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2025 GATHERING

AISTE ADOMAVICIENE

I am representative of MH-TRC Mission Capacity Development team, and I am delighted to work with the Mental Health Research Incubator on a number of projects, including GROW 2024, a webinar for Foundation Year doctors in collaboration with Royal College of Psychiatrists, a promotional campaign for fully funded MSc courses in clinical research delivery for mental health practitioners, and video case studies on mental health research careers.

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FAYE AMBLER

My research journey started back in 2021, when I joined an NHS research and development department, working as a research intern. Prior to this I had worked clinically, studying mental health nursing and working as a psychological wellbeing practitioner in the NHS. As a research intern I supported the running of several projects, primarily relating to diabetes, COVID-19 and arthritis. I loved working in research and wanted to combine this with my previous experience in mental health and wellbeing. I therefore joined the University of Leeds in 2022 as a research assistant, working on a randomised controlled trial and process evaluation exploring the effectiveness of a psychological therapy for people who attend A&E with repeated self-harm. In 2023, I was awarded a 2 year NIHR pre-doctoral fellowship which is due to come to an end soon. This is a methodological focused fellowship, and I chose to centre mine around qualitative and creative research methods. As part of this I completed an MA in social research at the University of Leeds. I am interested in research topics such as self-harm and eating disorders and have been able to explore these topics further during my fellowship and through my MA dissertation. I also have a particular interest in research with children and young people, and participatory methods. As my fellowship is coming towards the end, I am looking towards the next steps in my research journey and hope to apply for the doctoral fellowship in the future.

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PJ ANNAND

I am a researcher, illustrator and activist co-leading the Digital Care and Innovation research strand at the ESRC Centre for Care at the University of Sheffield. My current research revolves around (mental) health, care and social equity especially at the intersection of gender/sexuality, housing, and technology. I hold a visiting position at King's College London in the Service User Research Enterprise—a centre comprised predominantly of researchers with direct experience of neurodiversity, trauma, mental distress, and/or (ref)using mental health services.
I used to work in the third sector, where I set up and ran an online youth mental health service at a national charity. I continue to collaborate with third sector organisations and facilitate a monthly cross-sector creative space called the Reject Lounge, which sees academics, activists and artists reflecting on research cultures and how they might be improved.

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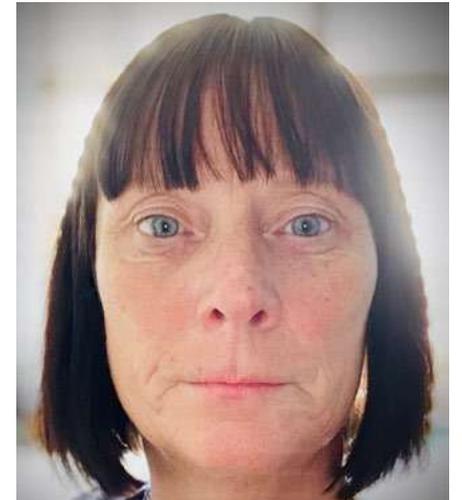HEALTH
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CLAIRE ASHMORE

I have an extensive range of transferable skills developed during over 30 years of working within the NHS and Higher Education sector, with particular experience in the fields of Obstetrics and Gynaecology and Primary Care.

I am currently the Programme Manager for the Three NIHR Research Schools' Mental Health Programme (https://www.spcr.nihr.ac.uk/research/three-research-schools-mental-health-programme). The theme of the Programme is: IMPROVING MENTAL HEALTH AND WELLBEING IN UNDERSERVED POPULATIONS THROUGH COLLABORATIVE RESEARCH. By working collaboratively across primary care, public health and social care, we address problems in a multi-professional, multi-disciplinary way and at the individual, family, group and population levels using a variety of methodological approaches.

The NIHR Schools for Primary Care, Public Health and Social Care are uniquely placed to deliver this ambitious programme as we have strengths in mental health, learning disability and autism research and are committed to working more closely together to generate high-quality evidence that improves the health and wellbeing of the population in underserved areas. By working together, we can take a more holistic view of mental health, avoiding traditional "siloed" research and generating the evidence needed by individuals, families, practitioners and policy makers.

Since the programme commenced in April 2021, we have funded 100 new awards.

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PHOEBE AVERILL

I am a GROW Programme 2024 alumnus and mixed-methods health services researcher whose interests lie in improving the safety and quality of care in mental health services. Recently, I started a new interdisciplinary role at King's College London as a Better Health & Care Hub Postdoctoral Fellow. Previously, I held a postdoctoral position at Imperial College London, having completed my THIS Institute PhD Fellowship at the Institute of Psychiatry, Psychology & Neuroscience, King's College London.

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HASSAN AWAN

I am an NIHR Clinical Lecturer in Primary Care at Keele University and a practicing GP in inner-city Manchester. My passion is to address mental health inequalities in underserved communities, focusing on cultural safety that addresses power imbalances, institutional discrimination, and structural barriers that perpetuate health inequalities. My academic journey includes completing a Wellcome-funded PhD Fellowship exploring how South Asian men with long-term conditions understand, experience, and seek help for emotional distress.

My research expertise spans qualitative methodologies, systematic reviews, and community engagement approaches. Through my PhD, I developed top tips for meaningful patient and public involvement with underserved communities and established culturally-appropriate patient advisory groups (HICCMAT: Humility, Information-sharing, Collaboration, Community outreach, Manage sensitives, Applicability, Thriving research culture). I have published qualitative research in BJGP exploring emotional distress in South Asian populations and presented findings at international conferences including NAPCRG and WONCA.

As a practicing GP, I work directly with diverse communities, providing me with practical insights into the challenges faced by individuals accessing mental health support within primary care settings. I have experience working in and supervising multidisciplinary teams and have contributed to medical education.

My clinical practice is informed by my role as a part-time faith leader and community activist, which has deepened my understanding of how cultural, religious, and social factors influence mental health experiences and help-seeking behaviours. This unique combination of clinical, academic, and community perspectives provides a strong foundation to develop research that bridges the gap between evidence and practice in mental health care.

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SARAH BATES

Sarah is a public mental health economic modeller focussing on understand the long-term effectiveness and cost-effectiveness of school-based interventions aimed at improving and preventing mental health problems in young people.

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KATHERINE BECK

Dr Katherine Beck is an NIHR Clinical Lecturer at King's College London and has recently completed a PhD using neuroimaging methods to investigate the neurobiology of psychosis, funded by the Rosetrees Trust and Royal College of Psychiatrists. She is an Honorary Consultant Psychiatrist in General Adult Psychiatry at South London and Maudsley NHS Foundation Trust. Dr Beck has developed a specialised service for patients with Treatment Resistant Schizophrenia. She is interested in the biological factors underpinning treatment resistance and has used PET and MRI methods to investigate the glutamate system in schizophrenia. She is now conducting research on novel drugs targeting this system and is developing experience in clinical trial methodology.

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SIOBHAN BECKWITH

My doctoral study at the University of Huddersfield explores the mental health of mothers subject to child removal by the state and the relevance of power. As a narrative researcher, I am interested in how stories help us make sense of the world and employed a Listening Guide analysis to my data. I developed a visual tool to explore the operation of power within narrative interviewing and drew upon the Power Threat Meaning framework in both my study design and to develop my understandings of the way power operated. Through 'Managing the hurt: Narratives of mothers living apart from their children', I explored ways mothers construct their mothering identities in the absence of children in their everyday lives. As part of 'Marking Motherhood', I researched tattoo narratives with women, taking their indelible images as a vehicle for storytelling. My research follows 20 years working in voluntary sector women's mental health services and 17 developing specialist services for mothers living apart from children. I co-founded WomenCentre's Mothers Apart: Common Threads Collective which takes a collaborative approach to increasing awareness of the lives of mothers who live apart from their children and their families through research collaborations, training and creativity. Bringing together my research and practice roles I am currently PPI lead/research associate for the NIHR 'Keeping Mothers in Mind' study with Lancaster University. My research interests include: Mothers, mental health, power, child removal, tattooing, narrative, academic/lived experience collaboration, adoption, post adoption/removal contact, creative and visual methods.

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MIA BENNION

I am a Lecturer and Research Associate at the University of Manchester and have recently completed my PhD at the same institution. I am a qualified mental health practitioner (Psychological Well-being Practitioner) and previously delivered low-intensity Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT)-based interventions within the NHS. In my lecturing role, I teach on a postgraduate training programme that equips students with the skills to deliver psychological therapies in public primary care mental health services. In my research role, I contribute to an NIHR-funded global mental health initiative focused on adapting and implementing scalable, CBT-based interventions in low-resource settings. This work is strengthening my expertise in cross-cultural adaptation, collaborative intervention development and implementation science. My PhD research focused on improving engagement with CBT, particularly the between-session tasks that are critical to therapeutic success, but which are often overlooked, misunderstood, or challenging for patients to complete.

I am especially interested in co-designing practical, meaningful solutions with patients and practitioners to enhance engagement and promote equity within CBT delivery. Supporting better engagement can empower individuals to take a more active role in their care, enhance self-management of their mental health, and develop sustainable coping strategies. It can also contribute to greater practitioner satisfaction. By optimising the design, delivery, and support of between-session tasks, my research aims to improve engagement, treatment effectiveness, and the overall therapy experience. Ultimately, I hope to make CBT-based interventions more accessible, inclusive, and sustainable, helping more people benefit from effective psychological support globally.

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MENTAL HEALTH RESEARCH

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GRETCHEN BJORNSTAD

I am a Senior Lecturer at the University of Exeter. My research focuses on improving health and social care services to support children and young people with complex needs and their families. Since completing my DPhil in 2009, I've built expertise in evaluating and implementing evidence-based interventions, including complex, parent- and child- focused, and school-based approaches to promote mental health and well-being. My work spans systematic reviews, meta-analyses, and a range of trial designs.

