

RESEARCH

@worc



Spring/Summer 2026

Cover Image: Prof. Alan Dixon



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Editor, copywriter and designer

With thanks to Communication & Participation, and colleagues from across the University for their contributions.

WELCOME



Prof. John-Paul Wilson
Pro Vice Chancellor Research

I am pleased to welcome you to this latest edition of *Research@Work* which again showcases the diversity of our research and knowledge exchange. Our cover story focuses on an international and interdisciplinary project investigating climate change adaptation in Africa's Victoria Basin. We then shine a spotlight on our Molecular Plant and Microbial Biosciences Research Unit whose programme of work has focused on the science of plant-pathogen interactions and now increasingly is looking at how findings from this research can inform crop protection strategies in the field nationally and internationally. We are pleased to report on a number of important projects that have just started or are about to start focused broadly on health inequalities, each designed to develop real world solutions to wicked problems in the health and care system: whether that is access to mental health services or the adverse experiences of people with both dementia and hearing loss in care settings. Elsewhere we note the publication of a number of exciting new books by our researchers exploring wide-ranging topics from African Wetlands to rights and justice in the UK legal system to the writings of Hilary Mantel.

This edition also highlights how our researchers are seeking to develop the impact of their research in wider society. An important mechanism for this is providing evidence for Parliamentary Select Committees and other government groups examining significant socio-economic issues. We feature here stories about how researchers in law, business and management studies, and health and social care have contributed research evidence that has then been utilised in final reports from these committees and groups. This is an excellent example of how our researchers are making a difference in the real world.

3 Welcome

4 Research and Knowledge Exchange News

10 Doctoral School

Main Stories

19 A closer look at a number of the current projects being undertaken at the university.

Spotlight

25 Research Centres, Groups and Units, Postgraduate Research Students, Research Staff

Recent Publications

35 Publication highlights from the last 6 months.

Communicating our Research

48 Some of the recent public and community engagement highlights.

IN BRIEF

LAUNCH OF MENTAL HEALTH RESEARCH PROGRAMME

The University held a launch event in January 2026 for its important new research programme, *Tackling Health Inequalities and Unmet Rural Mental Health Needs in Vulnerable Communities across Herefordshire and Worcestershire* (THRIVE), funded by the National Institute of Health research. The event brought together University and NHS colleagues alongside other key stakeholders and research users to explore how we can work together to improve mental health support across the region. Serious mental illnesses such as schizophrenia, bipolar disorder, and major depression can make everyday life extremely challenging, and rates are rising, particularly in rural regions experiencing high levels of poverty.

In these communities, mental health needs often go unmet due to stigma, social isolation, and limited access to services. People often face long journeys to reach support and may struggle to use digital alternatives.

The programme will concentrate on early intervention, suicide prevention, and digital innovation to improve the delivery of mental health services.

There'll also be interlinked initiatives to build research capacity in the region, increase involvement in mental health research and develop opportunities for people with lived experiences to be more involved in the development and delivery of research projects.

At a packed launch event in the newly opened

Duke's Building at the University of Worcester's Severn Campus, attendees, representing a range of local NHS and social care, mental health services, voluntary sector groups and charities, mental health researchers and people with lived experience, heard from the University's Vice Chancellor, leading experts in mental health, and the newly appointed team who'll be carrying the work forward.

Elizabeth Hughes, Professor of Mental Health Inequalities and Lead for the Rural Mental Health Research Unit, said: "I was simply blown away by the energy and enthusiasm at the launch for this programme of work."

She added: "I am delighted to be appointed to lead this work, and be part of something that has potential to make a real difference to the lives of people who live in rural and remote areas."

Professor Eleanor Bradley, Director of Research and Knowledge Exchange at the University of Worcester and Principal Investigator on the THRIVE programme, said: "It was fantastic to see so many of our regional stakeholders at this launch."

She added: "The development of this important programme has only been possible through these collaborative relationships. We value our close working relationships between the University and our local communities, and the THRIVE programme is a great example of how these relationships can inform and strengthen our research."



L-R: Prof. John-Paul Wilson,
Prof. David Green,
Prof. Elizabeth Hughes,
Prof. Eleanor Bradley,
Prof. Mathew Broome (UoB),
Dr Maria Michail (UoB),
Dr Molly Miley

DOCTORAL GRADUATE LEADS NATIONAL PROJECT ON ACCESSIBILITY OF LANGUAGE

Dr Anastasia Kennett, a recent Worcester PhD graduate, Associate Lecturer in the Institute of Education, and a member of QAA's Student Strategic Advisory Committee (SSAC), led a UK-wide student-partnered project on the Accessibility of Language in higher education.

Working as part of the SSAC, Dr Kennett led student feedback collection and analysis that contributed to QAA's [published report](#). The findings identify that complex terminology, jargon and acronyms in institutional communications can leave students feeling excluded or less confident. The project emphasises that inclusive higher education is not only about physical or digital accessibility, but it's also about how we communicate.

Dr Kennett, who also serves on the University's Inclusion by Design Research Group, added: "This work reinforced my belief that language lies at the heart of educational quality, belonging and policy effectiveness. This work encourages universities to rethink how they write and communicate, ensuring that language acts as a bridge rather than a barrier to inclusion. This helps all students engage confidently, feel valued, and fully participate in university life."

PROFESSOR'S PAPER CITED IN GOVERNMENT PUBLICATION

A paper authored by a Worcester academic has been cited in a new Government publication setting out how services should work together to support people with both mental health and substance use needs.

The Department of Health and Social Care and NHS England has published the [Co-occurring Mental Health and Substance Use Delivery Framework](#) targets improved access and integrated, patient-centred care instead of siloed, sequential approaches.

It cites a [paper co-authored by Professor Elizabeth Hughes](#), which looks at achieving integrated treatment for individuals with substance use and poor mental health.

RESEARCH GROUP'S EVIDENCE USED IN HOUSE OF LORDS REPORT

The University of Worcester's Constitutions, Rights and Justice Research Group submitted [evidence](#) in 2025 to the House of Lords Constitution Committee's inquiry into the rule of law.

The House of Lords Constitution Committee's [report](#) has now been published, titled 'The rule of law: holding the line against tyranny and anarchy'.

The Committee relied upon the evidence submitted by the University's Research Group on four occasions. There were over 100 written submissions of evidence to the inquiry.

The Research Group is an interdisciplinary group based within the Institute of Arts and Humanities. It brings together academics at the University and other institutions, legal practitioners, and active and retired judges to work together on a myriad of issues.

It seeks to foster a collaborative approach regarding how to talk about and conduct research on the nature of constitutions, different categories of rights and the importance of justice in its many forms.

TURN DOWN THE NOISE PROJECT LAUNCH

– A new project, led by Dr Mary O'Malley, Association for Dementia Studies, focused on improving support for people living with dementia and hearing loss in care settings, got under way in April 2026. Funded by the National Institute of Health Research, Turn Down the Noise, will explore how noise levels, poorly supported hearing aid use, and a lack of staff training in this area, combine to make communication extremely difficult for those living with deafness and dementia and have negative consequences for their wellbeing. The project will seek to develop interventions and training which can improve outcomes and experience and better equip care settings to support residents.

NIHR | National Institute for Health and Care Research

20 YEARS OF PIONEERING EDUCATION AND ADVOCACY TO END DOMESTIC ABUSE AND SEXUAL VIOLENCE

The University of Worcester has marked two decades of groundbreaking work in tackling domestic abuse and sexual violence through education, research, and advocacy.

Jess Phillips MP, Safeguarding Minister, sent a video message to be played at the event thanking those working to tackle violence against women and girls.

The milestone event brought together alumni of the University's pioneering Master's programme, Understanding Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence, alongside professionals and partners working across the sector.



Launched in 2005, Worcester was the first UK university to offer a practice and research informed postgraduate qualification dedicated to this critical area. Over the past 20 years, the programme has empowered more than 500 graduates to lead change in policing, social work, healthcare, education, and the voluntary sector, shaping policy, transforming practice, and improving outcomes for survivors.

Dr Claire McLoone-Richards, co-Course Leader for the MA, said: *"We were delighted to have a video message from Jess Phillips to mark this important occasion and to celebrate the achievements of our alumni and partners over the past 20 years. This anniversary is a reminder of how far we've come, but also of the urgent need to continue this work. Domestic abuse and sexual violence remain pressing issues, and our commitment to education, research, and collaboration is as strong as ever."*

ACADEMIC WELCOMES PARLIAMENTARY DEBATE

An academic who established a national group committed to raising awareness about animal abuse and its links to human offences has welcomed a Parliamentary debate on the issue.

The Animal Related Crime Working Group (ARCWG), supported by the Chartered Society of Forensic Sciences (CSFS), is a multi-agency effort founded by Dr Samantha Pickles, a Senior Lecturer in Forensic Science at the University.

ARCWG tabled an amendment to the Crime and Policing Bill, seeking to strengthen definitions and punishments regarding animal sexual abuse, across three pieces of legislation. The amendment is due to be debated in the House of Lords this week.

Samantha said: *"We're delighted with the support and progression through Parliament so far. Whilst these topics are sensitive to discuss; they are sadly more commonplace than many realise. By aiming to close several legal loopholes, not only will such offences be taken more seriously, the changes can protect both animals and people – which is the wider goal of our work."*

LECTURER'S PERFORMANCE TO GET CZECH PREMIER

A performance directed by Theatre, Acting & Performance lecturer, Dr Daniel Somerville, has featured on a Czech national TV arts programme.

Iconic Program, from the Beautiful Confusion Collective and starring Thalie Award winner Becka McFadden, had its premier at Industra in Brno on November 27 and had its Prague premier at Venuše ve Švehlovce. The performance was directed by Daniel who also designed the lighting and offered dramaturgy throughout the creative process.

REPORT INTO THE REPRESENTATION OF WOMEN IN THE NEWS

A report co-led by Dr Barbara Mitra, Principal Lecturer in Media & Film Studies, and Dr Victoria Cann from the University of East Anglia, as part of the Global Media Monitoring Project, has highlighted that women remain significantly underrepresented in UK news media.

The study, which analysed 570 news stories, more than 2,000 sources, and 708 reporters across the UK, found that women make up just 36% of all sources and subjects, an increase of only seven percent since 2020.

The findings reveal that coverage of gender-based violence remains minimal, and women are still most often quoted in ordinary roles, such as eyewitnesses or providers of popular opinion, rather than as experts or authority figures. In sports news, women accounted for just 6% of coverage across print, radio and television.

The report urges media organisations to adopt gender-sensitive editorial policies and for digital platforms to promote serious stories featuring women beyond celebrity and entertainment. It also calls for targeted regional strategies across the UK, alongside training and awareness programmes for journalists, and asks the government develop policies to hold media organisations accountable on gender equality. The report is available to view [online](#).

BOOK CURATED BY RESEARCHER EXHIBITED AT UN

A groundbreaking book, which brings together a collection of postcards highlighting environmental threats to our oceans, has gone on display in the Headquarters of the United Nations in New York.

Sea Change was created by Tobias Hickey, Senior Lecturer and Course Leader for Illustration at the University of Worcester and was selected for the exhibition 'Turning the Page on Change – Children's Books Inspiring Action for the Global Goals', which ran until 13th March.

Mr Hickey invited illustrators worldwide to submit illustrated postcards featuring an illustration on one side and a message on the other. The call attracted 450 entries, leading to the *Sea Change* exhibition in 2022, which has since toured internationally. Fifty of the postcards were later selected for the book, published in 2023.

"It's exciting to think that the book itself is in front of policymakers at the United Nations; people who are actually global leaders working on ocean literacy, working towards climate change solutions".

EDITORIAL APPOINTMENT FOR DR LUCY ARNOLD

Dr Lucy Arnold, Course Leader for English Literature, has been appointed as co-editor of *The Year's Work in Critical and Cultural Theory*, a journal published by Oxford University Press on behalf of the English Association.

RESEARCHER CONTRIBUTION TO THE BUSINESS AND TRADE COMMITTEE'S INQUIRY PRIORITIES

Dr Sajad Rezaei, Senior Lecturer in Digital Marketing at Worcester Business School, has contributed written evidence to the UK Parliament as part of the Business and Trade Committee's Inquiry Priorities for 2026.

His evidence is cited in the Committee's report, Seven Priorities for UK Economic Revival, where it informs the discussion of the first priority for the UK economy (page 6). This recognition demonstrates the wider relevance of academic research in shaping national debate and contributing to evidence-informed policymaking.

