and retention.

**Option 2: Qualitative Data Management**

The intern will gain practical experience in handling qualitative data. They will support the team by transcribing, coding, and constructing analytical themes in NVivo. The intern may also lead on describing intervention fidelity by summarising if core intervention components were delivered by link workers or not.

Across both options, the student will gain insight into ethical and regulatory governance in clinical research, as well as practical exposure to study operations, documentation, and team collaboration.

**Learning objectives:**

By the end of the internship, the student is expected to:

**Option 1: Quantitative Data Management**

- Understand how electronic data capture systems are created and used in clinical research.
- Demonstrate skills in accurate data entry and validation in REDCap, and identify and resolve inconsistencies.
- Summarise and describe quantitative data to identify basic patterns in engagement and retention.

**Option 2: Qualitative Data Management**

- Assist in organising and coding qualitative data using NVivo.
- Analyse qualitative data to identify key themes and present them clearly.
- Support monitoring of intervention delivery and reflect on how it may affect study results.

**Professional Development Across Both Options:**

- Develop skills in planning and managing tasks to meet deadlines under supervision.
- Communicate processes and findings clearly to a team in written or verbal format.
- Adapt to new tasks and trouble-shoot challenges as they arise.
- Appreciate the importance of ethical research practices.

**Any further information:**

The WHEEL project is co-funded by BNSSG ICB and NIHR SPCR. The intern will work closely with the supervisor, meet regularly, and receive guidance for all tasks. Activities are non-clinical and low risk, focusing on data management and descriptive analyses. The supervisor will support the intern to present at an online PPIE meeting and submit a final report to the Directorate.

This internship is ideal for an ambitious student interested in clinical research or further education (e.g., Master's or PhD programmes) in primary care, public health, or psychology. Previous NIHR Undergraduate interns have lead publications in BMC Primary Care and presented findings at national conferences, including the RCGP Annual Conference 2025. Opportunities to present findings or author outputs are encouraged by the supervisor.

**Recommended reading:**

- 10.1111/obr.13355
- 10.1186/s12888-023-04517-1
- 10.1186/s12875-025-02929-4
- 10.1016/S2215-0366(25)00212-3

***Please submit project details to the Directorate ([spcr@keele.ac.uk](mailto:spcr@keele.ac.uk)) no later than Friday 30<sup>th</sup> January 2026***