Over the past few years, I've begun to establish a programme of independent research, shaped by collaboration with parent carers of children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND). These partnerships have deepened my interest in how health, education, and social care systems can contribute to stress, anxiety, and other mental health challenges, and how systemic inequities may exacerbate these issues. My goal is to identify opportunities to improve service systems and create pathways to better, more timely support for families.

I currently serve as Programme Manager for the NIHR Child Health and Maternity National Priority Programme and lead a NIHR-funded study investigating the prevalence of mental health conditions and access to treatment for parent carers of children with SEND. Additionally, I'm a Co-Investigator on a randomised controlled trial of mental health assessments in social care. My research is closely aligned with current and emerging health and social care policy and is designed to inform meaningful changes in services for families with children and young people with SEND.

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LIZ CAMACHO

I am a quantitative health researcher, specialising in health economics. My PhD is in Epidemiology and I have over 10-years' experience working as an academic health economist, with a focus on clinical trials. I work on research projects across a wide range of clinical areas but have a particular interest in mental health and women's/maternal health. I am currently based at the University of Liverpool and am a member of the Health Inequalities Policy Research (HIP-R) Group, Health Economics and Equity Liverpool (HEEL), Mental Health Research for Innovation Centre (M-RIC), and Data Action Research Team (DART). In M-RIC, I am the academic lead for a work package that focuses on Child and Adolescent Digital Mental Health.

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LAURA CHAPMAN

I completed my PhD at the University of Sussex, with a mixed methods thesis which focused on parenting and the intergenerational transmission of eating disorders. During the course of my PhD, I gained additional experience conducting research in the broader mental health field, including in relation to parental anxiety disorders, student and postgraduate researcher mental health, and depression in young people. Prior to this, I obtained a BA in Psychology and an MRes in Psychological Methods at the University of Sussex.

I am currently working as a Senior Research Associate at the University of Bristol, in the Centre for Academic Mental Health within Bristol Medical School. Here, I work closely with colleagues in the School of Psychological Science, where I am the Mental Health theme co-lead for the Translational and Applied Research Group. In my role, I support a project developing adjunctive virtual reality treatments for eating disorders, using the person-based approach to intervention development.

My main research interest is in eating disorders. I also have an interest in parental mental health and the intergenerational transmission of eating disorders, and in qualitative mental health research more broadly. Methodologically, my expertise and interests lie in qualitative research methods, mixed methods approaches, and in conducting systematic reviews. I am passionate about using qualitative methods to explore the experiences of people with eating disorders, with a view to informing innovative approaches to prevention and treatment.

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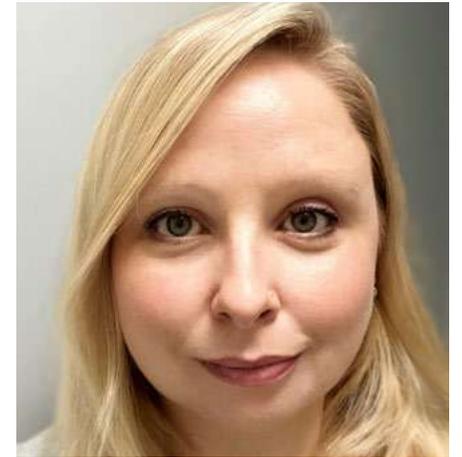
JAYA CHATURVEDI

I am a postdoctoral researcher at King's College London,
with interests in chronic pain and mental health research.
I use big data and AI-based methods for my research.

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CHLOE CHESSELL

My research focuses on increasing access to psychological treatments for preadolescent children with anxiety problems and obsessive compulsive disorder (OCD) through the development, evaluation, and implementation of brief therapist guided, parent-led Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT) interventions.

As part of my post-doctoral research role, I currently lead the implementation of a brief online therapist guided, parent-led CBT intervention for child anxiety problems in routine mental health services. Prior to my post-doctoral role, I completed a PhD at the University of Reading, which involved developing a brief parent-led CBT intervention for preadolescent children with OCD and conducting a preliminary evaluation of this treatment.

I am also a qualified Psychological Wellbeing Practitioner (PWP) where I support parents to learn CBT tools to help their children to overcome anxiety problems and OCD.

Current Research Projects:

1. Implementation and evaluation of Online Support and Intervention (OSI) for child anxiety problems in routine UK mental health services. https://osiresearch.org.uk/osi-grows/

2. Co-adaption and initial evaluation of Online Support and Intervention (OSI) for children with obsessive compulsive disorder.

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NATASHA CHILMAN

I am a Research Associate and Teaching Fellow in Population Mental Health at King's College London. My current postdoctoral role in the UKRI Population Mental Health Consortium involves bringing together partnerships across universities, local and national government, community organisations, and people with lived experience, to understand what can be done to prevent the onset of mental health problems using insights from large-scale linked data.

My research focuses on health inequalities and the wider social determinants of mental health. I have previously investigated mental health inequalities for people who have experienced homelessness; inequalities in unemployment for people with severe mental illnesses; and the mortality gap for people with severe mental illnesses during the COVID-19 pandemic.

I am interested in epidemiological methods using large-scale, linked datasets, such as electronic health records. I have also previously used qualitative and mixed-methods. I am keen to talk about public and patient involvement and co-production in mental health research.

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MOYA CLANCY

Moya is a qualified Clinical Psychologist, Lecturer in Clinical Psychology, and Principal Investigator of the NHS GGC AVATAR Therapy Implementation Project.

Moya completed her Doctorate in Clinical Psychology at the University of Glasgow, where she specialised in the areas of trauma and psychosis (thesis title: 'From trauma to psychosis: developing an interventionist-causal approach for dissociation and voice-hearing in people with complex trauma'). Moya completed a joint specialist placement with the Glasgow Psychological Trauma Service and ESTEEM Early Intervention for Psychosis Service. Moya has since worked as a Trial Coordinator and AVATAR Therapist for the Wellcome Trust funded AVATAR2 Trial (Home | AVATAR2 Therapy Trial | Mental Health Research (avatartherapytrial.com) https://www.avatartherapy.co.uk/) and a Principal Clinical Psychologist in NHS Prison Healthcare (lead psychologist for the female community custody unit). Moya is currently a Lecturer in Clinical Psychology at the University of Glasgow, where she is Principal Investigator of the AVATAR Therapy Implementation Project (NHS GGC Endowment Fund) and Senior Clinical Psychologist with the Irish Prison Service.

Outside of work Moya loves a good book, travelling, and going to gigs.

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BETHANY CLIFFE

I am a research fellow at the University of Westminster. I am primarily a qualitative researcher and my main research interests are self-harm, suicide, university student mental health, and digital technologies. I completed my PhD at the University of Bath between 2019-2023, looking at whether digital technologies could support university students who self-harm. I am currently working on an NIHR funded project evaluating the use of smart surveillance technology for suicide prevention in public places.

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ANGELA CLIFFORD

Dr Angela Clifford is a Research Associate and Deputy Director for Research in the School of Nursing and Midwifery at Keele University. She is an experienced research methodologist with expertise in qualitative and quantitative methodologies. Angela's key focus is on the delivery of effective services in primary and community care, in particular around mental health, aging, long-term conditions and dementia. She has an interest in impactful research that addresses the needs of underserved communities.

Angela completed her undergraduate and postgraduate training in Psychology and Psychological Research at Bangor University, North Wales. She moved to Loughborough University to complete a Faculty-funded PhD, investigating the protective link between physical activity and cognitive function in older age. Angela worked as a postdoctoral researcher at the University of Wolverhampton for 10 years, working on research and consultancy projects across multiple areas of health and wellbeing, including veterans' mental health.

Angela joined Keele University as a Trials Manager in the Clinical Trials Unit. She moved to her current role in the School of Nursing and Midwifery in June 2023 and currently works on studies across primary care, mental health and methodological research. For example, she works on the E-Primed study investigating complex emotional needs in prison populations. Angela has a network of collaborators across higher education, clinical and third sector organisations with whom she is developing programmes of research in her key areas of expertise.

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RACHEL COLEMAN

Rachel is a Research Fellow & Trial Manager at the NIHR Funded Centre for Addiction and Mental Health Research at the University of Hull. She has recently completed her SSA funded PhD which focussed on alcohol withdrawal in acute hospitals. She has worked in the field of addiction research for over 10 years and her area of interest is around clinical care and pathways. She is currently working on a project which focusses on improving care pathways for young people experiencing co-occurring substance use and mental health problems.

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GRAINNE CREMIN

Following my undergraduate BSc in Human Health and Disease at Trinity College Dublin, I worked for several years in cancer research where I developed strong research and analytical skills. More recently, I transitioned into Public Health, where I have focused on mental health economics. Currently, I am undertaking a cost-effectiveness analysis of the Transforming Children and Young People Mental Health Provision Green Paper programme as part of my summer thesis. I am enthusiastic about further developing my health economics expertise, with a particular interest in mental health interventions that operate at a population level. I am keen to contribute to evidence-based decision-making that improves mental health outcomes and resource allocation.

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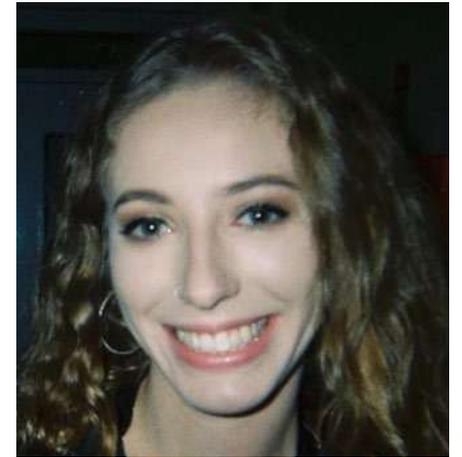
OLA DEMKOWICZ

I am an Academic Psychologist and a Senior Lecturer in Psychology of Education in the Manchester Institute of Education.

My research focuses on mental health and development in adolescence. This includes the ways that systemic inequalities translate into mental health inequalities, particularly in relation to the gender mental health gap. I also investigate how schools can support mental health and wellbeing and adolescents' developmental needs. Current and recent research projects include investigating the drivers of the increase in poor mental health for young people, exploring adolescent girls' perspectives on rates of low mood and anxiety, and developing a measure for adolescent social media usage.

