**ESRC PhD Studentship in Economics**

**Royal Holloway, University of London - Department of Economics**

This is a unique opportunity for a high-achieving graduate student to be **fully funded** to carry out research on the economics of adoption, working with staff from the Economics Department at Royal Holloway University of London and from Alma Economics, a consultancy which combines expertise in economics in the area of public and social policy. Alma Economics has offices in London and Athens and is active in a number of countries across Europe, the Middle East and Africa. This studentship will enable the recipient to develop two valuable skillsets; both academic-standard research skills and vital professional skills.

**Research Project**

At present, about 5,000 children in England find permanent new homes via adoption each year while the number of looked-after children under the age of five growing rapidly. A key reason for delays in finding new homes and indeed why some children miss out on the adoption route altogether is a problem of finding a good match between the children waiting to be adopted and the families approved to adopt. Currently the majority of matching is done within a Local Authority and there are a number of funding distortions e.g. between placing a child locally or in another area, between a Local Authority matching a child themselves or using a specialist voluntary adoption agency. Financial incentives and cultural factors mean matching tends to be done sequentially which leads to delays for some children. The average number of days for a child to be matched with an adoptive family was 234 in 2014/15. This research will contribute to improving the current system using economic analysis and therefore have a real impact on the lives of some of England’s most vulnerable children.

The current project will bring an economics perspective on adoption policy and processes in England. Child adoption is an under-researched area in economics despite the discipline having a tradition of studying non-market allocations and matching design in settings of parallel nature. Drawing on statistical and theoretical methods, the research will address the following questions:

- How, and on what basis, are children matched to prospective parents within the current system?

- How large and flexible is the demand for adoption from prospective parents?

- How do matching-profiles of adopted children and parents map into child outcomes?

- How can matching processes be designed/improved in order to deliver better outcomes?

This research topic is broad. The path of the PhD could vary substantially from a focus on the more theoretical, mathematical approach to matching to a more applied, empirical emphasis. The abilities and interests of the successful student will drive the direction of the PhD.

The project constitutes a collaboration between Royal Holloway and Alma Economics, with shared supervision between the two partners. The recruited student will be part of the PhD programme in Economics at Royal Holloway and will, as part of that programme, receive PhD level training. At Alma Economics, the recruited student will work with the rest of the team in a fast paced, varied environment. They will get important responsibilities from the outset, be supported with training and supervision and their work will have an immediate impact.

**Academic Requirements**

Applicants are expected to have a Master's degree from a good programme in economics (or cognate discipline) and a strong analytical and quantitative background.

**Residency Criteria**

The studentship is funded by the ESRC via the Southeast DTC (see http://www.southeastdtc.ac.uk/) and is available only to UK or EU citizens who have been resident in the UK for three years prior to the start of the studentship.

**Funding Level**

The successful applicant will have their full PhD fees paid at the appropriate rate for 3 years. They will also receive an annual tax-free maintenance stipend at the standard UK Research Council rate plus a London allowance (£16,057 in total in 2015/16) over this period.

**Contact Information and How to Apply**

For further information please contact Prof Dan Anderberg (Dan.Anderberg@rhul.ac.uk).

To apply please send letter and CV to Economics Department Manager Shareen Holmer (shareen.holmer@rhul.ac.uk) by March 31, 2016.