Dr Rezaei's submission also draws attention to important regional challenges, including workforce digital skills gaps and limited training resources in Worcestershire. These issues are central to strengthening productivity, supporting business competitiveness, and enabling inclusive economic growth across regions.

FUNDING HIGHLIGHTS

PREVENTING MENTAL HEALTH ISSUES IN ETHNICALLY DIVERSE YOUTH: A FEASIBILITY PILOT STUDY (PRIMA)

NIHR

Principal Investigator: Prof. Helena Tuomainen

Research Group/Unit: Mental Health Inequalities Research Unit

Value: £413,282

PRIMA is a new programme designed to support the mental wellbeing of young people aged 11-14 years and their parents or carers living in ethnically diverse communities. It consists of afterschool workshops for both young people and parents or carers. PRIMA aims to strengthen family and peer relationships, reduce stigma, improve knowledge about mental health and wellbeing and help families cope with difficulties before problems become more serious. PRIMA has been designed together with 61 community members including young people, parents, school staff and community organisations to make sure it is relevant, respectful and accessible to families from diverse backgrounds. This 24-month study will evaluate whether PRIMA can be delivered successfully in six secondary schools across three areas: Tower Hamlets, Birmingham East and Manchester. These areas were chosen because they serve communities with high levels of diversity and disadvantage and where families often face barriers to mental health support.

RAISING AWARENESS AND TRUST OF IN RESEARCH IN UNDERSERVED COMMUNITIES

NIHR

Principal Investigator: Dr Cate Rose

Research Group/Unit: Health Inequalities and Social Inclusion Research Group

Value: £67,564

The University of Worcester has secured funding from the West Midlands NIHR Regional Research Delivery Network to explore how churches support communities who are currently under-represented in health research, focusing on Gypsy, Romani and Traveller communities and those located in CORE20 areas — among the most deprived areas in England according to the Government's Indices of Multiple Deprivation. These groups experience poorer health outcomes and face multiple barriers to accessing healthcare services and participating in health research.

The project team comprises Dr Catharine Rose, Jen Bray and Dr Peter Unwin from the University of Worcester's Health Inequalities and Social Inclusion Research Group. The project aims to improve understanding of the role faith groups play in promoting community health and wellbeing, while building stronger partnerships between the University and NHS researchers. It will also create opportunities for people in Herefordshire and Worcestershire who experience health inequalities to learn about and take part in health research.

A key aim of the project is to foster meaningful dialogue between health researchers and faith communities, helping to build trust, raise awareness of research opportunities and strengthen long-term relationships. Ultimately, the project will develop a co-designed strategic and operational framework to support sustained collaboration and more inclusive approaches to health research, contributing to improved health outcomes across local communities.



Hope Church, Worcester

INCREASING RESEARCH CAPACITY IN RURAL COMMUNITIES

NIHR

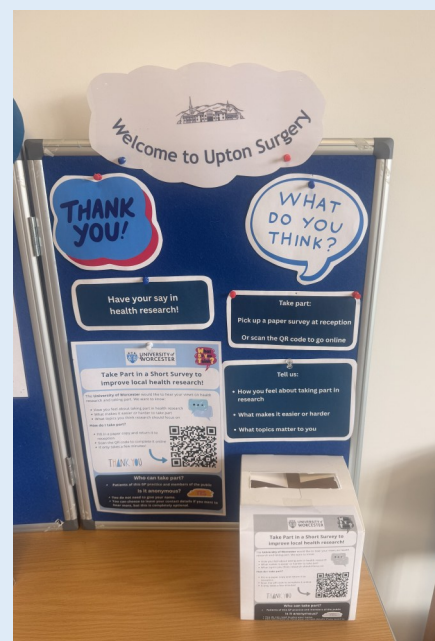
Principal Investigator: Prof. Eleanor Bradley

Research Group/Unit: Health Inequalities and Social Inclusion Research Group

Value: £64,540

The University of Worcester (Evaluation Hub) is leading an NIHR West Midlands RRDN funded project to develop a Rural Primary Care Research Hub across Herefordshire and Worcestershire. The project aims to reduce inequalities in research participation and engagement by improving opportunities for people living in rural and underserved communities to engage with health research. Working in collaboration with three GP practices, the project is exploring how research can become more accessible, relevant and embedded within rural communities and primary care.

To understand current experiences of research participation, and any barriers and facilitators that exist, the team have conducted surveys with patients, interviews with GP practice staff and will facilitate discussion groups with patients, practice staff and healthcare trainees. Findings will inform the co-design of a Rural Primary Care Research Hub, which will bring together practical resources, guidance and collaborative approaches to increase research awareness, involvement and participation in rural primary care settings. The new hub approach will then be piloted in the region to evaluate the role it can play in building research capacity and activity.



COMMUNITY BASED PEER SUPPORT FOR PEOPLE LIVING WITH DEMENTIA AND THEIR CARE PARTNERS: NORTHERN IRELAND'S FIRST MEETING CENTRE

EMPOWER Dementia Network, ESRC

Principal Investigator: Dr Shirley Evans

Research Group/Unit: Association for Dementia Studies

Value: £16,442

This project is about establishing the first Meeting Centre for people living with dementia and care partners in Northern Ireland as a six-month pilot at Green Island Golf Club near Belfast. There are already over 75 Meeting Centres across England, Scotland and Wales. This initiative has evolved from an international research project, MEETINGDEM (2014 -2017), with which the Association for Dementia Studies was a partner.

Through co-production with people with dementia, care partners, and other stakeholders, the project will develop a model that can be scaled nationally to fill a major gap in community support services across the region. The Meeting Centre is scheduled to open in September 2026. Preparatory work has been focused on recruitment of participants and the setting up of a Planning Group with the aim of it consisting of a third people living with dementia, a third care partners and a third other stakeholders. The project is funded by the EMPOWER Dementia Network+ which has funded seven projects through its Small Research Projects Fund. It is supported by UKRI, Economic and Social Research Council, National Institute for Health and Care Research and the Alzheimer's Society.

The project meets the priority areas of the funders by:-

- Raising public awareness and addressing stigma and social exclusion
- Supporting families, friends, and unpaid carers
- Building a compassionate, skilled and supported workforce



DOCTORAL SCHOOL

Name: Sonja Bruning-Mescher

Conference: Towards New Food Systems, Berlin, Germany

Date: 28-30 October 2025

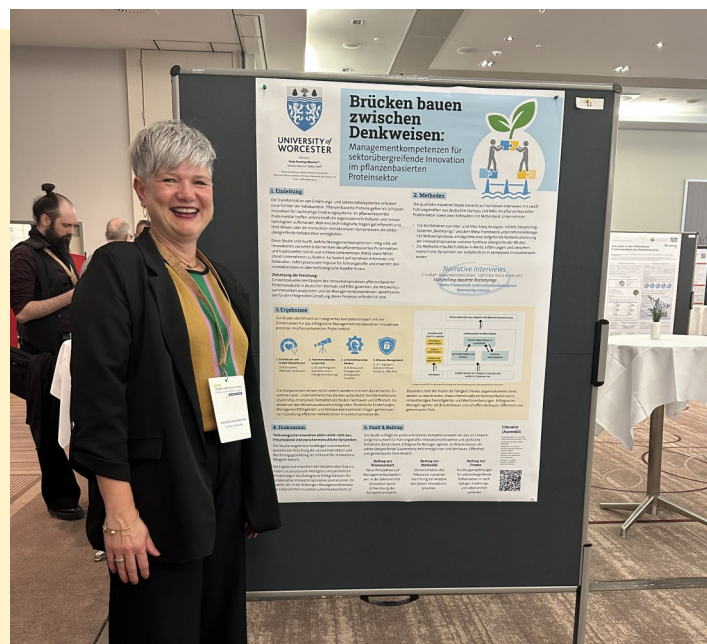
I presented a key part of my DBA study's findings in the form of a poster presentation. The title of the poster was: 'Bridging organisational mindsets: Management Capabilities for Collaborative Innovation in Germany's Plant-Based Protein Food Sector'.

As part of my DBA research, I investigated which management capabilities are necessary to successfully shape cross-sector innovation processes in the plant-based protein food sector. While technological aspects have been well researched, there is a lack of knowledge about the management capabilities required to lead collaborative innovation processes.

Drawing on narrative interviews with managers from start-ups and SMEs in the plant-based protein food sector, I developed a framework of management capabilities for leading collaborative innovation processes efficiently, with a focus on sustainability and health. My poster outlines the study design, emphasising the narrative inquiry and presenting the findings in the form of the developed framework, and explaining their contribution to theory and practice.

Main takeaways for my study: Allowing new perspectives, overcoming mental barriers and seizing the right momentum are crucial.

Transforming our food system requires more than technological innovation. It requires social,



economic and political participation, as well as the courage to change our mindsets. Transformation can only succeed with innovation that allows for new perspectives and harnesses the power of "creative destruction". Professor Tim Benton emphasised how important it is to overcome mental barriers, because change begins in the mind. Transforming mindsets also helps to identify "windows of opportunity" and use them strategically to drive innovation and transformation, as Prof. Dr Achim Spiller pointed out.

The conference was a fruitful experience to present and discuss my own research but also to learn from other researchers and inspire each other. Moreover I met one of my referenced key authors and had an overall good experience to enhance the network in my academic field.

DOCTORAL STUDENT HONORED WITH PRESTIGIOUS AWARD

Hilda Agyepong, Associate Lecturer and Doctoral Student from the School of Health and Wellbeing, has won the Exceptional Leadership Award in the Social Care and Health category at Warwickshire Council's STAR Awards.

Alongside her studies looking further into the wellbeing and autonomy of older adults in social work, Hilda serves as a Team Manager for older people's services in Warwickshire. She was praised for her passion for social work education and commitment to developing future practitioners.

Judges commended her outstanding dedication, energy, and integrity, highlighting her unwavering commitment to both her professional role and her contributions to higher education.

Graduation

March 2026



L-R: Dr Scott Andrews, Dr Vessela Warren, Dr Bernadette Gaughan, Dr Thomas Butsch, Prof. Robin Bell, Prof. Lynn Nichol, Nichola Armstrong

Congratulations to our recent graduates!

Elise Barron *MRes* | Dr Joe Bryant *PhD* | Dr Thomas Butsch *DBA* | Jack Flinders *MRes*
Dr Bernadette Gaughan *PhD* | Emily Hopkins *MRes* | Ryan Jones *MRes* | Dr Anastasia Kennett *PhD* | Arden Masters *MRes* | Holly Mead *MRes* | Cordelia Nwancha *MPhil* | Jane Owen *MPhil* | Dr Mary-Ann Preece *PhD* | Dr Joseph Rix *PhD* | Dr Rafael Rutkowski *DBA* | Dr Claudia Andrea Tapia Arenas *PhD*



Dr Anastasia Kennett PhD

A Heuristic Inquiry exploring the experience of Inclusive Student Voice for students with diverse learning needs in Higher Education

Supervisory Team: Dr Sean Bracken (DOS), and Dr Rachael Paige

"I would like to extend my gratitude to everyone who has been a part of my journey, but especially to all the co-researchers who were brave enough to share their experiences with me."

My research aimed to explore the experiences of Inclusive Student Voice for diverse students attending higher education. A further aim was to collaborate with diverse students to conceptualise an Inclusive Student Voice approach that will provide equity of voice for all students attending higher education.

The findings highlighted the need for a trauma-informed safe space to regulate emotions, the need to remove judgement through implementing trauma-informed practice, to increase understanding and representation to enable authentic interaction, to remove fear by humanising those in positions of power, and finally the need for choice and autonomy. The findings also revealed that Inclusive Student Voice is a relational endeavour whereby safety is obtained through trauma-informed practice. Authenticity in student voice is obtained through staff role modelling authentic interaction and through students healing their own childhood trauma. Inclusive Student Voice can then be facilitated through carefully scaffolding choice and autonomy as the student heals. Finally, the findings revealed that Inclusive Student Voice required a universally designed approach to enable the whole university to better support diverse students in utilising their student voice.

As a diverse student myself, I am deeply proud of how I have overcome the many challenges that can be experienced during the PhD, not only from my own personal needs but also in reference to balancing highly intensive study, work and family life. There were many times where I wanted to give up but I was inspired to continue each time I remembered my educational journey being determined by my silence. I often reminding myself that not only was I finding the voice I lost all those

years ago, but I was also attempting to seek out an Inclusive Student Voice approach that would go on to support other diverse students.

