# Lothian Clinical Academic Pathways Partnership

# Clinical Academic Research Gateway Funding

# First Steps into Research Opportunities 2023

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| Institution & Department | School of Nursing, Midwifery and Paramedic Practice: Robert Gordon University, Aberdeen |
| Contact – name, role & email | Prof. Flora Douglas Email: [f.douglas3@rgu.ac.uk](mailto:f.douglas3@rgu.ac.uk) |
| Research Theme | **Nursing, Midwifery, AHPs** |
| Specific Research Project – | **Maternal and infant food insecurity - infant feeding intentions, practices, and support needs**  **Background**  Maternal and infant food insecurity is poorly understood and under-recognised in the UK. Whilst recently introduced measuring and monitoring of food insecurity in Scotland and the UK provides a better picture of the nature and prevalence of food insecurity at the household level, the true extent to which infants, and the women who feed them, are affected by food insecurity is unknown. Single female headed families in particular are experiencing unprecedented levels of poverty and economic distress in the UK, and increasingly recognised as a group requiring support from food banks to cope with experiences of food insecurity.  Current public health policy recommends that women breastfeed exclusively for 6 months and then supplement their infant’s diet with other foods. Yet international lived-experience evidence indicates that some women (living in high income country contexts) struggle to meet this recommendation due to concerns about the volume and nutritional quality of their breastmilk, and their lack of time, and financial resources to adequately feed themselves whilst breastfeeding. This evidence also highlights that food insecure women who wish to breastfeed require more support than those who are food secure and are more likely to formula feed their babies. Struggling with both breastfeeding and formula feeding impacts negatively on the mental health of food insecure mothers, as does the pressure to access infant formula for their infants, which evidence indicates is getting harder to access for low income families.  This project area is in the planning stage and would give an individual an opportunity to help further work up a project proposal with a research team and explore related research questions in this novel topic area.  For example:  Undertake a systematic literature or scoping review to explore, for example:   * Lived experiences of food insecurity of women and families during and after pregnancy in the UK context (which in turn could focus on a specific subgroup of women and families of interest e.g. those with no recourse to public funds.   or   * Experiences and perspectives of midwives, health visitors or AHPs in recognising maternal and infant food insecurity and supporting families in addressing those challenges, including in relation to parents’ infant feeding intentions and practice.   or   * Emergency food providers’ experiences and perspectives supporting food insecure families seeking their help to address those challenges, including in relation to infant feeding requests.   or   * Discuss and agree with own NHS manager the possibility of undertaking some limited, service evaluation investigation with clinical colleagues about the topic area and related questions, with a view to establishing a case for a funding application for a further study. |
| Opportunities for candidate | Project specific opportunities:   * Develop a literature review protocol as a starting point for a future research study * Work with RGU’s library and information staff to develop knowledge and understanding of literature searching, retrieval and storage of data. * Possible involvement in Patient and Public Involvement stakeholder groups meetings depending on the time of year and research question of interest.   General opportunities:   * Depending on start date, it may be possible to participate in the Sept / Oct intake of RGU’s Post-graduate research student induction events * Participation in SNMPP research committee, School ethics committee meetings and research seminars. * Attendance at RGU PGR [PgCert Researcher Development](https://www.rgu.ac.uk/research/the-graduate-school/researcher-development) events. * Participate in peer review and ethics approvals processes within the SNMPP. * Meet staff within the RG research Office to get understanding of processes around research bid development, costing and approval processes. * Work with teams working on ongoing research projects (where ethics approvals allow) to observe and learn about research project delivery in real time. * Work with an author or team on the process of writing a manuscript, to develop knowledge and understanding about writing for publication. * Dependent on the applicant’s existing level of expertise and interests, further development opportunities within the SNMPP and RGU may be suitable and available and can be discussed with their mentor. |
| Any other considerations for potential candidates? | * Opportunities to be part of RGU’s health and wellbeing research theme which would help to develop an understanding of public health, health care and interdisciplinary research. * Hybrid working with some time on campus where appropriate and possible. |
| Dates available | Dates can be flexible depending on applicant’s preference and availability |
| Mentor(s) | [Prof. Flora Douglas](https://rgu-repository.worktribe.com/person/152159/flora-douglas)  [Prof. Catriona Kennedy](https://rgu-repository.worktribe.com/person/149684/catriona-kennedy) |