**Research Associate, Empowering Refugee Women in Wales: Tackling Barriers to Education and Employment**

**About Empowering Refugee Women in Wales**

*Empowering Refugee Women in Wales* is a unique research collaboration between the Welsh Refugee Council and The Open University that aims to change and improve access to employment and education for refugee women across Wales. Through trauma-informed research and inclusive engagement, the project will co-create practical tools and recommendations aimed at reducing barriers and enhancing integration, safety, and dignity.

The research is not just about uncovering the problems women face, it is also about providing solutions to enduring barriers and tackling policy challenges with robust and reliable research based on lived experience among refugee women.

**The Role**

The *Empowering Refugee Women in Wales* initiative is led by Athina Summerbell at the Cardiff office of the Welsh Refugee Council (WRC) while the research is led by The Open University (OU). The researcher will work closely with the WRC to recruit participants for the research and conduct in-person focus groups in Cardiff, Swansea and Newport, as well as online focus groups. They will also co-design a survey for employers and FE and HE professionals. They will identify problems and solutions and, deliver an evidence-based research report independently, in collaboration with OU academics and partners. The post holder will require strong interpersonal, stakeholder management and communication skills, in addition to research experience and skills.

The post holder will report Marie Gillespie (Professor of Sociology) with whom they will co-design and deliver the research. They will be supported by Helen Thomas (Partnerships Manager at OUinWales. They will be contractually based at the OU’s Cardiff office. with hybrid terms and conditions and flexible working patterns, which are a part of The Open University’s normal pattern of operation. The post holder can work remotely depending on their location or situation, but some travel will be expected to conduct the focus group and survey research and attend meetings.

**Key Responsibilities**

**Identifying, managing, and delivering research**

* Design, deliver, and disseminate research that responds to the needs of refugee women, stakeholders in the employment and education sectors, and policy makers.
* Manage the research and knowledge exchange projects in a sensitive and secure way
* Collaborate with colleagues in partner organisations and institutions, research groups and support capability building within the project.
* Develop ideas for generating research income, and present detailed research proposals to senior colleagues.
* Manage own research, administrative activity, and support the wider project coordination and management.
* Devise strategies and create relevant forums to communicate research findings in particular knowledge and understanding of key barriers and solutions and use this knowledge to advance research and knowledge exchange activity.

**Collaborative and partnership working**

* Use initiative and creativity to deliver the research and share insight and ideas with partners.
* Manage and quality assure that all research is conducted in line with OU ethical policy and practices
* Establish and build strong, sustainable connections between the OU, the WRC, professionals in relevant sectors and the policymaking and research communities across Wales.
* Prepare and author a research report for publication and disseminate work using new and creative ways to communicate ideas to different audiences.
* Design and facilitate focus groups workshops, roundtables, and events with a range of stakeholders.

**Building**

* Support the awareness raising of WRC and OU’s research among policy makers, academics, policy organisations and research networks.
* Contribute to, and engage with, activities that enhance research impact, such as engaging with local and national media and policy organisations.

**Skills and Experience**

**Essential:**

**Experience and Knowledge:**

* A PhD in a related subject area.
* Knowledge of current migration policy issues in Wales.
* A strong record of research and/or knowledge exchange and experience conducting research, including evidence of design, implementation, and dissemination, in a policy environment/field.
* Experience of qualitative data analysis, including how to contextualise the findings of the research within relevant academic and policy debates
* A proven ability of engaging, developing and maintaining excellent realtionships with vulnerable groups (women, asylum-seekers, refugees), community organisations, advocacy groups. civil servants, researchers and public policy.
* Ability to communicate effectively and persuasively – in writing and in person – with a diverse range of expert and non-expert internal and external stakeholders, including working collaboratively with practitioners and/or policy makers.
* Computer literacy and ICT competence and the ability to produce high quality, well written, accessible outputs and communicate with academic and non-academic audiences.
* Ability to quickly build contextual competence in unfamiliar topics or policy areas.
* Evidence of an ability to work at pace, producing work to an agreed quality within tight deadlines, taking responsibility for own elements of work within a team framework.
* A commitment to, and understanding of, equal opportunities policies and practices.

**Desirable:**

* An understanding of the barriers to research with vulnerable groups and the complex ethical issues involved, and knowledge exchange and practical approaches to overcoming them.
* Experience of working in a multi-sector environment.
* Experience of managing and collaborating on joint projects with academic peers and/or colleagues.

The Open University is committed to equality, diversity and inclusion which is reflected in our mission to be open to people, places, methods and ideas. We aim to foster a diverse and inclusive environment so that all in our OU community can reach their potential.  We recognise that different people bring different perspectives, ideas, knowledge, and culture, and that this difference brings great strength.  We strive to recruit, retain and develop the careers of a diverse pool of students and staff, and particularly encourage applications from all underrepresented groups. We also aspire to make The Open University a supportive workplace for all through our policies, services and staff networks*.*