Honestly, I still cannot believe I am graduating. Diverse students like me often doubt our own success; we are frequently torn down by the belief that we are 'wrong'. Therefore, although I am incredibly proud to be graduating, I am also deeply aware of those who struggle to make it. This PhD was a profoundly personal journey of self-discovery that will inspire others to find their voice after years of silence.

I have always enjoyed my time at the University of Worcester. The university has consistently encouraged me to take on additional roles and projects, including undertaking research projects as a student partner, planning and presenting at conferences, collaborating with our Indonesian partners to develop inclusive modules in higher education, writing for publication, working with the academic librarians as part of their student librarian team, becoming a member of the Inclusion by Design Research group, and finally being appointed by the Quality Assurance Agency to sit on the Student Strategic Advisory Committee. Although this list is extensive, I have also engaged with many more projects and roles, and I am grateful to the university staff for encouraging me to apply for these opportunities.

I would like to extend my gratitude to everyone who has been a part of my journey, but especially to all the co-researchers who were brave enough to share their experiences with me. Thank you for trusting me and for showing me that I was not alone. Your courage gave me courage, your strength gave me strength, and through your voices, other diverse students will find their own strength and courage to use their voices too.

What are you doing now? I am currently working as an Associate Lecturer at the University of Worcester in the Institute of Education and Inclusion.



Dr Andrea Tapia Arena PhD

Evaluating Remote Sensing Technology to Assess Bumblebee Habitat Quality in Open Semi-Natural Grasslands

Supervisory Team: Dr Kate Ashbrook (DOS), and Dr Fleur Visser

"I feel fulfilled, elated, and relieved, but also a little sad, as I enjoyed the journey very much."

My PhD investigated how Uncrewed Aerial Vehicles (UAVs) can be used to assess bumblebee habitat quality in semi-natural grasslands, with the aim of supporting more efficient conservation monitoring. Using monthly UAV imagery, I developed methods to detect bumblebee key habitat traits remotely.

UAV-derived habitat metrics showed strong agreement with field data and can be used effectively to assess bumblebee habitat quality. The developed UAV-based models reliably identified lower-quality habitats, which can be used to support efficient conservation prioritisation.

It was a wild ride, and I genuinely loved it. I had several moments I am particularly proud of, including winning third place at the Research Pitches Contest organised by the Compostela Group of Universities in 2024, as well as receiving a prize in the Images of Research 2022 competition.

The journey was not without challenges. I almost lost a drone during fieldwork, the multispectral camera failed during the summer when I needed it the most, and midway through my PhD I became a single mother. Balancing research, fieldwork, and parenting was demanding, but it was also deeply formative.

What made the experience truly special were the people I met along the way. I was fortunate to share the PhD journey with incredible colleagues, especially Nathan and Eya, with whom I shared not only frustrations and losses, but also theatre, music, sports, and plenty of silliness. Their support, alongside that of others, helped me persevere and made the experience both meaningful and memorable.

I feel fulfilled, elated, and relieved, but also a little sad, as I enjoyed the journey very much.

For me, this experience came at exactly the right moment in my life, when I decided to follow my dreams and focus on what I truly wanted. The University of Worcester represented that freedom and the promise of doing something for myself. I found a community of people it was easy to connect with, which allowed this experience to become a life-changing event, not only for me but for my son as well.

I am truly grateful for all the human connections and the warmth I experienced during my PhD. From staff members such as Dominic and James, to my supervisors Richard and Fleur, who were always incredibly supportive, and especially my Director of Studies, Kate Ashbrook. I am also very thankful to the Research School (now the Doctoral School), particularly Nichola, who always ensured that everything ran as smoothly as possible.



What are you doing now?

Now I am working part time as a GIS Officer in the Bumblebee Conservation Trust.



Cordelia Chukwuemerelam Nwancha MPhil

Implementing Language Policies in Nigerian Primary Education: Challenges and Perspectives from Local Education Authorities

Supervisory Team: Dr Madeleine Findon (DOS), and Prof. Jaswinder Dhillon

“The University’s inclusive, supportive culture emphasizes student learning, diversity...accessibility, sustainability, and social responsibility, all within a welcoming academic community”

My thesis investigates the implementation of language policies in Nigerian primary education, focusing on Local Education Authorities’ (LEAs) roles, challenges, and perspectives in enacting the National Policy on Education (NPE) and National Language Policy (NLP). Using qualitative methods—semi-structured interviews with nine LEA staff and systematic policy document analysis—it identifies key themes around policy goals, language use, support systems, stakeholder roles, resource allocation, awareness, training, and government priorities. The study finds LEAs as critical intermediaries translating national policies into local practice but facing persistent barriers including funding shortages, infrastructural deficits, inadequate teacher recruitment and training, political interference, and parental preference for English instruction. It proposes the Multidimensional Language Policy Implementation (MLPI) Model, highlighting LEAs’ meso-level agency bridging policy and practice. Recommendations emphasize anti-corruption measures, flexible context-sensitive guidelines, enhanced teacher development integrating mother tongue pedagogy and technology, and governance mechanisms to safeguard policy continuity, informed by comparative insights from countries like China.

Findings reveal that LEAs act as critical intermediaries translating national policies into local practice via capacity-building, community engagement, and policy dissemination. However, persistent challenges such as funding shortages, infrastructural deficits, inadequate teacher recruitment and training, political interference, and misalignment between national objectives and parental preferences for English instruction hinder effective implementation. The research

underscores the need for robust multi-tiered support systems, transparent resource management, sustainable funding, and comprehensive stakeholder engagement to align community expectations with policy goals.

The study contributes the Multidimensional Language Policy Implementation (MLPI) Model, which integrates critical language policy and sociolinguistic perspectives across micro, meso, and macro levels, emphasizing LEAs’ meso-level agency as pivotal in bridging policy and practice. Recommendations include enhancing anti-corruption measures, developing flexible, context-sensitive implementation guidelines, prioritizing teacher professional development integrating mother tongue pedagogy and technology, and establishing governance mechanisms to protect policy continuity. Comparative insights from countries like China inform potential strategies for improving Nigeria’s multilingual education system.

Within the School of Education, the culture’s collaborative, student-centered, and innovative nature has supported my professional growth through reflective practice, research-informed teaching, and integration of theory and practice. More broadly, the University’s inclusive, supportive culture emphasizes student learning, diversity, community involvement, faculty-student collaboration, innovation, accessibility, sustainability, and social responsibility, all within a welcoming academic community.

To me, graduating represents a major milestone that signifies the culmination of hard work and personal development. It reflects both a sense of accomplishment and a preparedness to move forward in my professional and academic pursuits.

What are you doing now? Currently, I am employed in social care roles supporting neurodiverse and elderly residents, which enriches my understanding of diverse learning and support needs, complementing my academic expertise.



Dr Thomas Butsch DBA

Transformation of German Owner Led Small and Medium Entities into Self-Managed Organizations

Supervisory Team: Prof. Robin Bell (DOS), and Dr Vessela Warren

"On the one hand, it feels great to have completed the journey; on the other hand, there is also a sense of sadness that it has come to an end."

I researched how Owner Led Small and medium Companies transitioned from a hierarchical organization into a self-managed organisation. For that I interviewed owners of such companies and asked for the reason for a transformation, their journey, and if they should have done something different. Results of the study can be used by other businesses as best practice for their transformation.

The study was the first of its kind in this business segment and produced many findings, like that the transformation process was mainly initialised by owners because of their personal philosophy. Also it that SME leaders acknowledge that not all employees are suited to the requirements of self management organisations and that some owners always keep a command and control layer open beside the self-managed structure.

One major challenge for me was that, prior to the DBA journey, I did not particularly enjoy reading. This changed over time, and today I always have another book ready in case I finish the one I am currently reading. I have also published four peer-reviewed articles, with more to come. Throughout the process, I had my family's full support and never felt excessive pressure, even while running a company with 100 employees at the same time.

On the one hand, it feels great to have

completed the journey; on the other hand, there is also a sense of sadness that it has come to an end. It was a demanding period with many responsibilities that are now suddenly gone, which feels a little like retirement. Overall, I am very proud of what I have achieved.

I received excellent support from my supervisors, Robin Bell and Vessela Warren. As a distance student, I primarily used Blackboard and SharePoint, which proved to be a great help throughout the programme.



L-R: Dr Vessela Warren, Dr Thomas Butsch, and Prof. Robin Bell

What are you doing now?

Besides my work as the owner and CEO of a company, I am currently working on new journal articles and a conference submission. I am also planning a book based on my research topic.



Dr Rafael Rutkowski DBA

An Exploration of Halal Requirements and the Response to Them in the German Chemical-Pharmaceutical Manufacturing Sector

Supervisory Team: Dr Abdulmaten Taroun (DOS), and Dr Edward Ochieng

"It takes a while to truly grasp what this milestone represents. Alongside pride and gratitude, I mainly feel a sense of humility and quiet joy at having completed this journey – and not having walked it alone."

This dissertation examines the requirements and strategic implications of halal certification for the German chemical-pharmaceutical industry in the context of increasing regulatory complexity, global competitive dynamics, and growing demand for transparency and cultural sensitivity. The halal market is experiencing above-average global growth and is gaining increasing strategic importance for export-oriented industries.

Based on an international comparison of leading halal certification systems, the study analyses religious, regulatory, operational, and strategic frameworks within the industrial context. The aim was to systematically structure these diverse requirements and translate them into a practice-oriented implementation concept for companies.

The findings show that halal certification in the chemical-pharmaceutical industry goes far beyond a purely technical compliance requirement. Rather, it represents a multidimensional governance challenge that interlinks religious norms, state regulation, and industrial practice. The study reveals significant international differences in requirements, as well as a structural gap between strategic intent and operational implementation within companies. Key barriers include limited intercultural competence, unclear responsibilities, fragmented certification approaches, and the tendency to reduce halal to an administrative burden.

At the same time, considerable strategic potential becomes evident—particularly in terms of market access, ethical differentiation, and trust-building. As a practice-oriented outcome, a structured five-step implementation guideline and a systematic halal checklist were developed to enable transparent and integrable implementation of the requirements.

A particularly formative experience for me was realising how practice-oriented a DBA is. The intensive engagement with real industrial

challenges and the development of concrete, applicable tools demonstrated how research can be directly translated into business practice.

Over time, it became clear to me that this dissertation is more than a purely academic contribution: it has the potential to build bridges between different religious, economic, and regulatory systems. It was especially fascinating to observe that halal is increasingly perceived not only by Muslim consumers, but also by non-Muslims as a marker of quality and trust. It is precisely this complexity that makes the topic so fascinating.

At the same time, I am reflecting on the past years and gaining clarity about the next steps. I am looking ahead with openness to new perspectives and opportunities.

It takes a while to truly grasp what this milestone represents. Alongside pride and gratitude, I mainly feel a sense of humility and quiet joy at having completed this journey – and not having walked it alone.

My time at the University of Worcester was a highly positive and rewarding experience. I felt consistently well supported throughout the programme. The structured organisation and reliable supervision provided clarity and confidence at every stage of the journey. Academically, I was able to deepen my expertise and further strengthen my analytical thinking.

Completing the DBA alongside my professional career was a particular challenge and required considerable discipline and perseverance. Without the support of my family, this journey would not have been possible – this dissertation is therefore dedicated to them.

All the greater are my gratitude and pride in achieving this milestone, which will continue to shape my professional and personal path.



Dr Mary-Ann Preece

Teaching practices that support the positive emotional wellbeing of learners in post-compulsory education

Supervisory Team: Prof. Geoffrey Elliott (DOS), and Dr Alexandra Sewell

"All the staff have always been so incredible supportive which makes the difference between make or break. I will be entirely grateful to my supervisory team for all their hard work and support throughout my journey."

Learners' emotional wellbeing in post-compulsory education (PCE) is a growing concern. It is well documented that there has been a continued increase in mental health difficulties among young people in the last decade. Tutorial-based programmes have been introduced and evaluated in UK PCE environments to support learners' emotional wellbeing; however, there has been a lack of research into how learners' positive emotional wellbeing can be supported in PCE classrooms. Therefore, I explored theories of positive psychology and PERMA and their implementation within teaching practices in post-compulsory education by answering the research question 'Which teaching practices are conducive to supporting the positive emotional wellbeing of learners in post-compulsory education?'. I explored the history of post-compulsory educational policy, positive psychology and mental health interventions for children and young people and their implementation in educational environments.