I'm a multi-methods researcher with a strong interest in the ways that we integrate qualitative and quantitative approaches in mental health research. I have led and collaborated on projects funded by organisations including NICE, NIHR, UKRI, and the National Lottery Community Fund.

I have been based at the Manchester Institute of Education since 2016, and am an Honorary Research Fellow at the Evidence Based Practice Unit (Anna Freud and UCL). I have a record of service and leadership in research infrastructure with a focus on developing research quality and community.

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JUDE DINELEY

I am a postdoc in the Department of Biostatistics and Health Informatics and the CAMHS Digital Lab at the Institute of Psychiatry, Psychology & Neuroscience, King's College London. I am an engineer. I originally worked as a clinical medical physicist. My work is focused on applications of speech, speech technology and mobile health in mental health research and practice.

My NIHR Development and Skills Enhancement (DSE) Award started in October. My focus in this is the responsible use of Ambient Voice Technology (AVT) in NHS CAMHS, particularly in neurodevelopmental assessments. I'd love to talk to other researchers with an interest in AVT, especially those involved in clinical implementation.

My other interest is speech and language collection and analysis for symptom assessment in mental health, with the goal of developing robust, feasible protocols with clinically meaningful outputs. I have contributed to international and national digital and mobile health projects collecting and analysing speech in major depressive disorder (RADAR-CNS), autism (AIMS-2-TRIALS), eating disorders (STORY), ADHD (ART-CARMA), psychosis and addiction.

I am a keen advocate for the active participation of data scientists and engineers in PPIE and am additionally interested in participant and patient engagement with digital health tools.

Our Voice and Speech Processing for Health lab (www.kcl.ac.uk/research/voice-and-speech-processing-for-health) are open to new collaborations and happy to talk!

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CAITLYN DONALDSON

I completed my PhD in DECIPHer at Cardiff University in 2023 and now work as a post-doctoral research associate across DECIPHer and the Wolfson Centre for Young People's Mental Health. My main research interests are in young people's mental health within school settings, including across the transition from primary to secondary school, and I am particularly interested in school connectedness as a protective factor and target for intervention. My research typically uses quantitative methods (multi-level modelling or latent class approaches) to analyse large survey datasets, but I am also interested in how other methodologies might be useful for exploring the development of school connectedness—or school disconnectedness—in young people over time.

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SARAH DONALDSON

I am a lecturer and researcher at the University of Dundee, based in the School of Health Sciences, where I work across both the Substance Use Research Group and the Improvement and Implementation Research Group. My academic career builds on a substantial clinical background as a specialist pharmacist in drug treatment and public health within the NHS.

My clinical experience has shaped my research interests, particularly in designing, implementing, and evaluating targeted interventions for people who use drugs. I am committed to improving service accessibility, safety, and person-centred care through evidence informed approaches. My research focuses on recovery and harm reduction, with a strong emphasis on addressing the social determinants of health that impact people who use drugs.

I am especially interested in how treatment and recovery pathways can support not only physical and psychological recovery, but also dignity, autonomy, and meaningful social inclusion. My current research focuses on the implementation of long-acting injectable buprenorphine within treatment pathways, examining its impact on individual outcomes and its potential to reduce stigma by providing more flexible and empowering treatment options.

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CORINE DRIESSENS

I am a psychiatric epidemiologist with an international career focused on advanced research methodology. In my current role as Principal Research Fellow at ARC Wessex, I lead on the methodological design and implementation of several Mental Health Hub projects. I also provide guidance and mentoring to researchers and interns across the Mental Health, Social Care, and Healthy Communities themes within ARC Wessex.

I have secured ESRC funding to lead a project investigating the experiences of young people living with emotional mental health difficulties who are not accessing mental health services. This project integrates multiple research approaches. I have negotiated access to linked cohort and health record data and collaborated with young people to co-produce the data analysis plan. I identified and implemented appropriate missing data methodologies and conducted analyses within trusted research environments.

To ensure the research remains grounded in lived experience, I have used an appreciative inquiry approach to co-produce recommendations with young people based on the findings. I am actively involved in disseminating these findings through academic, policy, and public engagement channels. I am now seeking to build on this work through additional funding to further develop and expand the project's impact.

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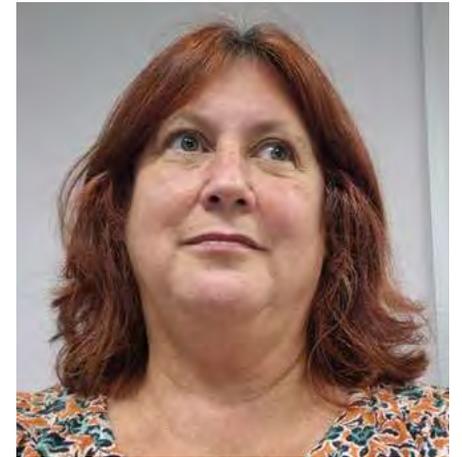
ANAM ELAHI

I am a Lecturer in Clinical Psychology with a research focus on ethnic minority mental health inequalities, including among refugees and migrants in the UK. My work explores how social identity, stigma, and structural disadvantage shape mental health outcomes and access to support.

My PhD examined the role of social identity in psychosis among ethnic minority individuals, using Social Identity Theory to explore both protective and risk mechanisms. Since then, I have expanded my research to investigate how ethnic inequalities impact physical health experiences and how access to services can be improved for South Asians.

I am particularly interested in the development and improvement of culturally sensitive mental healthcare that reflects the lived realities of marginalised and underserved groups. My work aims to inform more inclusive mental healthcare, policies and interventions, drawing on interdisciplinary approaches and close collaboration with the communities I study.

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NIAMH ERRINGTON

I am a Research Fellow at the Department of Biostatistics & Health Informatics, King's College London. My interests are in the intersection of mental health and digital biomarkers – specifically, how passive data from wearable and mobile devices can enhance our understanding of symptom dynamics in depression. My research focuses on modelling relapse and deterioration, moving beyond retrospective surveys and static snapshots toward continuous, personalised prediction. I am examining data from the RADAR project (Remote Assessment of Disease and Relapse), a large multimodal remote monitoring technology (RMT) study focusing on MDD. Using a data-driven approach, I am aiming to see if remotely collected information from wearable devices can predict relapse or symptom worsening with a long term goal to inform preventative interventions.

My previous roles as a post-doc and PhD student focused more on machine learning for classification using -omics, particularly focusing on cardiovascular conditions.

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MICHAEL FANNER

I am a Senior Researcher at the Department of Social Policy and Intervention, University of Oxford, co-leading and developing the Supporting Early Minds Research Network (www.supportingearlyminds.org.uk) funded by Oxford Health NIHR BRC. Additionally, I contribute to research studies centred on evidence-based practice and workforce development during the critical first 1001 days of life. In conjunction with my academic practice, I bring diverse clinical experience from both the NHS and voluntary sector as a registered health visitor, working with families with children under five. My clinical practice has involved providing relational, trauma-informed, and salutogenic evidence- based assessments and interventions, particularly in infant mental health.

My research interests revolve around enhancing the evidence base and its application for the mental health and wellbeing development of children under five and their families, with a particular emphasis on health visitor practice.

This encompasses my evolving expertise in complex intervention research methods. The scarcity of role models and postdoctoral research opportunities in academic health visiting and infant mental health poses challenges for career development in this field. I eagerly anticipate the opportunities that the Incubator Gathering will provide, aiding my growth in research leadership within this crucial area of mental health.

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SONIA FILMER

I have been qualified as a pharmacist for over 25 years. After working in acute hospitals, then spending 17 years working in primary care, I started working as a prescribing pharmacist on acute adult mental health wards in Durham eight years ago. I have always had an interest in benzodiazepine and hypnotic deprescribing, after running benzodiazepine withdrawal clinics in primary care, and had always wanted to carry out a research project.
I obtained funding from the NIHR to complete my masters in psychiatric pharmacy at Aston University with a project entitled 'Facilitators and barriers to deprescribing benzodiazepines and z drug hypnotics on adult mental health wards'. I completed this in February 2025 and have presented it as a poster at a conference in July and at the college of mental health pharmacists annual conference in October. I am currently in the process of trying to get my research published in an open access peer reviewed journal.

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TAMSIN FISHER

I am an early career researcher (Research Associate) with qualitative and review method expertise. I have a particular interest in creative and ethnographic methods and work with minoritised and underserved populations to co-design and co-produce interventions to improve help-seeking and identification of anxiety and depression.

I am currently working in the mental health research team in the School of Medicine at Keele University; however, I have a background in social science and I bring my social science and theoretical knowledge to health services research. I completed by PhD in Human Geography in 2023 titled 'Crafting self-care practices: Learning craft in time and space'.

I am currently working on a variety of studies, including help-seeking in older adults (SHADOW), identification of perinatal anxiety (CLASP), identification of anxiety and depression in older adults (FIRESIDE and FIRESIDE 2), supporting young people living with a stoma to manage distress (The Stoma Study), and most recently I am co-leading a study exploring help-seeking for mental ill-health in farming communities (FARMSP). I am looking forward to engaging with the GROW programme to meet fellow ECRs working in mental health research, to share experiences and ideas, and look forward to potential collaboration opportunities.

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MENTAL HEALTH RESEARCH

DEVELOP YOUR CAREER • CHANGE LIVES

HOLLIE GAY

I am a Postdoctoral Research Fellow and Manager for the Research and Evaluation team in Cedar Create, University of Exeter. For the last 3 years, I have led a team of six researchers (5 Graduate Research Assistants and 1 Postdoctoral Research Associate) and have project oversight of internally and externally funded mental health evaluation and research projects. My primary research focus is children and young people's mental health, specifically workforce implementation and impact evaluation of low-intensity practitioners. We ensure continuous feedback loops to services which have contributed to retention and expansion of the workforce.

