



Mental Health Complexity and Service Inequalities in Adolescent Chronic Pain

DPhil in Psychiatry, University of Oxford · October 2026

Chronic pain affects 21% of children and adolescents; that is nearly 3 million young people in the UK. Young people with chronic pain are at increased risk of mental health difficulties compared to their pain-free peers. While anxiety and depression are well-established comorbidities, less attention has been given to other mental health needs and challenges, including neurodiversity and suicidal distress, which are increasingly observed in paediatric pain services. Pain is a common reason for seeking healthcare, yet mental health complexity can hinder treatment access and benefit. There is an urgent need to understand psychosocial differences in treatment access and outcomes, healthcare inequalities, and opportunities to strengthen community-based and specialist support.

The Group

You will join a growing research team examining the interplay between physical and mental health, focussing on adolescents with chronic pain. Our mission is to identify emerging mental health needs and translate findings into actionable targets for prevention and intervention. Our work spans community and clinical settings, drawing on developmental and clinical psychology, psychiatric epidemiology, public health, and qualitative research. We collaborate with experts in pain science, self-harm research, adolescent mental health, intervention development, and implementation science, and partner with paediatric pain services in [Oxford](#) and [Bath](#) to ensure real-world relevance.

The DPhil

The specific focus will be refined with the successful candidate. You will use a combination of methods (e.g., systematic reviews, secondary data analyses, and qualitative research) to examine psychosocial differences in treatment access and outcomes, healthcare inequalities, and opportunities for scalable, community-based support. Your work will generate clinically and policy-relevant evidence with clear potential for patient impact, underpinned by methodological rigour and stakeholder engagement.

Training/supervision

Under supervision of Dr Verena Hinze and Professor Willem Kuyken, you will gain skills in evidence synthesis, data analysis, qualitative research, and stakeholder engagement, as appropriate. You will work with large-scale clinical (routinely collected pain services data) and community-based, longitudinal datasets (e.g., [CIPA](#)).

Candidate profile

We welcome ambitious applicants with at least an upper second-class honours degree (or equivalent) and/or a relevant Master's degree in psychology, psychiatry, public health, epidemiology, or related fields. Applicants should demonstrate experience of independent research (dissertation or substantial research project). Experience with large datasets and statistical analyses (e.g., regression models) in R, STATA, or similar software is desirable. We particularly welcome applicants interested in interdisciplinary research and collaborative work with young people and stakeholders. Excellent communication and collaboration

skills are essential. We are committed to equality, diversity, and inclusion and encourage applications from candidates of all backgrounds.

Funding/application

The scholarship covers course fees up to the value of home fees*, a tax-free stipend at the UKRI standard rate (£20,780 per annum), plus additional support for research expenses and conference attendance.

*Applicants with overseas fee status would need to fund the fee difference from alternative sources.

Applications must be submitted via the University's online graduate application form. To access the application form and guidance please visit our website at www.graduate.ox.ac.uk/apply. The application form, all supporting materials (including references), and £20 application fee must be received by the submission deadline.

For informal enquiries please contact: verena.hinze@psych.ox.ac.uk

Submission deadline: 12:00 noon (UK time) on Friday 10 April 2026

Interview date: Wednesday 20 May 2026

Studentship code for application: 26PSYCH05WEB