I aimed to identify post-compulsory education teaching practices that could support each area of PERMA which included Positive emotions, Engagement, Relationships, Meaning and Accomplishments, and evaluate their effectiveness in supporting the learners' positive emotional wellbeing within this sector. The study took place in a sizeable post-compulsory education college across multiple sites. The research drew upon an action research framework, and data was collected through online questionnaires, participant group interviews, and classroom observations of teaching practices. I conducted the research while teaching full-time within the research environment and have therefore experienced the highs and lows of being a teacher-researcher within one's own educational environment and the ethical challenges that educational researchers experience.

Specific practices were identified that supported each area of the PERMA theory, such as greeting learners, teachers' movement around the classroom while teaching, the use of positive descriptive praise, inclusion of a range of activities and group tasks during lessons,

building on learners' interests or work experiences, and the use of practices like 'think, pair and share' method of questioning. The findings also revealed the impact different practices had on learners and how teacher's enjoyment of their own lessons also increased as a result.

Identifying a range of practices with the potential to support learners' positive emotional wellbeing in post-compulsory education has recognised the possibility of teachers, through effective delivery of their lessons, being able to improve the emotional wellbeing of learners. These teaching practices have the potential to significantly impact learners' positive experiences of post-compulsory education as their emotional wellbeing is improved. There is then the potential to improve retention, attendance, success, progression rates and build relationships with parents and carers. By identifying teaching practices conducive to supporting the learners' positive emotional wellbeing in post-compulsory education, this research could inform educational policy changes to address the mental health challenges of young people in education in the UK, teacher training programmes across the country, as well as inform knowledge within the under-researched area of the emotional wellbeing of learners in post-compulsory education.

I began my PhD in 2019 not knowing that COVID-19 was just around the corner. However the impact of the pandemic on learners' emotional wellbeing highlighted the importance of my research for the education sector. There were challenges with data collection, however these were overcome to enable the progress of the study. The process of studying while working full time as a teacher and Head of Department in a Sixth Form college and raising a family has been a huge challenge. However the fantastic support of my research supervisors Geoffrey Elliot and Allie Sewell and the support of my family has enabled me to achieve. I wrote an article about my research for the Research in Post-Compulsory Education Journal which was published [here](#). I am extremely proud of everything I have achieved on this journey.

What are you doing now? I have left my role as a teacher and Head of Dept and founded Effervescent Education enabling me to offer education consultancy and teacher CPD to support teachers in the implementation of the findings of my research, and beyond, to work towards consistently outstanding teaching which enhances not just learner achievement but also improves their emotional well-being and enjoyment of their educational journeys.



Dr Joseph Rix

'Provocative People': The *Lewis-McChord Free Press*, GI Social and Political Consciousness during the Vietnam War

Supervisory Team: Dr Wendy Toon (DOS), and Dr Paddy McNally

"I am elated to be graduating as it is something that felt so far away when I was actually writing my thesis and it now feels that my hard work has finally paid off"

My thesis analyses the historical phenomenon of anti-war servicepeople against the Vietnam War, or, as they were referred, the GI Movement. It does this through a case study of the *Lewis-McChord Free Press*, a newspaper published by servicepeople and veterans on the military bases of Fort Lewis and McChord Air Force Base, Tacoma, Washington.

This study re-conceptualises the GI Movement, arguing that it was not only an anti-war phenomenon but that it was part of a broader progressive social movement which fought against other social ills, including racism, sexism, and imperialism. A desire to oppose the Vietnam War, as well as combat these social problems, eventually led to these young men (and women also) becoming attracted to communism, and eventually tentatively supporting a second American revolution.

The most interesting aspect of my study was that, in October 2023, I flew to Seattle, Washington, to interview the GIs who published the newspaper I studied. It was fascinating to actually hear from those who pressed the typewriter keys which resulted created the *Lewis-McChord Free Press*. They

were extremely gracious hosts and wonderful people and I am very glad to have met them and recorded their stories. I am elated to be graduating as it is something that felt so far away when I was actually writing my thesis and it now feels that my hard work has finally paid off.

I have loved my four years at the University and have grown so much, not only as a historian but also as a person. It has been an extremely rewarding experience and I have met so many people that I will never forget.

L-R: Dr Wendy Toon and Dr Joseph Rix



What are you doing now?

I am currently working in the Library Services department of the University of Worcester. I would like to eventually publish my thesis, either in a monograph or several journal articles.

A REAL-TIME QUALITATIVE EVALUATION OF THE REGIONAL IMPLEMENTATION OF AMBIENT AI SCRIBES ACROSS HEREFORDSHIRE AND WORCESTERSHIRE

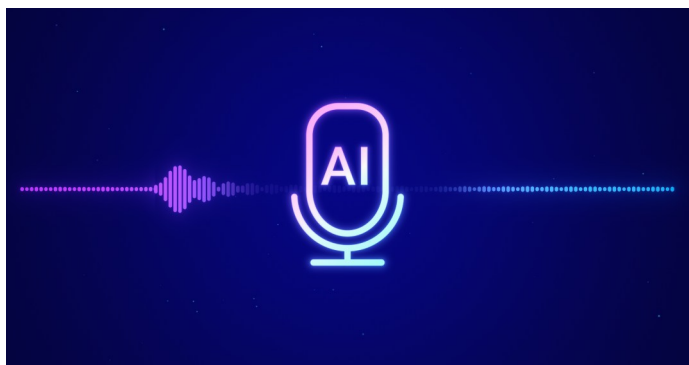
The University of Worcester (Evaluation Hub) and the University of Edinburgh have collaborated with the Herefordshire and Worcestershire Integrated Care Board (ICB), to explore the usability of Ambient Artificial Intelligence Scribes (Ambient Scribe) across a variety of NHS settings across Herefordshire and Worcestershire. The purpose of Ambient Scribe is to produce notes and summaries to accompany clinical documentation (Duggan et., 2025). The employ of Ambient Scribe could offer potential to reduce clinician fatigue and burnout created by the burden of note-taking related to patient consultations (Duggan et al., 2025).

The team conducted a qualitative evaluation across 2 pilot projects in 2025-2026, to consider the usability and acceptability of 3 Ambient Scribe tools into primary, secondary and community care settings. Interview, survey and observation data was collected from professionals before, during and after implementation of the relevant Ambient Scribe tool.

Key findings

Whilst all the Ambient Scribe tools removed some administrative tasks, such as summarising notes following a consultation and generating referrals, clinicians were required to review, edit, and format the notes produced. This took time, often perceived to equate to the time saved by the employ of the Ambient Scribe. Clinicians had entered the pilot with high hopes, expecting to save administrative time. For many, their expectations were not realised, resulting in disappointment and disengagement.

Clinicians placed great emphasis on the 'art of medical note keeping' and relayed the central role of note taking for patient consultations. For clinicians, note taking supported their critical thinking and diagnostic reasoning. By writing notes manually, clinicians felt more able to memorise details about patients they had seen and used this to build their patient relationships. By introducing Ambient Scribe tools to support their note taking, some felt that their ability to retain or recall consultation information was reduced and they were less able to mentally process details about a patient. To overcome this, clinicians spent time re-reading and adding detail to the notes generated by the Ambient Scribe tools. They used this time to record



information about non-verbal cues that may have taken place within their consultation, and which were only captured by Ambient Scribe if they were explicitly verbalised.

There were several benefits derived from the employ of the Ambient Scribe tools for consultations which required detailed notes. In these instances, Ambient Scribe served as a valued supportive tool which augmented, rather than replaced, clinicians' note taking. There was less value, however, in the employ of Ambient Scribe for routine consultations e.g coughs and colds, or for consultations which follow existing templates.

Overall, assumptions that Ambient Scribe tools would rapidly deliver time savings were not realised, and some clinicians felt they had held unrealistic initial expectations, resulting in disappointment/disinvestment. Clinical note taking was recognised to serve important cognitive and relationship functions, supporting clinicians to maintain their patient-centred approaches and enhancing their ability to provide continuity of care. Rather than eliminating work, Ambient Scribe tools re-shaped the work into reviewing, editing or validating. Where time savings were possible, clinicians suggested that these be reinvested in time spent within consultations, rather than utilised to increase consultation volumes.

As a result of our collaboration, the NHS Herefordshire and Worcestershire ICB have been shortlisted for a HSJ Digital Award 2026 in the Category: **Driving Change Through AI and Automation** titled: **Pilot and evaluation of EPR-integrated Ambient Voice Technology (AVT) across multiple care settings.**

CLIMATE ADAPTATION AND RESILIENCE STRATEGIES (CLARS): SOCIO-ECONOMIC VULNERABILITIES AMONG URBAN MIGRANTS IN THE LAKE VICTORIA BASIN AND GREAT LAKES REGION

As the global climate crisis intensifies, a prominent narrative has emerged linking increasing human mobility to climate change. Estimates vary widely, but suggest that by the end of this century between 44 million and 1.2 billion people globally could be displaced by climate change. This will have profound political, socio-economic and environmental impacts, potentially exacerbating existing development challenges including food and water insecurity, conflict, and public health concerns. However, there continue to be questions raised about the 'climate-migration nexus', since climate, or indeed environmental change, is rarely a direct driver of migration. Migration is multi-causal; people move for better livelihood opportunities, to access land or resources, to have freedom from persecution, to escape conflict, or to be closer to their families. Migration can also be permanent or temporary, internal, cross-border or cross-continent, short or long-term. Understanding and disentangling the climate-migration nexus, particularly in regions most vulnerable to climate change, is a critical first step towards: a) identifying the social-ecological 'tipping points' that may accelerate migration, and b) informing strategies for mitigation and adaptation. With funding from UKRI, the New Frontiers in

Research Fund (Canada), Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft (Germany) and the National Science Foundation (US), the 'Climate Adaptation and Resilience Strategies' (CLARS) project brings together researchers from three continents to explore these issues across two key regions: the Lake Victoria Basin in Central Africa, and the Great Lakes Region in North America. The goal of CLARS is to understand the extent to which climate change is influencing human mobility, and what the challenges are for both migrant and host communities in these areas. A central focus is exploring socio-economic vulnerabilities among different groups, and whether climate-induced migration exacerbates these vulnerabilities or, alternatively, creates opportunities for more resilient livelihoods. Through employing a range of participatory action research methods, CLARS foregrounds knowledge co-production among different stakeholder groups as a means of strengthening their own adaptation strategies and building resilience to the shocks and pressures inherent in their lived experiences of the climate-migration nexus. CLARS' engagement with governments and NGOs also ensures the policy and planning for climate migration becomes more responsive and adaptive.



While the Lake Victoria Basin has a long history of migration and human displacement linked to conflict, livelihood insecurity and environmental change, the Great Lakes Region in North America is increasingly viewed as a 'climate haven' likely to experience significant inward migration from those whose lives have been disrupted elsewhere. An overarching and novel theme of CLARS, therefore, is how climate migration experiences in the global south can inform and contribute to adaptive strategies and policy responses in the global north.

We are now halfway through CLARS' 3-year timeline, and like most multi-partner international projects there have been some challenges along the way, not least arising from the conflation of eight work packages, four funding bodies, and researchers from nine academic institutions. Nonetheless, several key activities are currently underway:

- In Tanzania, participatory fieldwork among Maasai communities has explored how climate change influences traditional cultural practices, mobility patterns, and adaptation strategies linked to pastoralist livelihoods. Initial findings suggest that climate change has disrupted seasonal migration patterns and is resulting in a greater dependence on sedentary agriculture.
- The University of Michigan have developed a user-friendly participatory GIS tool (PIVOT) that enables stakeholders to visualise potential futures for urban planning under different climate migration scenarios. Recent workshops in Tanzania, Uganda and Kenya have introduced this tool to planners and policymakers.
- The Canada team, in collaboration with the Six Nations of the Grand River, are investigating the impacts of climate change on water resources and ecological health in the region, drawing on traditional ecological knowledge to inform adaptive policy in anticipation of increased climate-related migration.
- In an analysis of climate migration policy based on over 200 legal and policy instruments from around East Africa, colleagues from the Potsdam Institute for Climate Impact Research have highlighted a lack of a provision for displaced people, and fragmented policy silos among climate adaptation, disaster preparedness, and (im)migration frameworks.