In addition to my research role, my line management skills were recognised during a presentation by the University on International Women's Day and I have contributed to guidance for other line managers. I am also a member of the University of Exeter ethics committee, a steering committee member for Children and Young People's Wellbeing @Exeter and a co-lead of meaningful involvement of children and young people in research.

I was thrilled to learn my first grant application was funded by the Three NIHR Research Schools Mental Health Programme. Under the supervision of Professor Adlam and in collaboration with staff from the voluntary sector and the School for Social Care, we are supporting the engagement and representation of care-experienced children and young people in research through co-produced resource. Recruitment for stage 1 (focus groups with care leavers) has progressed well, and we are looking forward to sharing the results of this project.

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MENTAL
HEALTH
RESEARCH

DEVELOP YOUR CAREER • CHANGE LIVES

MELISSA GIRLING

I am a Research Fellow at Northumbria University. I have nearly 25 years experience of primarily qualitative research in a range of health and social issues in the UK and New Zealand. My research interests are advancing understanding of the often-complex health and social challenges experienced by under-served groups, with a focus on applying innovative approaches to transform ways of working with these particular groups who are regularly missing in research and co-creating evidence-informed solutions that impact upon health outcomes. My NIHR Doctoral Fellowship combined elements of mental health, criminal justice and participatory research approaches to investigate the mental health of young people who offend in community forensic services. To promote the uptake of research findings into practice, since 2012 I have also been integrally involved in developing implementation theory and methods: Normalisation Process Theory (NPT) and the development of quantitative measures for users (NoMAD). I am currently developing and NIHR Advanced Fellowship application to investigate youth mental health in relation to knife crime.

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MENTAL HEALTH RESEARCH

DEVELOP YOUR CAREER • CHANGE LIVES

HAYLEY GORTON

Hayley is a pharmacist and pharmacoepidemiologist focusing on mental health research, particularly to do with suicide and self-harm. She is a Senior Lecturer at Aston University and currently an NIHR DSE Fellow. In this Fellowship she is reinvigorating (and expanding!) her health data science skills.

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MENTAL HEALTH RESEARCH

DEVELOP YOUR CAREER • CHANGE LIVES

MANDY GRAHAM

Dr Mandy Graham is a Reader in Occupational Therapy at City St George's, University of London and a Senior Fellow of AdvanceHE. Prior to entering higher education, Mandy held a number of clinical and managerial roles within adult mental health services in the NHS, including that of Professional Lead Occupational Therapist. Her recent PhD study explored the nature, meaning and purpose of Occupational Therapy within perinatal mental health services, using a contemporary Charmazian grounded theory method, to generate a theoretical approach to professional practice.

Mandy is passionate about mental health and explored the role of occupational therapists within forensic services, using an Interpretative Phenomenological Approach (IPA) within her post-reg MSc. Mandy has acted as a research supervisor to many MSc and BSc students over the years and was honoured to receive the £15,000 Constance Owens award in 2018, that supported her doctoral studies and dissemination of research in India, America, Singapore and France. Mandy has recently completed the NIHR Leadership Academy to further enhance her research skills, collaborations and potential to secure future bids and grants.

Mandy was part of the Peer Coaching (PeCo) 2024 cohort, recently completed the Fellowship Application Writing Retreat July 2025 and is looking forward to further networking and support offered by the Paper Writing Retreat in September 2025. Having attended and benefited from the Incubator Gathering last year, Mandy is delighted to be part of a supportive growing community of mental health and addiction researchers from across the UK.

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MENTAL HEALTH RESEARCH

DEVELOP YOUR CAREER • CHANGE LIVES

NINA HIGSON-SWEENEY

Dr Nina Higson-Sweeney is a Postdoctoral Researcher at the University of Oxford, focused on clinical, health, and developmental psychology. Her main research interests are in child and adolescent mental health, particularly depression, anxiety, and Obsessive Compulsive Disorder, with the overall aim of ensuring that how mental health is addressed in research and practice aligns with young people's wants, needs, and lived experiences. Nina is a mixed methods researcher, with expertise in qualitative methods and a keen interest in co-production and participatory research, including arts-based approaches. Her current postdoctoral role is focused on better understanding young people's attitudes towards and experiences of self-diagnosing with mental health problems.

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MENTAL HEALTH RESEARCH

DEVELOP YOUR CAREER • CHANGE LIVES

ORLA HILTON

Orla is a clinical academic working between St George's University London and the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine. Orla's current research is on the relationship between mental health and infection in UK migrant populations. Orla completed her MSc in Tropical Medicine and International Health at LSHTM, funded by an NIHR Three Schools scholarship. Prior to her MSc, Orla was an academic doctor based at the Infection Neuroscience Laboratory in Liverpool, a specialist world-leading unit investigating neurological infections. There Orla led on a sub-study of the national COVID-CNS trial, focussing on the presentation and outcomes of stroke. In addition, Orla leads the World Health Organisation and University of Liverpool funded Global Brain Health Clinical Exchange Platform Programme, directing online, free monthly workshops to facilitate the promotion of global neurological and mental health and the exchange of knowledge between clinicians and academics in high- and low- and middle-income countries. Orla is currently co-leading on the writing of the UK national encephalitis paediatric guidelines and serves as a co-writer for the adult guideline equivalent. Orla has undertaken research at the Malawi Liverpool Wellcome Centre on cerebral malaria and fatal COVID-19, at Tokyo Medical and Dentistry University on monoclonal antibody therapy for Type 1 Diabetes, and at Harvard Medical School/Massachusetts General Hospital on B cell immunotherapy for amyotrophic lateral sclerosis, with grants from over 5 different funders.

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MENTAL HEALTH RESEARCH

DEVELOP YOUR CAREER • CHANGE LIVES

PHUONG HUA

Dr Phuong Hua is a mixed methods research fellow specialising in applications of mental health to primary care and health inequalities. Currently based at the University of Bristol's Centre for Academic Primary Care, she leads NIHR-funded studies that integrate primary care, dermatology, and behavioural science. Her work spans academic and clinical settings, including direct observational research in psychodermatology clinics, and co-supervision of doctoral research on allergy prevention.

With a background in psychology and public health, Dr Hua's expertise lies in realist evaluation, co-production, and participatory methods that centre service users and marginalised communities. Her research has examined institutional racism and workforce wellbeing in inpatient mental health care, multimorbidity, and system-level strategies for integrated care. She previously led the first realist secondary analysis of patient interviews on ethnic disparities in inpatient mental health services, and contributed to a national evaluation of EDI strategies across NIHR infrastructures.

Passionate about equity and intersectionality, Dr Hua investigates how intergenerational trauma, cultural identity, and systemic barriers shape health experiences and engagement. She is committed to embedding PPI throughout her work and translating research into practical improvements in care.

Dr Hua holds a DPhil in Forensic Medicine from Monash University, and has been awarded multiple grants and fellowships, including the NIHR GROW Programme, British Skin Foundation/Skin Health Alliance, and a Knowledge Mobilisation Catalyst Award. She seeks to build interdisciplinary partnerships, strengthen her research leadership, and contribute to a more equitable and responsive mental health research ecosystem.

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MENTAL HEALTH RESEARCH
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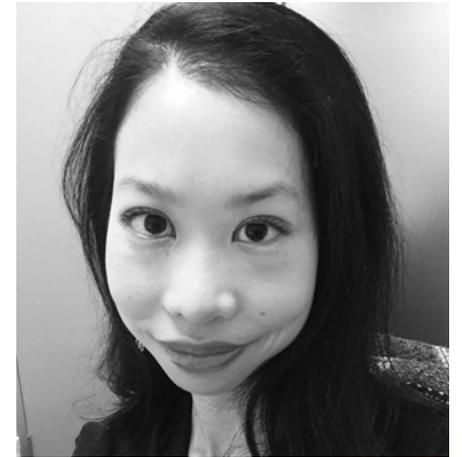
STEPHANIE HUGHES

Dr Stephanie Hughes is a postdoctoral research fellow at the University of Southampton. Her work focuses on alcohol use in women, particularly those in midlife, and the ways in which social networks, loneliness, and stigma shape their experiences of drinking and support. She's especially interested in how people manage alcohol as part of their everyday lives, and how healthcare communication can better reflect the realities of people's circumstances. Her work is grounded in qualitative methods, and she's passionate about research that amplifies people's voices and informs practical change. She's an active member of the ARC Wessex Healthy Communities and Long-term Conditions themes and collaborates with a range of stakeholders, including people with lived experience, healthcare professionals, and voluntary sector partners.

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MENTAL
HEALTH
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DEVELOP YOUR CAREER • CHANGE LIVES

DAVID HUNT

David is an applied psychologist specialising in improvement and implementation science within complex mental health systems. His work focuses on translating evidence into practice and supporting meaningful change in how mental health care is designed and delivered.

He has a particular interest in men's mental health, from preventing male suicide to helping men build more connected and fulfilling lives. David's work explores how systems, culture, and practice shape men's experiences of mental health and how services can respond in ways that are compassionate, practical, and effective.

He brings a systems perspective and a collaborative approach, believing that real improvement happens when people come together around shared purpose and curiosity.

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MENTAL HEALTH RESEARCH

DEVELOP YOUR CAREER • CHANGE LIVES

ROSE HUTTON

I am a Research Associate in the School of Medicine at Keele University. I am a qualitative researcher, and my research interests centre on the availability and quality of care for vulnerable and/or underserved groups. Most of my work to date has been related to the physical and mental health of people involved with the criminal justice system. I finished my PhD in Social Work in 2022, which explored the experiences of older men in prison. Since then, I have worked on several prison-related research projects, including evaluations of psychological interventions and topics such as suicide, perinatal mental health, and complex emotional needs.

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MENTAL HEALTH RESEARCH

DEVELOP YOUR CAREER • CHANGE LIVES

JAYNE JEFFRIES

I am a feminist geographer working in the Population Health Sciences Institute at Newcastle University. I have developed an interdisciplinary portfolio of work exploring the context of health and health care in a range of allied settings from general practice and community pharmacy to voluntary organisations and participants homes. I have gained a rich understanding of practitioner, patient, peer, volunteer and stakeholder roles in north east and south west England using conceptual and methodological expertise in participatory and qualitative approaches.