In addition to coordinating the Lake Victoria Basin elements of CLARS, our work here at the University



CLARS researchers visiting landslide-prone areas in Bududa District, Uganda

of Worcester has focussed primarily on understanding the experiences of climate migrants and host communities in different regions of Uganda – a country currently hosting over 1.2 million refugees and asylum seekers. Professor Alan Dixon, Principal Investigator on CLARS, together with colleagues from Mbarara University of Science and Technology, recently visited several areas in the country experiencing high rates of migration and displacement. One of these, Nakivale refugee settlement near the Tanzania border, has operated since 1958 and hosts over 150,000 refugees from Burundi, DRC, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Rwanda, Somalia and South Sudan. While recent UNHCR reports suggest that climate change and conflict are the key drivers of migration to this settlement, it is also becoming clear that climate variability is similarly disrupting agricultural-based livelihoods within the settlement itself, potentially prompting further onward migration.

Meanwhile, in eastern Uganda on the slopes of Mount Elgon, climate change has been linked to increasingly frequent landslides and flooding that have rendered farmland unusable and displaced thousands of people. Here, the Uganda government plans to relocate up to 100,000 people to surrounding districts over the next decade – a move that will likely have significant social and economic implications for host communities. Our research will be examining these issues, with particular attention to the barriers and facilitators that shape effective adaptation and resilience among these communities.

COPRODUCING INCLUSIVE CHANGE: EMPOWERING VOICES OF YOUNG PEOPLE WITH SEND IN WORCESTERSHIRE

L-R: Holly Plante, Dr Sean Bracken, and Jessica Rayner



A new project, commissioned by Worcestershire County Council's (WCC) Children's Services, is shining a spotlight on how young people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) experience co-production in practice. Led by Holly Plante, and supported by Jessica Rayner and Dr Seán Bracken, the study works in partnership with the *Voices United* initiative. This is Worcestershire's flagship youth-voice forum for disabled young people which is designed to strengthen participation and embed young people's perspectives across all service development.

The project builds on wider national policy reforms, including the SEND and Alternative Provision Improvement Plan (DfE, 2024) and the updated Ofsted/CQC Area SEND Inspection Framework (2025), that call on local authorities to move beyond consultation and towards meaningful, youth-led co-production. Locally, Worcestershire's SEND Strategy 2023–2026 highlights empowerment and shared decision-making as core priorities. Yet research consistently shows that young people with SEND often remain under-represented in conversations that shape their everyday lives.

This project responds directly to this gap. Working with up to 15 young people aged 12–25, the study explores how participants understand empowerment, what it feels like to have a voice in shaping decisions, and how involvement in *Voices United* may influence their confidence, identity, and future aspirations. The

design mirrors established practices within the initiative, ensuring accessibility, psychological safety, and equitable participation. Data collection includes documentary analysis, small online focus groups, and one-to-one semi-structured interviews, supported by trusted WCC Co-Production Officers who act as gatekeepers and facilitators.

A distinctive feature of the research is its commitment to genuine co-production: young people aged 16+ can opt to act as co-researchers, contributing to data interpretation and co-creating outputs such as posters, reports, or youth-friendly summaries. Reflexive Thematic Analysis will be used to develop insights, which will be shared across academic and practitioner communities as well as through formats chosen by the young researchers themselves. By amplifying lived experiences and centring the expertise of young people with SEND, the project aims to inform Worcestershire's ongoing improvement programme and offer a model for inclusive, relational, and ethically grounded co-production. Ultimately, *Coproducing Inclusive Change* seeks not only to understand empowerment—but to enact it. The team are hopeful that findings will further inform WCCs sector leading initiatives, while also showcasing how genuine co-production can be realised for young people across all settings concerned for the well-being of those who may be marginalised.

RESEARCH BACKS INNOVATIVE PRISON SCHEME TO BREAK CYCLE OF REOFFENDING



Experts from the University of Worcester have been working with men recently released from prison to evaluate the impact of an innovative rehabilitation programme centred around fitness.

Their report on the pilot scheme could help make the case for rolling the programme out to prisons across the country.

Lecturers Chris Cattell and Dr Christian Edwards, from the School of Sport & Exercise Science, have been assessing the 180 Project's Prison Programme, trialled over three years at HMP Lancaster Farms. This is the first formal evidence of its impact.

The 180 programme begins six months before release and continues into the community following resettlement. Centred on CrossFit training, it builds camaraderie and breaks down barriers among participants, creating a supportive environment for open discussions around behaviour, mental health and life beyond custody.

Following release, each participant is provided with access to ongoing support, including counselling, housing assistance, and continued training sessions. This holistic approach aims to reduce reoffending and support long-term rehabilitation.

To explore the programme's impact, the researchers interviewed participants about their lives before, during, and after imprisonment, focusing on changes linked to their involvement in the programme. They also visited HMP Lancaster Farms, taking part in CrossFit training with men in prison and during their resettlement.

The pair said their findings demonstrated that the blend of group-based CrossFit training alongside other group-based support helped participants to reimagine and reconstruct their potential 'future

selves' beyond prison. And their findings indicated the programme has the potential to break negative behavioural cycles and contribute to reduced reoffending.

Chris Cattell, Course Leader for the foundation degree in Sports Coaching and PE, said: "Our research shows that the 180 Project creates a powerful sense of community inside prison. Through shared training, men described how they developed discipline, compassion, and respect for others. It also helped them reimagine what their future can be beyond prison."

Dr Christian Edwards, Principal Lecturer in Sports Coaching Science, said: "The values fostered within the prison programme transferred into life after prison, with participants reflecting on how this shift in attitudes influenced their actions and outlook upon release from HMP Lancaster Farms. Many of the participants have had multiple sentences, and they haven't reoffended since beginning this project. What came through in our interviews is a real feeling of the men wanting to give back to the community and to others. Some of the men have now moved into youth education or crime reduction initiatives. They are now effectively working on crime prevention and supporting their community."

The 180 Project, based in Lancashire, was created to support people leaving prison, and help them avoid reoffending by changing their circumstances and mindset.

RESEARCH PROJECT TO BREAK DOWN BARRIERS TO NATURE FOR PEOPLE WITH DEMENTIA

A new study will help break down barriers to outdoor spaces for millions of people affected by dementia.

The research, led by the University of Worcester's Association for Dementia Studies (ADS) in collaboration with Natural England and a range of leading health and green space organisations, is being funded by £153,000 from The National Lottery Heritage Fund.

Previous research by ADS has shown there are significant barriers for people affected by dementia to accessing outdoor space; individuals often struggle with confidence, navigation, and uncertainty about available facilities.

Access to nature has long been recognised as an important contributor to people's overall health and wellbeing, making these barriers especially impactful for those living with dementia. Many spaces lack dementia-friendly design features such as clear signage, accessible paths, and appropriate seating areas, and staff and volunteers may not have had the opportunity to learn how to best understand or respond to the needs of people who live with dementia. This new study will create free, practical resources and tools that help outdoor spaces become dementia-friendly and inclusive, including an environmental self-assessment tool, an app, training videos and case studies. It will also aim to encourage organisations to collaborate and share good practice, while increasing visitor numbers through improved inclusivity.

Sarah Waller CBE, from the Association for Dementia Studies, will be leading on the study. She said: "There are nearly a million people living with dementia in the UK, yet many face personal and practical barriers to accessing outdoor spaces that could transform their wellbeing." Sarah has expertise in developing enabling environments for people living with dementia, and has worked extensively on the development of environmental assessment tools. She said: "This project will see the creation of free, easy-to-use resources so parks and nature reserves can assess their spaces, make improvements, and welcome people with confidence."

Further down the line, the study will pave the way for funding opportunities, enabling park operators to apply for grants to improve features such as signage,



pathways, and seating as they act as case studies for dementia-friendly outdoor spaces.

Shirley Evans, Director of the Association for Dementia Studies, said: "Access to nature is something most of us take for granted, but for people impacted by dementia, it can feel out of reach. This study has the potential to completely reimagine how we design and manage outdoor Spaces. By making sure they're welcoming, safe, and inclusive, breaking down barriers, and creating practical tools, we can transform parks and nature reserves into havens that support wellbeing and connection for everyone."

Shirley said: "We would like to thank The National Lottery Heritage Fund and National Lottery players for their support with this exciting project."

David Fanaroff, Senior Advisor at Natural England, said: "The study will include small grants for participating open spaces. This will allow site managers to make changes in response to feedback from users. We can then measure the impacts and make sure the tools and guidance really work for people with dementia, their carers, and organisations that support people with dementia."



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SPOTLIGHT



A SPOTLIGHT ON...

Dr Molly Miley

Research Fellow in Mental Health,
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What is your professional background?

My background brings together psychology, community engagement and applied mental health research. After completing my PhD looking at the impact of nurses' decision-making on wellbeing, I moved to a joint NHS - university role, where I delivered mental health research in clinical and community settings. I've worked on projects supporting rural farming communities, maternal mental health, and wider mental health service improvement.

What are you currently working on (research project)?

I am currently a part of THRIVE, a new research programme at the University of Worcester that focuses on addressing mental health inequalities in rural communities. Our work centres around three key themes – early intervention, suicide prevention and digital support.

Right now, I'm leading on a scoping project, where we are mapping existing services for people with severe mental illness in rural areas and identifying barriers and facilitators that may shape access to support. Alongside this, I'm working closely with VCSE organisations to understand what provision already exists across Herefordshire and Worcestershire, what the local priorities are, and where the biggest gaps lie. This engagement is helping us to build a clear picture of how we can help strengthen support for rural communities.

What advice would you give to those looking at moving into an academic role?

My advice for anyone looking to move into an academic role is to stay curious, open-minded, and to take the time to build connections and relationships early. Most opportunities come through connection, so I would engage with research groups and absorb as much as you possibly can.

What is your biggest achievement to date?

My biggest achievement to date is probably completing my PhD. It was a long, challenging process that pushed me outside of my comfort zone (on more than one occasion), but this allowed me to grow both as a researcher and a person. I think reaching the final milestone and getting to discuss my findings and their impact was a nice reminder of why I decided to do my PhD in the first place and empowered me to begin my career in mental health research.

Who has influenced you the most in your career so far?

If I had to choose one person, I think I would have to say my PhD supervisor. Throughout my studies, she encouraged me to think outside of the box, challenge what I thought I knew and helped strengthen my confidence as a researcher. Her support shaped my decision to continue working in research and I'm now in a role I love, where I get to interact with a diverse range of people daily and contribute to meaningful research.



A SPOTLIGHT ON...

Molecular Plant and Microbial Sciences (MPMS) Research Unit

Why this Matters

Roughly 20-40% of global crop yields are lost each year to pests and pathogens. Most current solutions rely on chemical fungicides that leave residues, generate resistance, and harm non-target organisms. RNA-based biopesticides work differently: they can be designed to switch off only the genes needed by a specific pathogen, leaving the broader environment unaffected. Worcester's research is helping to make that technology a practical reality - from the laboratory bench to the vineyard.

FIGHTING CROP DISEASE WITH RNA: WORCESTER AT THE CUTTING EDGE

The Molecular Plant and Microbial Sciences (MPMS) Research Unit; led by Professor Mahmut Tör, focuses on understanding the molecular interactions between plants and their microbial associates - including pathogens and beneficial organisms - with the aim of developing sustainable, science-led solutions to crop disease.

TWO VISITORS, ONE SHARED QUESTION

When Rachel Randles arrived at Worcester from Bioatlantis in Ireland, she came with a specific challenge: could double-stranded RNA - a molecule that can switch genes off in target organisms - be produced cheaply and reliably enough to protect tomato crops from grey mould? Caused by the fungus *Botrytis cinerea*, grey mould is one of the most economically damaging crop diseases worldwide, capable of wiping out harvests from the field to the supermarket shelf.

Rachel spent six months developing methods to clone and express these RNA molecules using *E. coli* bacteria, and to synthesise them in the lab through a process called in vitro transcription. Her work, funded through the EU-wide CropPrime consortium (with UK participation supported by UKRI-EPSC), is laying the practical foundations for RNA-based crop sprays that leave no toxic residues.

After Rachel left, the group also welcomed Violeta Ivanova, a PhD student from the Institute of Plant Physiology and Genetics at the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences in Sofia. Violeta tackled a question that is critical to the whole enterprise: once an RNA molecule is applied to a plant, how does it actually get inside a downy mildew spore? Her work focused on endocytosis - the process by which cells engulf and absorb material from their environment - identifying the molecular gates through which RNA-based treatments must pass to be effective.