Tailoring longitudinal, ethnographic and creative methodologies to suit the needs of research participants, carers and service users is an important aspect of my work. My contributions in this area include: i) shadowing social prescribing link workers in general practice; ii) health and well-being interviews with entry-level and senior NHS staff during COVID-19; iii) photovoice with a chronic pain support group; iv) mobile ethnographies of sight loss, ageing and social isolation; and v) life mapping to document acquired health conditions.

I am establishing myself as an applied mental health and prevention researcher, working with underserved Deep End communities across three NIHR Three Research Schools funded projects: i) MINDED: Mental Health in the Deep EnD is a complex intervention to embed psychological support into DE general practice (2022-25); ii) Embedded methods to explore Deep End initiatives is a focused ethnography of the Community Research Link Worker (CRLW) model, established at the University of Sheffield (2025); and iii) qualitative fieldwork and co-production in Deep End Community Pharmacies and General Practices (2025-27).

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MENTAL
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DEVELOP YOUR CAREER • CHANGE LIVES

BUKET KARA

I am a mixed-methods mental health researcher with a background in Developmental Psychology. I am passionate about and committed to improving mental health outcomes in youth, families, and communities, particularly those facing social inequalities. My research focuses on understanding the factors underlying mental health and resilience, designing and evaluating mental health interventions, and addressing health disparities through mobilising community assets and improving cross-sector partnerships, service provision, and co-produced research. Currently, I am a Lecturer in Clinical Psychology at Lancaster University. I am part of the AHRC-funded Coastal Community & Creative Health programme aiming to tackle health inequalities in coastal areas, leading the capacity building work package. Previously, I was working as a Senior Research Fellow at the Centre of Resilience for Social Justice, University of Brighton, in a partnership with the HeadStart Blackpool programme. Besides my passion for research, I enjoy feminist science fiction and fantasy (with Octavia E. Butler and N. K. Jemisin my favourites), boardgames (love hosting game nights!), hiking, and baking.

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MENTAL
HEALTH
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DEVELOP YOUR CAREER • CHANGE LIVES

MYROFORA (MYRTO) KAKOULIDOU

I am a Research Fellow at the UCL Research Department of Primary Care and Population Health and the Deputy Director of UCL's Group for Research in Relationships And NeuroDiversity (GRRAND). Previously, I was a Post-doctoral Research Associate in the UKRI-funded Regulating Emotions – Strengthening Adolescent Resilience (RE-STAR) research programme at King's College London, which aims to reduce the risk of depression in autistic and ADHD young people. I am a mixed-methods psychology researcher specialising in mental health, education, and neurodiversity, with a strong focus on autism and ADHD. I am particularly interested in the role of social determinants in the development of mental health conditions in both neurotypical and neurodivergent populations, as well as in adapting talking therapies and interventions for neurodivergent groups to reduce mental health care inequalities. My research is deeply inspired by the neurodiversity paradigm. I am also passionate about experience-based participatory research that empowers and actively involves under-served communities throughout the research process to improve and humanise educational and mental health services.

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MENTAL
HEALTH
RESEARCH

DEVELOP YOUR CAREER • CHANGE LIVES

IMRAN KHAN

I am a Counselling Psychotherapist and Research Fellow at Queen Mary University of London, where I explore faith in psychotherapy. My research focuses on integrating Islamic principles and practices into a talking therapy based on acceptance and commitment therapy (ACT) for use in NHS primary care settings. I am also a recipient of an NIHR Pre-Application Support Fund, supporting the development of this research.

My work is driven by a commitment to addressing the barriers that Muslims in the UK face when seeking mental health support. In addition, I am a member of the Luton and Dunstable Hospital Clinical Ethics Committee.

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MENTAL HEALTH RESEARCH

DEVELOP YOUR CAREER • CHANGE LIVES

EMMA KING

I am an interdisciplinary researcher with a background in Genetics. I've worked for some years as a health services researcher, on a variety of projects, including with cancer patients, paediatric hospital admissions, smoking in pregnancy, and mental health in the farming community. I'm really interested in ethics and I sit on the ethics committee at the University of Stirling. I've worked across a variety of methods, including realist reviews, participant observation, intervention development and qualitative research methods such as interviews and focus groups. I'm interested in the potential for interventions around how people use alcohol to manage mental health and physical pain, particularly brief interventions that could be delivered alongside screening, to reach people where they are.

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MENTAL
HEALTH
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DEVELOP YOUR CAREER • CHANGE LIVES

RUTH KNIGHT

Ruth is a mixed methods researcher focussing on marginalized experiences of mental health, most often eating disorders. She used coproduced approaches and centres on community-oriented research practices. Currently she is a Senior Lecturer in Psychology at York St. John University.

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MENTAL
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DEVELOP YOUR CAREER ● CHANGE LIVES

CLAUDIA KUSTNER

Claudia is a clinical psychologist and systemic therapist. She works as the lead clinician for older adult inpatient mental health wards at an NHS hospital in Berkshire. She is also a consultant lecturer and assessor for DClinPsy programs at various universities in the South East. She has an interest in qualitative research methodologies, particularly systemic adaptations of these models. She is currently working on publishing chapters of her PhD thesis on staff experiences of significant moments in systemic team formulation, using an IPA for focus groups approach.

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MENTAL HEALTH RESEARCH

DEVELOP YOUR CAREER • CHANGE LIVES

KATRIN LEHMANN

Katrin is a consultant nurse in child & adolescent mental health (CAMHS) at the Belfast Health & Social Care Trust. Her clinical practice is focused on working with children, young people and their families who have experienced trauma and present with complex mental health needs. She works one day per week as a systemic clinical lecturer at Queens University Belfast. Katrin completed a Public Health Agency NI funded mixed methods PhD focused on autism and gender dysphoria in 2020. Her research continues to centre on gender incongruence, autism and mental health. Katrin`s most recent publication focused on 'Increased risk of suicidality in treatment-seeking transgender adults and adolescents with autism traits and anxiety/depression'.

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SKAISTE LINCEVICIUTE

I am a postdoctoral mental health and wellbeing researcher working at the University of Southampton, part of the Alcohol and Gambling Research Groups. My research focuses on meaning-making in the context of living with long-term conditions and unmet needs, and understanding how holistic interventions like social prescribing could bring positive change to people's health and wellbeing. I am particularly passionate and committed to meaningful research that addresses community needs and is centred around the voices of people with lived experience. I focus on building collaborative partnerships with community stakeholders to support wider community's engagement and interest in research, ensure representation of groups with under-served needs, and incorporate their valuable expertise into the research process.

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MENTAL HEALTH RESEARCH

DEVELOP YOUR CAREER • CHANGE LIVES

SHAUN LIVERPOOL

Dr Shaun Liverpool is a Senior Lecturer in Child and Adolescent Mental Health at Edge Hill University and a dedicated interdisciplinary researcher committed to advancing mental health equity for children, young people (CYP), and families. His research focuses on developing accessible, evidence-based mental health interventions, particularly for marginalised and underserved groups. Shaun's expertise spans digital mental health, youth engagement, co-production, and implementation science.

He has led and contributed to international and UK-based research projects exploring the use, effectiveness, and accessibility of digital mental health tools. His work has been published in high-impact journals and presented at major international conferences. Shaun has completed two systematic reviews mapping global digital mental health interventions and identifying major gaps in provision for CYP from marginalised communities.

Shaun is actively involved in policy and practice, and collaborates with multidisciplinary teams, service providers, and community groups to ensure that research is co-created, inclusive, and impactful. Shaun is affiliated with several professional networks, including the International Association for Youth Mental Health and the Anna Freud Centre. He is passionate about translating research into meaningful, scalable change, and his work continues to bridge the gap between research, policy, and practice in youth mental health.

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MENTAL HEALTH RESEARCH
DEVELOP YOUR CAREER • CHANGE LIVES

EMILY LOVETT

Emily is a Senior External Engagement Fellow in the Department of Sport and Physical Activity at Edge Hill University. Her research is focussed on community-based provision for physical activity and perinatal mental health and the role of sport, physical activity and leisure in accessing peer support for new fathers. Emily is very interested in collaborating to better understand key mechanisms for actively engaging diverse groups in community-based interventions.

Emily has a background in sociology, qualitative methods and realist evaluation. She is currently working on an NIHR Three Schools funded project using realist evaluation exploring a peer support model in mother and baby units. Emily is also Co-director of the International Research Centre for Early Years Education, leading their work with families and communities; and is a member of the scientific advisory board of the Active Pregnancy Foundation.

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MENTAL HEALTH RESEARCH

DEVELOP YOUR CAREER • CHANGE LIVES

AMY LYNHAM

Dr Amy Lynham is a Research Fellow at the National Centre for Mental Health (NCMH), Cardiff University. Her research investigates how cognitive functions are impacted in patients with a history of mental health problems. She has a special interest in how health technologies can be used to support delivery of clinical care in psychiatric services. She completed her PhD at Cardiff University where she developed "CONCA", a web-based assessment of memory and concentration for use in psychiatric research. In her current fellowship, she leads on the development of a clinical version of CONCA, working with patient representatives and clinicians to create a tool that will support the assessment of patients with psychosis in the clinic.

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MENTAL HEALTH RESEARCH

DEVELOP YOUR CAREER • CHANGE LIVES

XUEMEI MA

I am a Postdoctoral Research Associate at the Institute of Psychiatry, Psychology & Neuroscience (IoPPN), King's College London. My research focuses on how early life adversity, inflammation, diet—particularly high (poly)phenol diets—and sex interact to influence adolescent mental health trajectories. My PhD at King's, conducted as part of the multidisciplinary eBRAIN project, investigated the long-term effects of early adversity on brain development and psychological outcomes in young people. I hold a Bachelor's degree in Preventive Medicine and a Master's in Perinatal Epidemiology from Fudan University in Shanghai, China. Broadly, my research interests span early life adversity, nutritional psychiatry, inflammation, and the gut microbiome. Committed to interdisciplinary collaboration, I aim to identify modifiable risk and protective factors that can inform prevention strategies and improve mental health outcomes in adolescence.

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MENTAL HEALTH RESEARCH

DEVELOP YOUR CAREER • CHANGE LIVES

SIMONA MANNI

Dr Simona Manni is an early career researcher in mental health based at the University of York, with a background in participatory filmmaking, creative media, and co-design. Her work bridges the fields of participatory storytelling, qualitative inquiry, and public engagement, with a focus on lived experience, relational ethics, and inclusive research practice.

Before entering academia, Simona spent over a decade working as a filmmaker and facilitator with communities affected by mental health challenges, social exclusion, and trauma. She trained in film and critical theory in Italy before completing a practice-led PhD in interactive media and mental health in the UK. Her doctoral research, which culminated in the interactive film Stepping Through, explored how non-linear participatory narratives can reduce stigma and support self-expression and recovery.

Simona currently leads and contributes to interdisciplinary projects focused on emotional labour among CAMHS professionals, anonymity and recognition in co-produced research, and digital storytelling as a means of fostering empathy in inpatient care. She also collaborates on a mixed-methods evaluation exploring the parent-infant relationship in early years services.

Her work is grounded in a commitment to collaboration, accessibility, and emotional depth, aiming to support more reflective, compassionate, and inclusive approaches to mental health research and practice. She is particularly interested in the future application of creative, participatory methods to areas such as workforce wellbeing, trauma-informed systems, and equitable access to care.

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MENTAL HEALTH RESEARCH
DEVELOP YOUR CAREER • CHANGE LIVES

PARISA MANSOORI

I am a member of the Incubator Steering Group, previously I was representing the MH-TRC and since 3 years ago have been the charity rep.

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MENTAL
HEALTH
RESEARCH

DEVELOP YOUR CAREER • CHANGE LIVES

SARAH MARSDEN

I am a social qualitative researcher, with a PhD in Mental Health from Lancaster University, and I am interested in the mental health and wellbeing of marginalised and seldom-heard populations, and the social determinants of poor mental health. My PhD focused upon self-harming behaviours in autistic people as described in their own words using online forum posts, using the social model of disability/neurodiversity paradigm to challenge the medicalisation of mental distress. I am currently working in my first postdoctoral position at Lancaster University, undertaking a scoping review of the knowledge landscape on self-harm and suicidality in people with learning disabilities, with a view to developing a larger project; and I am also a visiting researcher at Cambridge University, analysing qualitative responses to a large survey on suicidality in autistic people. I have previously worked as a research assistant at Lancaster University on two smaller qualitative projects, one on the mental health and support needs of male adopters, and one on the perceived benefits of accessing widening participation initiatives in underprivileged medical students.

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MENTAL HEALTH RESEARCH

DEVELOP YOUR CAREER • CHANGE LIVES

DORIANE MIGNON

I am a health economist, currently holding a position of Research Fellow in the HOPE group at The University of Manchester and affiliated to the Productivity Institute. I am currently doing research on the effect of health on productivity, with a focus on mental health. I am also leading the project 'Patients with mental health conditions in a pressured primary care context: access, experience and inequalities', which has been awarded a SPCR grant (£50,000) and is the topic of my current Career Development Award from the Three School Mental health programme.

My overall research interests cover understanding the formation of human capital and the social inequalities related to it. Within this scope, I am interested in the links between health and work/education and inequalities in healthcare.

My approach involves studying these topic quantitatively, mainly relying on large survey data and using micro-econometric methods.

I obtained a PhD in Economics in 2020 from University Paris-Dauphine, PSL (France) and previously held a Postdoctoral Researcher position at the Department of Economics, NTNU (Norway).

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MENTAL HEALTH RESEARCH

DEVELOP YOUR CAREER • CHANGE LIVES

TYLER MILLS

Tyler is a Research Fellow at the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health Research (CAMHR) at the University of Hull. He received his PhD in Psychology in 2022, which was a longitudinal, mixed methods examination of transmasculine experiences of substance use. He continues to use mixed methods approaches to examine the provision and experience of healthcare for people with co-existing substance use and mental health problems, and is passionate about co-producing research and working with marginalised groups to optimise healthcare. He has contributed to research across the fields of social work, psychology, criminology, and research and innovation, with a focus on the inclusion of people typically underrepresented in research. At present his research is focused on using a realist approach to optimise care pathways for people with co-existing substance use and mental health problems who present in crisis to emergency departments. He is also supporting the development and implementation of CAMHR's equality, diversity, inclusion, and accessibility (EDIA) strategy. His research interests include exploring co-existing addiction and mental health in the context of healthcare, epistemic injustice, stigma, and using creative approaches to understanding lived experiences.

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MENTAL
HEALTH
RESEARCH

DEVELOP YOUR CAREER • CHANGE LIVES

RUTH NAUGHTON-DOE

I am an Applied Mental Health Social Care Researcher at the University of York. Together with our team, we explore the social determinants to mental illness.

My research approach is to co-design and co-evaluate interventions that address loneliness, social isolation or an absence of social support. In addition to my research expertise, I bring lived and practitioner experience. I have worked in the NHS and in voluntary sector mental health services. My current research projects aim to improve the mental health of under-served perinatal populations including Muslim mothers, young mothers and LGBTQ+ families. My NIHR Three Schools Mental Health Fellowship (2022-24) co-produced solutions to perinatal loneliness. My work to address perinatal loneliness is ongoing. I am passionate about improving the experience of mental health researchers with lived experience of mental illness. Together with colleagues, we are developing ideas for better support within Universities.

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MENTAL HEALTH RESEARCH

DEVELOP YOUR CAREER • CHANGE LIVES

ALEXANDRA NEWBOLD

I am a mixed methods research fellow working out of the Mood Disorders Centre at the University of Exeter, currently analysing survey data from our Nurture-U student mental wellbeing survey which has run over the last 3 years. In particular I am looking at mental health service use, the experience of students with ADHD, and the impact of student finance on student satisfaction with the university experience. I am also writing up the results of a qualitative evaluation of a new mental health literacy course designed for UK students.

I am also a part-time therapist qualified in hypnotherapy and emotional freedom technique (tapping) for triggers, trauma and PTSD, and I am keen to partner up with anyone wanting to research in this area. I look forward to meeting you all and learning more about you.

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MENTAL HEALTH RESEARCH
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TINE OPITZ

I am a research fellow at the University of Edinburgh, working in the field of eating disorders. Having completed MScs in both psychology and social anthropology, I am passionate about interdisciplinary research to explore the intersection of disordered eating and health perceptions. During my PhD in Clinical Psychology, I explored the conceptualisation of orthorexia nervosa (a preoccupation with 'healthy eating') in the context of eating disorders, drawing on a mixture of psychological, medical, and anthropological research. In 2023, I joined the EDIFY project in Edinburgh as a postdoctoral research fellow, where I have worked with secondary data from the Millennium Cohort Study to identify risk and resilience factors for eating disorders in young people. Recently I was awarded a launchpad research grant by the Medical Research Foundation to investigate the association between Polycystic Ovary Syndrome (PCOS) and eating disorders, which I will be researching for the upcoming two years. Beyond research, I am particularly interested in science communication and am always keen to connect with others working on related topics or navigating similar early-career challenges.

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MENTAL
HEALTH
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DEVELOP YOUR CAREER • CHANGE LIVES

JACKIE PARSONAGE-HARRISON

Jackie is an Occupational Therapist, Researcher, and Lecturer at Oxford Brookes University. Jackie's Research interests include mental health with a focus on adolescence/young adulthood, particularly looking at the importance of occupational balance and daily life on health and wellbeing using qualitative and intervention development methodologies.

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MENTAL HEALTH RESEARCH

DEVELOP YOUR CAREER • CHANGE LIVES

NICKI PIERCE

I am deeply passionate about perinatal mental health, with a particular focus on how it affects young and marginalised fathers – an often overlooked group in both research and service provision. My research interest lies in understanding how structural inequalities, gendered expectations, and the absence of targeted support shape young fathers' emotional wellbeing during their transition into parenthood.

I am currently a Scholarship PhD student on the UKRI-funded Following Young Fathers Further Project, where my doctoral research, 'The Forgotten Fathers: Mapping the Educational Trajectories of Young Fathers Aged 13–18 in Compulsory Education', explores how education systems impact young fathers' lives and opportunities. My wider academic interests include gender, education, class, disadvantage, men and masculinities, and the concept of gender performativity.

Since October 2022, I have taught at the University of Lincoln in both the School of Education and the School of Social and Political Science, delivering teaching across undergraduate and master's programmes. Alongside teaching, I actively contribute to research activities within the Following Young Fathers Further Project. My responsibilities include analysing data using NVivo, producing pen portraits, descriptive case studies, and framework grids, as well as anonymising and pseudonymising sensitive data.

I also contribute to the development of high-quality research outputs, such as reports, papers, and publications of national and international standing. My work is driven by a commitment to producing research that has real-world impact, not only advancing academic understanding but also influencing policy and practice to support young fathers more effectively.

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MENTAL HEALTH RESEARCH

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ROBERTA PIRODDI

I am a tenure track fellow in the Institute of Population Health at the University of Liverpool. I was awarded a NIHR Three Research Schools Fellowship in mental health research (2021-2024). This award allowed me to focus on mental health both as a public health researcher and a health data scientist. In fact, I am also embedded within the regional NHS business intelligence. This role allows me to apply my methodological expertise and to focus my research activity to support population health priorities and public health planning and decision making within the regional NHS.

Before joining the University of Liverpool, I worked as an algorithm and R&D engineer in commercial multimedia analytics for broadcasting and creative industries. During this work in industry, I honed my knowledge translation, relationship building and stakeholder-listening skills.