In parallel, Violeta generated CRISPR tools to edit tomato plants with specific genes surgically switched off - to identify the role of genes. Together, Rachel's and Violeta's work represent two complementary pieces of the same puzzle.



Violeta Ivanova

LEADING THE GLOBAL OOMYCETE COMMUNITY

In July 2025, the group's international standing was on display in Cologne, Germany, where the annual meeting of the Oomycetes Molecular Genetics Network (OMGN) drew 80-100 scientists from around the world. Oomycetes - a group of water mould-like organisms distinct from true fungi - are responsible for some of the most notorious crop diseases in history, including the potato late blight that caused the Irish famine and sudden oak death, which continues to devastate forests across Europe and North America.

As co-chair of the OMGN Senior Committee, the group played a key role in organising and chairing this meeting, held immediately before the prestigious International Society for Molecular Plant-Microbe Interactions (MPMI) Congress. PhD student Gizem Ünal delivered a talk on optimising RNA-based strategies for controlling downy mildew in pea - an impressive milestone for an early-career researcher at an international specialist forum.



Researchers at the OMGN annual meeting, Cologne, July 2025

SHAPING THE GLOBAL RESEARCH AGENDA

At the XXII MPMI Congress itself, the group co-organised and co-chaired a concurrent session titled "RNA on the Move: Advances in Cross-Species Communication and Translational Research," alongside Professor Roger Innes of Indiana University. The session brought together leading researchers to present work on mobile RNA molecules - including small RNAs, double-stranded RNAs, and messenger RNAs - that travel between organisms to influence defence responses, gene regulation, and pathogen virulence.

A talk entitled "RNA-Based Control of Downy Mildew Pathogens in Plants" showcased the Worcester group's own research programme to an international audience. Gizem Ünal also contributed a poster to the broader Congress, drawing interest from researchers across the field.

FROM WORCESTER TO THE VINEYARDS OF TURKEY

Downy mildew does not respect borders. The same class of pathogen that threatens pea crops in the UK devastates vineyards across the Mediterranean. A UKRI-BBSRC Global Partnering Award, held jointly with Associate Professor Birsen Cevher Keskin (TUBITAK-MAM), has opened a productive research corridor between Worcester and Turkey's leading institution.

A research visit took in five days at TUBITAK - Turkey's national science and technology council - alongside the Tekirdag and Manisa Viticulture Research Institutes and the Central Laboratory of Ege University's Agriculture Faculty. The agenda focused on biological control: using beneficial microbes to suppress downy mildew without chemical intervention. Two joint papers have already been published from the partnership, with more collaborative grant proposals in development.

Through a separate UKRI-BBSRC UK-USA Partnering Award, the group hosted Associate Professor Sherif Sherif from Virginia Tech for a nine-day research visit. The focus was hands-on and forward-looking: working through the latest advances in dsRNA technology, mapping the practical obstacles to field deployment, and sketching out the joint grant proposals that will carry the collaboration forward. A joint paper has already been published from the partnership, with more collaborative research in development.

The visit reflects a broader ambition: to combine expertise across continents to accelerate the development of RNA-based crop protection that is safe, scalable, and effective in the field.



A SPOTLIGHT ON...

John Bosco Tumuhairwe

PhD Student,
School of Health and Wellbeing

*"Exploring stigma towards people
with dementia living in Extra
Care Housing"*

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Advice for future PhD students

Research something you truly love
and feel passionate about.

Pursuing a PhD is, of course,
complex and demanding, and
challenges will inevitably arise
along the way. What sustains us
during these difficult moments is
the passion we have for our
research projects. If you are
not genuinely interested in your
subject or topic, your intrinsic
motivation may gradually fade.

Finally, be prepared to learn,
unlearn, and relearn. This requires
flexibility, open-mindedness, and a
willingness to grow. Make the
most of your supervisors'
guidance. They have completed a
PhD before you and possess
valuable experience that can help
you move forward. By following
their advice and engaging in
meaningful discussions with them,
you can strengthen your research
journey and achieve your goals.

Supervisory Team: Dr Julie Barrett (DoS),
Dr Chris Russell, Dr Vanessa Pritchard-Wilkes

Research Area: My research is exploring stigma towards people with dementia living in Extra Care Housing. Dementia is always reported as a highly stigmatised condition, and studies into Extra Care Housing usually highlight dementia-related stigma as one of the challenges that Housing Providers are grappling with. Despite these revelations, there has not been any study looking into this stigma in Extra Care Housing, the extent of the problem, causes and contributory factors, its impact on those living with dementia and their families, successes registered and challenges faced in addressing this stigma, as well as the most effective measures to address it. This is the reason I decided to undertake this research.

Why did you decide to undertake PGR at the University of Worcester? When I decided to pursue a PhD, I was determined to join a University where I would receive dedicated supervision, close mentorship, and meaningful academic support. I therefore began searching for Universities and research programmes that aligned with my research interests and would provide an enriching experience as an international research student. The University of Worcester stood out for two key reasons; First, its smaller class sizes aligned perfectly with my desire for focused supervision and personalised academic support. Second, the University's strong research reputation, particularly that of the Association for Dementia Studies, a globally respected centre for research and education in person-centred dementia care greatly impressed me.

After carefully reviewing various programmes, I came across a PhD studentship advertised by the University of Worcester which was under the Association for Dementia Studies that I had already liked. Without hesitation, I submitted my application. My decision to apply for this particular research topic was strongly influenced by my previous research in HIV/AIDS care, specifically my work on HIV-related stigma and its impact on access to care and adherence to antiretroviral therapy. The studentship immediately captured my interest because it focused on dementia-related stigma in Extra Care Housing. This represented a natural progression of my research on stigma, its impact on those who experience it and strategies to address it, while allowing me to explore these issues within a different health context and a different health issue from HIV/AIDS.

At the time, the number of people living with dementia was rising globally according to World Health Organisation. Uganda, just like other Sub-Saharan African countries had been identified as one of the countries experiencing a significant increase in dementia cases, many of which remained undiagnosed despite the presence of clear symptoms. I was convinced that this opportunity would enable me to further develop my research skills and deepen my knowledge in dementia. Ultimately, I hoped to apply this expertise to strengthen dementia awareness initiatives in Uganda and contribute to global efforts aimed at addressing this growing public health concern and stigma that comes with it.

What opportunities have you had during your time at Worcester?

One of my greatest opportunities has been learning through collaboration and partnership with many players. These have been from both academic and professional circles. I have been able to work

with Housing 21 and Extra Care Trust as part of my research, and these have enabled me to learn about Extra Care Housing in the UK. I have also had the opportunity to present twice at the UK Dementia Congress (the first one at Aston University in 2023, and the second one at Coventry Arena in November 2024). I received a lot of feedback from respected academics, researchers and professionals in dementia. Last but not least, I got the opportunity to visit the House of Lords as part of a delegation from the Association for Dementia Studies that went to share findings from the DemECH (Supporting People Living with Dementia in Extra Care Housing) research project and to launch booklets for people and families affected by dementia, organisations providing extra care housing for people living with dementia, and a booklet of adult social care commissioners and professionals. This was a great learning and networking opportunity that University of Worcester provided me. I have also presented at two PGR Conferences, presented at one of the School of Health and Wellbeing Research Seminar series and many other presentations that have been learning and knowledge exchange opportunities for me.

What has been the highlight of your PGR study so far? My greatest highlight has been presenting at the UK Dementia Congress in 2023 at Aston University, and at the 2025 Congress at the Coventry Arena. This opportunity raised the profile of my research within the care and dementia community and enabled me to network with academic and professional leaders in the field of dementia and Extra Care Housing that expressed great interest in my research and also offered genuine guidance and feedback on how to proceed. Following my presentations, I have been invited to speak as a guest at a meeting of the Social Workers Team at Worcestershire County Council, who expressed a strong interest in my research. I have also received numerous emails from professionals across these sectors enquiring about my work as a direct result of my presentations at the 2023 and 2024 UK Dementia Congresses.

What is your professional background? I initially trained as an Adult and Community Educator, earning a Bachelor of Adult and Community Education Degree from Kyambogo University-Uganda. This degree opened doors for me in counselling, health education, and health promotion, which later motivated me to pursue an MSc in Public Health (Health Promotion) in Leeds. I began my professional career as an HIV Prevention Counsellor at Integrated Community Based

Initiatives (ICOB) in South-Western Uganda. I worked on a Home-Based HIV Counselling and Testing project funded by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC-USA).

I later worked as a Community Outreach Assistant on the first-ever Partners PrEP (Pre-Exposure Prophylaxis) Study at Kabwohe Clinical Research Center (KCRC), a sister research institution to ICOB. Subsequently, I held several research roles at ICOB and KCRC, serving as an HIV Prevention Officer and Qualitative Research Assistant until 2015, when I was awarded a Commonwealth Scholarship to pursue an MSc in Public Health-Health Promotion. After completing my MSc in the UK towards the end of 2016, I returned to Uganda and continued working with both ICOB and KCRC as a Research Officer and Research Assistant on various studies conducted in collaboration with the University of Washington and Massachusetts General Hospital.

What is your biggest achievement to date?

Undertaking a fully funded PhD has been one of my greatest achievements. I recall telling my fellow students during our MSc programme that I intended to pursue a PhD after gaining further research experience. I am proud that I did not give up on that ambition. Instead, I continued applying to fully funded PhD programmes aligned with my research interests until I was finally accepted onto this programme. Many of my subsequent achievements, including building strong professional and academic networks, engaging in continuous research development, and presenting at high profile conferences have all stemmed from undertaking this PhD. What was once a dream ten years ago has now become a reality. I am currently writing the chapters of my thesis and will soon complete my PhD.

Where do you see yourself after you have completed your course? I want to continue conducting research that positively impacts communities in practice by working diligently and collaborating with practitioners to ensure that research findings are effectively translated into policy formulation and implementation. I am particularly passionate about research that explores the social determinants of health and other social issues affecting people living with dementia, as well as identifying practical solutions to address these challenges. I also aspire to share knowledge through research-informed teaching, should I be given the opportunity anywhere.



A SPOTLIGHT ON...

Rona Chunhong Zhou

PhD Student,
School of Sport and Exercise Science

*"Women Are Still Holding up Most
of the Sky: Urban Single Mothers'
Battle for Physical Activity
Participation and Social Well-being
in China"*

(with scholarships from the
Sir Richard Stapley Educational
Trust and the Great Britain-China
Educational Trust)

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Advice for future PhD students

Follow your heart, never give up,
and you'll reach your destination.

Research Area: My research focuses on the barriers to physical activity (PA) of divorced single mothers working in high-demand IT/ Internet industries, having the sole-custody of a child, and living in one of the most developed cities in China. I am specifically focusing on how such women manage their work-life-family and PA participation.

Why did you decide to undertake PGR study at the University of Worcester? During my early university years, many of my lecturers completed their PhDs or postdoctoral research abroad, which inspired me to follow a similar academic path. In 2019, I was awarded funding from the China Scholarship Council to undertake an academic visit to the University of Worcester, where I developed my initial research ideas into a PhD project with my supervisor. I applied for the PhD programme during the COVID lockdown and continued my study part-time long distance while working full-time in China. Two years later, following significant changes in my life, I quit my job and returned to Worcester to pursue my PhD full-time.

What opportunities have you had during your time at Worcester? I am grateful for the support of the Doctoral School, which has enabled me to present my research at the 20th and 21st European Association for Sociology of Sport annual conferences in Spain and Poland. Additionally, I have supported both undergraduate and graduate teaching and shared my research with students. I have also served as a Student Ambassador and an International Student Ambassador, engaging with students from diverse backgrounds and developed intercultural communication skills. Meanwhile, I completed a five-week CELTA course and obtained the Cambridge CELTA certificate, which improves my future employability. I'm also applying for Fellow of the Higher Education Academy (FHEA) with the support of the Learning, Teaching and Quality Enhancement Team at the University.

What has been the highlight of your PGR study so far? The publication of two journal articles under the guidance of my two excellent supervisors has been a significant milestone. Presenting at international conferences and engaging with multidisciplinary experts have also been key highlights of my study. Furthermore, working within the multicultural environment of the Doctoral School has given me a rare opportunity to build meaningful international connections, which I consider an invaluable aspect of my academic journey.