I am originally trained as an engineer (my first degree was in Electronic Engineering) and computer scientist (my PhD was in machine learning and signal processing), During my employment in industry, I saw that techniques I used to make sense of data there could be usefully applied to NHS data, where large amounts of useful data are routinely collected and not optimally used.

I am motivated to work to engineering better use of data for health and to promote health equity, and am passionate about mental health research as a key enabler to improve all other aspects of physical and social health and wellbeing, leading to happier, more productive and fulfilled lives, families and communities.

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MENTAL
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JO-ANNE PUDDEPHATT

I am a Senior Lecturer in Psychology at Edge Hill University and currently hold a Three NIHR Research Schools' Programme grant as joint Principal Investigator looking at developing a culturally adapted alcohol toolkit for mental health professionals. I apply mixed methodology to better understanding co-occurring alcohol and mental health problems, and specific groups at most risk of experiencing both issues.

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MENTAL
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PIYUSH PUSHKAR

I am a clinical lecturer and anthropologist at the University of Manchester. In my clinical role I am a specialist trainee in forensic psychiatry. My research background is in social science and I am in the process of developing more clinically focused projects.

My research explores how culture, power, and ethics shape mental healthcare delivery, particularly in high-stakes medicolegal contexts. I am currently developing a qualitative studies on how clinicians and interpreters discuss guilt and shame in medicolegal reports for criminal courts and immigration tribunals. This work investigates how these deeply personal emotions influence mental health assessments, therapeutic relationships, and legal decision-making, with the goal of improving cultural competence, communication, and fairness in clinical practice.

Previously, I have published on healthcare access for asylum seekers and refugees, the role of culture in mental health care, and political activism against privatisation in the NHS. I combine ethnographic and discourse-analytic methods to understand how clinicians navigate ethical responsibilities and institutional pressures.

I am keen to connect with others interested in forensic mental health, migrant mental health, medicolegal processes, cultural psychiatry, ethics, or qualitative and interdisciplinary approaches. I especially welcome conversations about ways to bridge social science and clinical practice in mental health research.

I am digital content editor for the BJPsych Open. I am on the editorial board of Sociology of Health and Illness. I am a convenor of the British Sociological Association's study group on Sociology, Psychoanalysis and the Psychosocial.

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MENTAL HEALTH RESEARCH
DEVELOP YOUR CAREER • CHANGE LIVES

MICHELLE RICKETT

I am a Research Associate in the School of Medicine at Keele University, working on two NIHR funded projects focused on severe mental illness. I am an interdisciplinary qualitative researcher with a PhD in Social Anthropology and undergraduate degree in English. I am particularly interested in PPIE in mental health research and in mixed methods and creative methodologies.

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ELYSTAN ROBERTS

I am a Clinical Psychologist, originally from south Wales and now based in Bristol. After completing my PhD in psychiatric epidemiology at the University of Bristol in 2020, I undertook my clinical psychology training at the University of Bath, qualifying in 2024. I am currently a BRC Clinical Psychologist Research Fellow at the University of Oxford / Oxford Health Biomedical Research Centre. I have a particular research interest in self-harm and suicide, as well as psychological treatments in acute inpatient settings. I work clinically on an acute male inpatient ward for two days per week, and on the other three days I am developing a programme of research to design new, effective psychological treatments for mental health inpatients experiencing suicidality. I am currently designing a qualitative study to explore experiences of suicidal ideation with individuals admitted to mental health hospitals.

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MENTAL
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ZOE RYAN

I am a Postdoctoral Researcher at the University of Oxford, developing the WISDOM Mental Health Research Network. The Network aims to bring together primary and secondary schools across England and academic researchers with a view to enabling high quality mental health research that meets the diverse needs of school communities.

My personal research interest is children's mental health, in particular individual differences in the construct of Intolerance of Uncertainty as well as its associations with child anxiety.

I began my academic journey at the age of 40, when I began my BSc in Psychology with Neuroscience at the University of Reading. I went on to complete a part-time PhD with the University of Reading focusing on Intolerance of Uncertainty, exploring responses to uncertainty, and developmental associations with mental health. I have worked part-time throughout my PhD as both a lecturer and a Research Assistant at the University of Reading, and as a Research Assistant at the Universities of Exeter and Oxford.

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MENTAL HEALTH RESEARCH

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HANNAH SAVAGE

Hannah Savage's (she/her/hers) main interest is the neural, psychophysiological and subjective processes involved when we feel anxious and how variable these are within and between individuals. During her PhD at the University of Melbourne she examined the neural correlates of threat and safety learning in patients with social anxiety and unaffected controls. She then moved to the Netherlands where she completed a postdoc at the Donders Institute for Brain, Cognition and Behaviour, using big data to look at variability in brain activation and link this heterogeneity to mental health symptoms. She is now employed on a Wellcome Trust grant awarded to Professor Sarah Garfinkel and Assistant Professor Camilla Nord (Cambridge), where she works on the Em-Body study—a project that aims to determine how our body signals, and our understanding of them (a process called interoception) links to the emotions we experience and symptoms of anxiety and depression.

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MENTAL HEALTH RESEARCH

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KYLE SCHWARTZ

Kyle Schwartz is an interdisciplinary researcher whose work focuses on adaptation and wellbeing in the contexts of mobility, conflict, and disaster. His research integrates public health, human geography, and humanitarian studies, with a methodological foundation in ethnography, participatory research, clinical trials, and mixed methods. He has contributed to projects on social vulnerability, caste and ethnic discrimination, and displacement in diverse settings including Nepal, Mongolia, Ukraine, India, the US, and the UK.

Kyle holds a PhD in Applied Social Sciences from Edinburgh Napier University, where his doctoral ethnography examined protracted displacement and mutual aid in Tibetan refugee camps in Nepal. He has published on UK anti-trafficking policy, COVID-19 interventions, and disaster preparedness, and has led and supported clinical and policy-oriented research across academic, NGO, and government sectors. He is currently a Research Associate at the University of York working on NIHR-funded projects addressing mental health access and suicide prevention among Gypsy, Roma, and Traveller communities, and an NIHR funded project to develop a screening tool for social frailty in older people.

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MENTAL HEALTH RESEARCH

DEVELOP YOUR CAREER • CHANGE LIVES

AMY SHAKESHAFT

I am a Senior Research Associate at the MRC Integrative Epidemiology Unit, University of Bristol. My current research uses epidemiological and genetic methods to examine the relationship between adverse childhood experiences and anxiety disorders in young people, comparing data from longitudinal cohort studies in the UK and Brazil. I have an interdisciplinary background, with research spanning neuroscience and genetics during my PhD at King's College London, and psychiatry and epidemiology in my previous postdoctoral role at the Wolfson Centre for Young People's Mental Health, Cardiff University.

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WAGNER SILVA RIBEIRO

I am a Research Officer at the Care Policy and Evaluation Centre in the London School of Economics and Political Science with a background as a clinical psychologist and a PhD in psychiatric epidemiology. Although my research has been mostly focused on mental health, I am passionate about epistemology and scientific methodology, which led me to currently define myself as a methodologist who has been collaborating with researchers in different fields, such as mental health epidemiology, social care, health system research and implementation science, among others.

I have extensive experience in knowledge about study design and data analysis, and have expertise in evidence synthesis (systematic reviews and meta-analysis). Currently, I hold a fellowship from the NIHR Three Research Schools' Mental Health Programme to develop a living systematic review (LSR) platform focused on psychological interventions to treat emotional problems among children and adolescents. As part of this work, I am exploring the integration of machine-learning models into the evidence synthesis process. My LSR will incorporate new methodological developments in evidence synthesis, such as component network meta-analysis and meta-analytical research domain framework.

In parallel, I have been working with colleagues who are experts in psychotherapy to use results from my review work to develop new psychotherapy protocols that can be delivered by non-specialist professionals, particularly in settings where resources are scarce.

As most of my previous research was focused on Brazil, I am looking to build collaborations to apply my expertise in the development of research that is relevant to the UK context.

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MENTAL HEALTH RESEARCH
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STEPH SLOAN

Hi I'm Steph, a clinical academic and registered dietitian with a passion for bridging clinical practice and research. My research interests include diet-related conditions and mental health namely eating disorders, and the development of mental health confidence and capability within our health and care workforce. Clinically, I'm part of a children's community eating disorder service, where I support young people and their families with multidisciplinary assessment and treatment. I recently attended the 2025 NIHR Fellowship Application Writing Retreat and am currently preparing to submit an NIHR Doctoral Fellowship application in June 2026.

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MENTAL
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KENVIL SOUZA

I am a research officer at Swansea University. My research is primarily within mental health phenotyping and suicide and self-harm prevention. I am involved with the mental health mission, DATAMIND, and the national center of suicide prevention and self-harm research in Wales. I have previously completed my PhD in psychology specifically focusing on how adverse childhood experiences are linked to suicide risk.

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DAN STEWARD

I am an early-career researcher based at Newcastle University. My topics of interest include mental health, implementation science, health inequalities, and population health. My current research is looking at the intersection between physical and mental health services that support people with severe mental ill-health, addressing ways services can be enhanced to better meet the needs of service-users and exploring ways for better integration and joined-up ways of working. I work in mostly with qualitative research methods and also chair my projects PPIE activities. Previous to my current position, I have also researched Bluetooth-enabled technology and the impact on the lifestyle of people with a high BMI and explored the experiences, attitudes and cognitive representations of people living with prediabetes and the impact those representations have on engaging in health behaviours.

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MENTAL HEALTH RESEARCH

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ZOE SWITHENBANK

I am a mixed methods Public Health researcher at Lancaster University, with interests in substance use and mental health. I completed my PhD at Liverpool John Moores University in 2024, which was funded by the Society for the Study of Addiction. This work explored behavioural interventions for smoking cessation for people accessing substance use treatment services. My other research work has focused on different aspects of substance use and mental health, including treatment pathways for people with co-occurring conditions. I am particularly interested in the meaningful inclusion of lived or living experience in mental health and substance use research and practice.

I have previously worked and volunteered in both community and residential substance use treatment, as well as mental health services and healthcare services for people experiencing homelessness. I have volunteered with a national mental health charity for several years, running support groups and serving on their lived experience advisory board.

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CHRISTOPHER TAYLOR

Dr Christopher Taylor is a Senior Lecturer in Psychology and NIHR Fellow in the School of Psychology at University of Sheffield. He also has a small role as a Consultant Clinical Psychologist with Pennine Care NHS Foundation Trust. The main aim of his work is to contribute to improving our understanding of severe mental health conditions and develop new treatments tested in clinical trials. He led the NIHR funded iMAPS-2 trial of imagery focused therapy for psychosis as chief investigator and was a principal investigator on the CSO funded DEC:IDES trial. He is Co-Chief Investigator of the TRUST trial, a schools based adolescent paranoia RCT and a co-investigator on Young and Healthy Minds and the THUMOS/ACTIVATE trial of a resilience boosting intervention for medical students. Chris also serves on the National Scientific Committee for the British Association for Behavioural and Cognitive Psychotherapies (BABCP), the lead organisation for CBT in UK and is Co-Chair of the Spring Conference. In 2021, he was recipient of the British Psychological Society's May Davidson Award, for "an outstanding contribution to clinical psychology, within the first ten years of qualifying".

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MENTAL HEALTH RESEARCH

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KAI THOMAS

Dr Kai Thomas is a Health and Care Research Wales Advanced Fellow based at the School of Psychology, Cardiff University. His research is focused on understanding the development and presentation of eating disorders, with the aim to identify potential targets for novel treatment and support. His PhD, also based at Cardiff University, explored cognitive and neural factors associated with disordered eating in preadolescents using neuropsychological and physiological measures.

Kai's fellowship, which started in October 2024, is a 3-year programme of work focused on improving awareness, understanding, and support for eating disorders in autistic, ADHD, and gender diverse populations. He works alongside people with lived experience, clinicians, academics, and support organisations who guide the research aims, design and accessibility, and interpretations. He uses a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods to generate new knowledge about the unique and intersecting mechanisms driving the development of eating disorders in these groups, and the barriers they face when accessing support.

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MENTAL HEALTH RESEARCH

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RHIANNON THOMPSON

I am a Research Associate in Public Health at Imperial College London. My academic background is in Psychology and Philosophy and Developmental Psychopathology, and I have also worked in community mental health support. My research focuses on the role of the physical environment in young people's mental health, including factors like air pollution, noise, temperature, climate change, climate action, local environmental quality, and the COVID-19 lockdowns.

I am currently carrying out an NIHR School for Public Health Research (SPHR) post-doctoral launching fellowship in Public Health Research at Imperial until December 2025.

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LIZZY TUUDAH

I currently work at King's College London as a Research Associate on the NIHR funded research programme "Improving Communication with Adults with Learning Disabilities (ICALD)". My PhD in Health Services & Population Research explored the health priorities of healthcare integration for adults with type 2 diabetes and SMI, and healthcare professionals. I have also completed a Master's in Health Psychology.

My research interests include health inequalities, health and social care integration, mental health and diabetes.I have worked mental health services gaining experience in diverse assistant psychologist roles supporting individuals with learning disabilities and complex mental health conditions.

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MENTAL HEALTH RESEARCH
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NATALIE WEIR

I am a Lecturer at the Strathclyde Institute of Pharmacy and Biomedical Sciences (University of Strathclyde) and work one day a week as a community pharmacist in Glasgow. I was recently funded by PRUK/CMHP to develop a community pharmacy service to support people with depression. This sparked my interest in teaching and research on how the pharmacy profession can support the most vulnerable in society, from reducing stigma and discrimination towards people with substance dependency and mental ill health to delivering services which address unmet need. I am a mixed methods researcher with a particular interest in Implementation Science.

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HANNAH WHITE

Dr Hannah White is a Senior Lecturer in Psychology at Loughborough University. Hannah's research interests are disordered eating and mental health among young people, with a particular focus on eating-related contexts and interactions. She is a mixed-methods researcher with experience of conducting eating-focused research with adolescents, young adults and parents within both community and clinical groups. Her research explores mental health in relation to different eating experiences for young people (e.g., family mealtimes, eating at school), and interactions related to eating, body shape and weight, and physical activity.

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MENTAL HEALTH RESEARCH

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REBECCA WHITE

Hi, my name is Beccy and I currently work as a teaching-focused Lecturer on the BSc Psychology at The University of Manchester. My research interests are qualitative methods and romantic relationships in the context of mental health. My PhD was titled 'Exploring romantic relationships in the context of psychosis: a mixed methods approach', and was completed in 2021.

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MENTAL
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DEVELOP YOUR CAREER • CHANGE LIVES

ALICE WICKERSHAM

I am the Academic Lead of the CAMHS Digital Lab, a collaboration between South London and Maudsley NHS Foundation Trust and King's College London. I lead on developing and implementing the Lab's academic strategy. I am also a Lecturer at University College London, leading a module on Current Research in Children and Young People's Mental Health for the Division of Psychiatry's MSc in Clinical Mental Health Sciences. My research uses epidemiological methods applied to regional and national linked administrative data to understand issues affecting children, adolescents, and young people. My work is cross-disciplinary, spanning mental health, education, social care, and criminal justice.

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JESSICA WILKINS

Jessica is a PhD student in the Centre for Eating and Weight Disorders (CREW) at the Institute of Psychiatry, Psychology and Neuroscience at King's College London. She is an HCPC registered Counselling Psychologist and has worked in both the private and public sector and has specialised in eating disorders since 2016. Jessica's research focuses on understanding help-seeking experiences among traditionally underserved groups in eating disorder research.

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MENTAL
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DEVELOP YOUR CAREER • CHANGE LIVES

KATH WILKINSON

Kath is an early-career researcher specialising in the intersection of mental health and early parenting support, with a strong focus on families experiencing socio-economic disadvantage and complex challenges. She has particular expertise in the mental health of parent carers and experience working directly with children and young people with mental health difficulties, parent survivors of domestic abuse, care professionals, and those delivering family services.

She is about to begin an NIHR Doctoral Fellowship investigating how parenting programmes can be designed and delivered to better support parents facing disadvantage and experiencing poor mental health, using realist and grounded theory emergent-fit methodologies. Her research will explore the factors that influence access, engagement, and outcomes for parents, with a focus on tailoring and implementing community-based, integrated models of parenting support.

Kath is also part of the team delivering the Support for Parent Carers in England (SPaCE) project, now in its third funding cycle, which examines the prevalence and treatment of mental health conditions in parent carers, and the impact of wider service systems on their wellbeing. This work includes an impact-focused programme to share findings in accessible ways and drive changes in practice.

Her goal is to develop an equity-focused mental health research programme that strengthens early intervention, embeds lived experience, and reduces intergenerational inequalities. Through GROW, she hopes to expand her collaborative networks, strengthen her leadership skills, and secure funding for future cross-sector, policy-relevant research that transforms support for families.

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MENTAL HEALTH RESEARCH

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ALEX WILSON

I am a clinical psychologist and research fellow based in the North East at Newcastle Upon Tyne Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust. Clinically, I work in a physical healthcare setting with children and adults with neurological conditions. I have a particular interest in neurodiversity and learning disabilities. In terms of research background, I am interested in adapting our clinical assessments, interventions and service provision for neurodivergent individuals and those with learning disabilities. I am currently delivering a research project across my trust to understand current implementation of reasonable adjustments and the facilitators and barriers to this. I am starting an NIHR ACAF Fellowship in January 2026 focused on adapting assessment of trauma and PTSD symptoms for autistic adults.
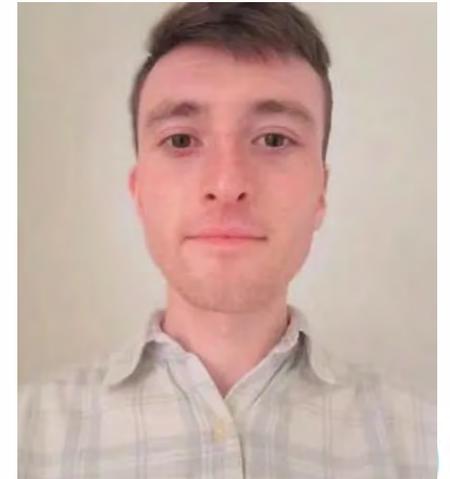
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JEANNE WOLSTENCROFT

Jeanne Wolstencroft's research interests are focused on understanding the impact of co-occurring mental health difficulties in children and young people (CYP) with neurodevelopmental disorders and/or rare genetic disorders, and digital approaches to psycho-social intervention for these CYP and their families.

Jeanne's PhD piloted the online delivery of a social skills training programme for girls with a rare genetic disorder called Turner Syndrome. She is currently investigating changes in the mental health and behaviour of children with rare genetic disorders, as part of the IMAGINE-ID programme of research.

Jeanne is a co-investigator on the Children's Autism Technology Assisted Assessments (CHATA) project which aims to digitise autism assessment procedures for families from diverse ethnic backgrounds and the Digital Family Support (DiFS) study which aims to see if an online family support programme (Stepping Stones Triple P [SSTP] Online) can improve behaviour and emotional problems in children with learning disabilities.

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JUSTIN YANG

Justin is an epidemiologist and data scientist based in the Division of Psychiatry at University College London. He specialises in the analysis of routinely collected and administrative data using epidemiological, causal inference, and geospatial approaches to understand the care and outcomes of people living with long-term mental health conditions across the life course. He is interested in applying health and social care data to ameliorate disparities, care, and outcomes for people living with conditions such as severe mental illness, substance use disorders, and neurodevelopmental problems. Justin's current fellowship examines linked health and education data to better understand the educational and health risk factors associated with adverse outcomes among pupils with neurodivergent special educational needs. He serves as an associate editor for Addiction, on the editorial board for Substance Use: Research and Treatment, and on the steering committee data subgroup for the Addiction Healthcare Goals.

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MENTAL HEALTH RESEARCH

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