What is your professional background? Before pursuing a PhD, I worked in the higher education sector in China for twenty years, progressing from lecturer to associate professor. During this time, I undertook course leadership and curriculum development in Academic English and EFL, supervised and mentored undergraduate students, coordinated teaching teams of international staff from diverse cultural backgrounds. I also coordinated a summer language and culture programme at California State university, Monterey Bay, the US. Alongside academia, I gained extensive part-time work experience across different industries. I worked with the British Council at the British Embassy in Beijing for nine years and later joined a sharing-economy start-up as an entrepreneur, focusing on B2C marketing and

user growth. I started from a junior online salesperson on social media to a senior sales manager and contributed to the company's successful listing on the Nasdaq in the US.

What is your biggest achievement to date? I consider the persistence and resilience I have developed during my PGR study to be my greatest achievement. Navigating the challenges of balancing my study, part-time work, and childcare independently in a foreign country, alongside other personal and professional transitions, has fostered both significant personal and academic growth. These experiences have also deepened my sociological understanding of human experiences.

Where do you see yourself after you have completed your course? I would like to continue in academia through teaching, researching, and engagement with the international academic community. I also aspire to contribute to initiatives in organizations that promote women's equality in sport, exercise, and physical activity, aiming to enhance their health and wellbeing.



Rona sharing her PhD research at the 21st EASS Conference in Warsaw, Poland, 2025.



A SPOTLIGHT ON...

Prof. Győző Molnár

Professor of Sociology of Sport and Exercise, School of Sport and Exercise Science

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What advice would you give to those looking at moving into an academic role?

Be strategic about what you say 'yes' to. Not every opportunity advances your career.

Build international networks and collaborations beyond your institution.

If you work with marginalised communities, do it ethically. Consider them as partners, not research subjects.

Protect your writing time. Well-place and well-timed publications matter.

Find good mentors who've achieved what you aspire to.

And set boundaries as academia has the tendency to take everything you give, so decide what matters most and protect that.

Research Area: Sociology of sport with a focus on nationalism, migration, gender, and inequalities in marginalised communities. I examine how sport intersects with power, identity, and social justice, employing participatory research methodologies that position communities as equal partners in knowledge production.

How long have you worked at the University of Worcester?

Since September 2008. I've grown with Worcester from lecturer to professor, and recently became the Lead of the Adapted Physical Activity Research Unit, which we're officially launching in October 2026.

What is your professional background? I'm a critical sociologist of sport with dual British-Hungarian citizenship. My journey into academia was shaped by experiencing migration firsthand as I moved to the UK in 2002. This personal experience of navigating different cultural contexts deeply influences my research on sport, migration, and belonging.

What defines my approach is working *with* communities rather than just studying them; whether that's co-producing health research with Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities or examining how sport creates both opportunities and barriers for migrant athletes and disabled people.

I've supervised ten PhD students to completion, published 50+ articles/book chapters and 4 books, and secured £100,000+ in research funding while serving on policy advisory bodies including the ONS Research Advisory Group.

What are you currently working on (research project)? As the Lead of the Adapted Physical Activity Research Unit, I'm building Worcester's profile as a leading UK hub for research on sport, physical activity, and marginalised communities.

Currently, I'm leading a British Academy-funded UK-Sweden-Hungary network on sport discrimination and radicalisation prevention, with the view of developing major Horizon grant application. I am also supervising PhD students examining everything from divorced single mothers' physical activity barriers in China to women navigating male-dominated strength coaching.

What unites this work is commitment to participatory research, i.e., working *with* communities as equal partners. For instance, our recent project (co-led by Dr Peter Unwin) with Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities on health data collection was co-designed entirely with community advisory groups who shaped every research decision. We're officially launching APARU



Photo credit: Travellers Times

in October 2026 and the goal is establishing Worcester as a hub for research that challenges how we understand ability, inclusion, and who gets to participate in sport and physical activity.

What is your biggest achievement to date? In my private life, it is my family. In my professional life, I hope that the biggest achievement is yet to come.

However, so far the biggest achievement is supervising ten PhD students to successful completion while maintaining a 100% success rate. This matters to me more than any individual publication or grant because it represents genuine impact and my contribution to helping develop the next generation of critical researchers who'll continue challenging inequalities in sport, physical activity and beyond.

What makes me particularly proud is the diversity of my students' research: from football fans to athletic migration and drive for muscularity, from youth football academies to physical activity barriers among divorced single mothers in China. They're asking questions that matter, working with communities that are often marginalised, and they're doing it with methodological rigor and ethical commitment.

Several of my past Doctoral students now in academic positions themselves, continuing this work. That is a legacy I am proud of and that cultivates researchers who share commitments to social justice and community partnership.

Who has influenced you the most in your career so far? The community members I've worked with. For instance, Gypsy, Roma and Traveller people who've taught me what genuine partnership looks like, and migrant athletes who've shared their experiences of navigating precarious sport labour markets, and, of course, the brave women rugby players in Fiji who battled marginalisation and social isolation so they could continue to play the sport they loved.

Academia tends to celebrate academic mentors (who are important, but my most important learning has come from communities who've challenged how I think about research, power, and whose knowledge counts. They've taught me that being a good researcher means listening more than talking, sharing power over research design, and ensuring communities benefit from the work; not just my CV.

Intellectually, C. Wright Mills has been foundational. His sociological imagination, understanding personal troubles as public issues, is the lens through which I approach all my research. When studying sport migration, gender inequality, or barriers facing marginalised communities, I'm always asking: How do structural forces shape individual experiences? How can we move beyond blaming individuals for problems rooted in institutions and cultures?

Mills taught me that sociology should serve democratic purposes, challenging power and making visible the structural forces that shape people's lives. This commitment drives my participatory research approach and focuses on working *with* communities to understand how sport and physical activity both reproduce and challenge inequalities.



A SPOTLIGHT ON...

Amber Sparrey

Technical Manager for the
Institute of Arts and Humanities,
Associate Lecturer for
Graphic Design

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What does your role at the University involve?

I work across both technical leadership and teaching within the University's Institute of Arts and Humanities. As Technical Manager, I oversee the technical team, specialist workshops, equipment, and processes, supporting staff and students in realising creative projects safely and effectively. This includes managing resources, delivering technical training, and maintaining studio standards.

Alongside this, as an Associate Lecturer in Graphic Design, I teach and support undergraduate students with a focus on concept development and visual communication. The dual role allows me to bridge practical making with critical thinking, enhancing student learning through both technical expertise and academic guidance.

How long have you worked at the University of Worcester?

In my current role as technical manager, it will be 3 years this summer. Before that, I did 4 years as a technical demonstrator for Art and Design Communication.

What is your professional background?

I am a University of Worcester alumni, studying BA (Hons) Fine Art between 2015-2018. I recently got my associate fellowship and am looking to doing an MRes in the near future.

What are you currently working as part of your own practice or research?

Outside of my role, I have recently opened my first major solo exhibition, *Soft Bodies, Cold Machines* at arebyte in London (16 April–2 August). The show transforms the gallery into a hyperfeminised bedroom, exploring girlhood, internet culture, and AI-driven identity through interactive installation, sculpture and moving image, reflecting on how digital consumption shapes memory, the body, and selfhood. <https://www.arebyte.com/ambie-drew>

What advice would you give to those looking at moving into technician or research enabling role?

Keep making alongside your role. Your artistic practice is vital, not separate. Staying creatively active deepens your technical insight, informs how you support others, and keeps your approach relevant and engaged. Its important for the students to see you can do it. Treat your own work as ongoing research; it will strengthen both your confidence and the value you bring to students and collaborators.

What is your biggest achievement to date?

It has to be creating *Soft Bodies, Cold Machines*. My proposal was selected from 114 submissions, which felt significant given how competitive opportunities like this are. Developing it from an initial concept into a fully realised, immersive installation has been incredibly rewarding. The process involved bringing together research, technical experimentation, and artistic intuition, then translating that into something audiences could physically experience. Seeing people engage with the work in real time, moving through it, reflecting on it, and forming their own interpretations, has made it feel like a truly living, breathing being, and a major milestone in my practice.

RECENT PUBLICATIONS

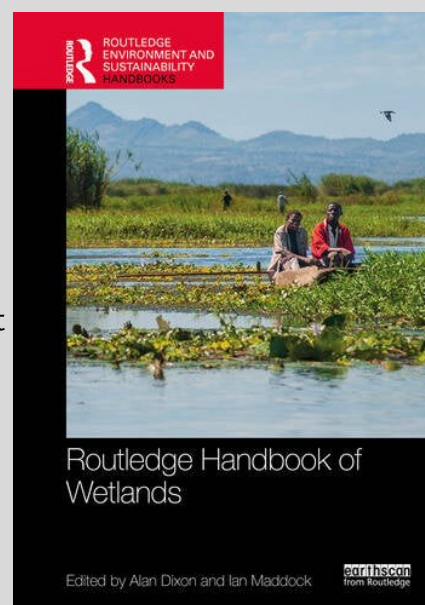
BOOKS & MONOGRAPHS

Dixon, Alan and Maddock, Ian (2025) **THE ROUTLEDGE HANDBOOK OF WETLANDS.** Routledge, London.

This handbook provides a comprehensive and interdisciplinary overview of the place, value and significance of wetlands, presenting perspectives from across the environmental and social sciences.

Recent decades have witnessed unprecedented global interest in wetlands and the critical role they play in supporting biodiversity and ecosystem services such as carbon storage, flood mitigation, as well as their direct benefits for people and society that include the provision of food, clean water and a range of cultural services. This Routledge Handbook of Wetlands brings together a wide range of perspectives from social and environmental disciplines, and voices from different wetland stakeholders from the global north and south, to present an assessment of our current understanding of wetlands, their environmental significance, and their place in society and policy. A recurring theme of the book is an exploration of how our current knowledge of wetlands, that is often fragmented along traditional disciplinary lines, can be brought together to enable a more integrated, interdisciplinary and social-ecological conceptualisation that aligns more closely with real-world complex challenges, and which offers new directions in wetland management for sustainable development.

This handbook will be essential reading for students and scholars of wetland management, environmental science, water resource management, conservation ecology, environmental humanities and sustainable development.



Welsh, Josie and Hewitt, L. (2025) **RIGHTS AND JUSTICE IN THEORY AND PRACTICE: PROCESS AND APPLICATION IN LAW.** Routledge, London.

This collection explores questions of rights and justice from theoretical and practical perspectives, by examining examples of the process and application of the law. The book brings together leading experts and early career academics to consider the application of rights, the achievability of justice and the methods available within varied legal frameworks to secure this. It offers a distinct approach by drawing contributions from a wide range of intellectual arenas thus breaking down legal silos and highlighting the interplay between different subjects. Authors confront the conceptual challenges of rights and justice, beginning with broad constitutional discussions in international and domestic contexts. The book examines institutions, procedure and matters of rights and justice located in numerous social contexts such as regarding interests in – or the protection of – property and the avoidance of discrimination or the protection of beliefs at work. For the younger generation, such questions are long term and, in many ways, evolving. Each chapter offers fascinating insight to support ongoing reflections on rights and justice in the modern world. The book will be of interest to scholars, students and practitioners with interests in human rights, socio-legal studies, areas of law such as family law, criminal law, employment law, as well as access to justice and constitutional justice.

Barnes, Charley and Walker, Claire (2026) **CRAFT OF CARE: AN ANTHOLOGY OF CREATIVE RESPONSES TO CAREGIVING.** Black Pear Press, Worcester.

Craft of Care is an anthology of creative nonfiction and poetic responses to the theme of caregiving. The book, and its brave contents, sheds light on the realities—sometimes harsh, sometimes wholesome—of caregiving, and how a carer carries their responsibilities with them. Edited by Charley Barnes and Claire Walker and featuring writers such as Sophia Argyris, Penelope Shuttle, Paul Atten Ash, Catherine Redford, Rob Walton, Catherine Balaq, and Gaynor Jones, this book offers rich and varied perspectives on the complexities of caregiving, beyond the day-to-day demands and into the heart of helping, listening, and sometimes grieving that comes with caring for another. Here, there are partners, parents, grandparents, children, friends, and patients, who have received care, sometimes from a family member, sometimes from a health professional, sometimes from themselves. The resulting works voice the fragile interplay of emotions and practicalities behind, within, and after the role of carer.

Lane, Michael (2025) **THE UNIVERSAL PERIODIC REVIEW AND THE UK: STATE PRACTICE AND CONSTITUTIONAL FACTORS .** Bristol University Press, Bristol.

This book analyses the impact of the United Nations' Universal Periodic Review (UPR) process through a case study of the UK. It advances a dual-perspective assessment of the UPR: the 'external' perspective, which focuses on a state's practice at the UPR, and the 'internal' perspective, which examines the influence of the UPR on the executive, legislature and judiciary.

The author introduces a new framework for assessing state participation, drawing on Kathryn Sikkink's 'Evidence for Hope' to advance the methodological rigour of UPR research. The UK context explored in the book highlights the influence of domestic politics, institutional capacity and accountability processes, with implications for Westminster systems worldwide. It is crucial reading for scholars, policy makers and practitioners of international human rights law.

Arnold, Lucy (2026) **HILARY MANTEL.** Writers and their Work. Liverpool University Press, Liverpool.

This book is the first comprehensive critical introduction to the life and career of one of the most significant authors of the contemporary period. Moving beyond the straightforwardly biographical, the study provides an account of Hilary Mantel's corpus which demonstrates the complex relationship that exists in the author's writing between history and fiction, source and story, and memory and making. Responding to the elliptical and self-reflexive nature of Mantel's body of work, the book rejects a chronological approach to the author's writing career in favour of tracing a series of thematic concerns that can be seen to structure her literary output across a diverse array of genres and forms: alchemy, the body, haunting, history, and the figure of the reader. Drawing on unpublished materials held in the Hilary Mantel Literary Papers at the Huntington Library, and woven through with illustrations of the ways in which a range of theoretical concepts can be seen to resonate within the author's work, Hilary Mantel offers a simultaneously accessible and rigorous account of a writer whose significance in, and influence upon, contemporary literary culture is yet to be fully acknowledged.



PROFESSIONAL EDUCATION

JOURNAL ARTICLE: *Malli, M., Whittaker, Daniel and Phoenix-Kane, D. (2026)* **WHEN TOURETTE SYNDROME IS REDUCED TO A DEBATE ABOUT OFFENCE, CLINICAL CARE SUFFERS.** The BMJ, 392 (s473). pp. 1-2.

Background There is increasing attention to the amount of contact between police and those experiencing mental health problems. This includes the amount of time and resource spent by police in attending to calls related to mental health, as well as what the role of the police should be in relation to other agencies, including mental health and social care services. The aim of the scoping review was to identify what research has been conducted about police response to mental health in terms of decision making, responses, as well as skills and interventions.

Methods A scoping review using the PRISMA extension for scoping reviews was conducted. Papers were included if they reported research on routine police work when responding to people with mental health problems or experiencing mental distress. Seven databases were searched and a two-stage searching procedure was followed. Screening and data extraction was completed by two researchers working independently.

Results A total of 14,608 texts were found; 7,164 were removed as duplicates and 7,281 were removed after screening titles and abstracts. After full text

screening a further 100 were excluded, leaving 63 papers for data extraction. About half of the papers included police only as participants ($n = 31$) and only 10 papers were from the perspective of people with lived experience. Three themes emerged from the thematic analysis: "policing decisions and actions"; "coordinating with other providers" and "lived experience".

Conclusions Police have skills that have been developed experientially rather than through formal training. There is often a lack of shared understanding between police and other agencies leading to uncertainty about how to best help the person with mental health concerns. Police can and do make a positive contribution to the multi-agency response to people with mental health problems, though should not necessarily be the first (or only) response to mental health calls. Most of the research to date has focused on the police role in mental health crisis. Further research is needed on understanding the police role in encountering mental health problems in routine work (as victims, witnesses or perpetrators).

BOOK SECTION: *Alhassan, Nurideen (2025)* **DEVELOPING EFFECTIVE LEADERSHIP IN SMALL BUSINESSES: IDENTIFYING KEY CONTEXTUAL FACTORS. IN: STRATEGIC LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT** Taylor & Francis, Abingdon, pp. 249-264.

Leadership research has placed greater emphasis on motivational processes to the detriment of other understudied mechanisms, namely situational variables and contextual factors in light of follower readiness. Understanding and being able to interpret contextual factors is an important tool in leading and managing the internal dynamics of small teams at different levels, to further our understanding of small groups in relation to their surroundings. This qualitative and exploratory research explored the contextual factors that could be considered in the leadership process for effective leadership among Ghanaian small businesses. The study adopted a multiple-case study strategy using a purposive-homogeneous sample of thirty staff from ten small

businesses and analyzed primary data from semi-structured interviews through latent thematic analysis and the Gioia technique as an analytical path and presented the results descriptively. This chapter concludes that family ties, cultural, and religious factors are key contextual factors that need to be considered in the leadership process for effective leadership when managing small teams, as managers find these factors very difficult to manage. This finding will provide a practical guide for small business leaders, managers, and practitioners to understand the contextual factors that could be considered in the leadership process for effective leadership and to deal with them appropriately when they surface.

JOURNAL ARTICLE: Jesus, R., Oliveira, L., Cunha, C., Boulhosa, R., Porto Ricci, A., Arruda, M., Batista, A, Santos, K., Pereira, K., Romeiro, F., de Castro Lyra, A. and Bueno, Allain (2026) **SYSTEMATIC NUTRITIONAL CLINICAL ASSESSMENT (SYNCA): INSTRUMENT DEVELOPMENT, DELPHI PROTOCOL FOR CONTENT, AND SEMANTIC VALIDATION.** Journal of Human Nutrition and Dietetics, 39 (2). pp. 1-13.

Background Malnutrition is a common complication in patients with chronic diseases, often exacerbated by clinical factors and increased metabolic demands. In individuals affected by Decompensated Chronic Liver Disease (DCLD), fluid retention, such as oedema and ascites, can hinder accurate nutritional assessment, leading to underdiagnosis or misdiagnosis of weight loss and malnutrition. The present study describes the development and validation of a novel tool for Systematic Nutritional Clinical Assessment (SyNCA), including its content, semantic, and construct validity.

Methods In Phase 1, the Delphi protocol was employed to evaluate SyNCA content and semantic validity with input from clinical nutrition experts and resident nutritionists. Phase 2 involved a cross-sectional, multicentre study of DCLD hospitalised patients to assess construct validity. SyNCA outcomes were compared with established nutritional assessment methods including anthropometry, handgrip strength (HGS), and

dual-energy X-ray absorptiometry (DEXA). Correlations were analysed using Pearson or Spearman coefficients.

Results Following expert review in Phase 1, out of the 18 items initially proposed across five anatomical regions, 14 items were retained in the final SyNCA instrument. In Phase 2, data from 136 hospitalised DCLD patients revealed moderate correlations between SyNCA scores and arm muscle circumference ($r = -0.567$, $p < 0.0001$), HGS ($r = -0.376$, $p < 0.0001$), and Appendicular Muscle Mass Index ($r = -0.502$, $p < 0.001$), supporting construct validity.

Conclusion SyNCA demonstrated strong content, semantic, and construct validity, demonstrating its potential as a reliable clinical tool for nutritional assessment in DCLD hospitalised patients, and particularly welcomed in clinical settings with limited resources or where traditional methods are impractical.

JOURNAL ARTICLE: Wood, Katharine, Frank, Helen and Papadopoulos, Konstantinos (2025) **LEARNING EXPERIENCES FROM AN INTERPROFESSIONAL, UNIVERSITY-BASED, STUDENT-LED HEALTHCARE CLINIC IN THE UK.** Journal of Interprofessional Practice and Collaboration, 6 (1). pp. 1-25.

Student-led clinics (SLCs) are increasingly being adopted in physiotherapy and occupational therapy degree programs. SLCs are an innovative practice-based learning model that offers unique learning opportunities while solving the challenges of sourcing appropriate placements. However, there is little recent evidence of their use in healthcare education in the UK. To address this literature gap, a synchronous online focus group with seven participants was conducted to explore the learning experiences of undergraduate occupational therapy and physiotherapy students who attended an inter-professional, non-elective, university-based SLC in the UK. A thematic analysis approach was used to identify three main themes: (1) Learning With, From and About Others; (2) Personal and Professional Development; and (3) Learning Environment. The effectiveness of the clinic in developing competencies, skills, and professional standards of

practice in the students was evident. Participants in the evaluation discussed the learning opportunities that arose during interactions with their peers, patients, and supervisors. They also reported having the freedom and autonomy to try new things, which created a safe place to learn and empowered them. Finally, as a learning environment, the SLC encouraged the participants to identify their own specific learning needs and accommodated their learning styles. SLCs should be considered a valuable means of practice-based learning in healthcare education, but greater preparedness before placement within the SLC, including acknowledgment of both student and supervisor expectations, along with a scaffolding approach to supervision, should be considered to enable greater learning and inter-professional education opportunities.

JOURNAL ARTICLE: *Holdstock, Kaytie (2025) CONTESTED AND NEGLECTED STORIES OF ART: A CRITICAL STUDY OF CULTURAL REPRESENTATION WITHIN THE PRIMARY ART CURRICULUM.* Educational Futures, 16 (2). pp. 109-131

This study interrogates cultural representation within the primary art curriculum, exposing the enduring dominance of Eurocentric narratives and the marginalisation of minority ethnic artists in classroom practice. Prompted by Ofsted's 2023 call to explore the 'contested and neglected stories of art' (Ofsted, 2023: 17), it critically examines whether primary art education has responded to this imperative or continues to replicate the 'whiteness' of teachers' own art education (Cameron et al., 2024).

Drawing on critical race theory and critiques of the artistic canon, the study explores how systemic inequalities are perpetuated through curriculum choices, often under the guise of cultural appreciation.

An online questionnaire distributed via social media gathered responses from 22 primary educators: mostly white, female, and non-specialist. Participants identified the artists and cultural practices they

include in their teaching, alongside perceived barriers to delivering a more representative curriculum. Findings reveal that 59 per cent included no minority ethnic artists, and 68 per cent included no Black artists. Even among specialists, only 38 per cent referenced Black artists, suggesting tokenistic inclusion rather than a broader anti-racist pedagogical commitment (Kraehe and Herman, 2020).

The study highlights how cultural art is often reduced to decontextualised activities that reinforce stereotypes and risk cultural appropriation (Rogers, 2006; Davenport, 2000). Teachers cited lack of training, confidence, time and fear of parental resistance as key barriers.

This research calls for systemic change, advocating for a flexible, child-centred curriculum that reflects Britain's cultural diversity and empowers teachers as 'arbiters of truth and shapers of history' (Link, 2020: 11).

SOCIAL EXCLUSION, CULTURE AND IDENTITY

JOURNAL ARTICLE: *Zhou, Chunhong, Bairner, A. and Molnár, Győző (2026) FROM THE SCHOOL GYM TO ADULthood: GENDERED PATHWAYS OF PHYSICAL EDUCATION AND POST-DIVORCE PHYSICAL ACTIVITY IN CHINA.* Sport, Education and Society, Latest. pp. 1-16.

Chinese scholarship under-examines how gender intersects with health and physical education (HPE) curricula and girls' PE experiences — particularly in shaping physical activity (PA) participation across the lifespan. Western research shows that single mothers exhibit lower PA levels and higher health-risk levels than married mothers do, yet research investigating Chinese single mothers' PA is particularly sparse despite a surging divorce rate. This study examines how gender and HPE curricula across educational stages in China have influenced girls' PE experiences and how these experiences have shaped divorced single mothers' (DSMs) adult PA participation.

Twenty-eight semi-structured interviews were analysed using thematic analysis and interpreted through gender socialisation and post-socialist feminism. Results manifest that gender and HPE curricula collectively produced gendered PE

engagement regarding PA types, intensity, and duration through girls' interactions with PE teachers and peers, and gendered expectations reinforced girls' marginalisation. Evidence indicates that gender inequality in PE and expectations placed on DSMs jointly contribute to low health and PA awareness and reduce adult PA, particularly post-divorce. These findings highlight the necessity of structural and cultural shifts to disrupt entrenched gender norms, promote gender-equitable HPE curriculum, support girls' active engagement in PE, and advance DSMs' access to health, PA, and self-care.

JOURNAL ARTICLE: Mycock, George, Downs, J., Molnar, Gyozo, Foye, U., Bartel, H., Griffiths, J. and Edwards, Christian (2026) **"I WANNA LIVE IN A WORLD WHERE CHANGE IS POSSIBLE": CO-DESIGNING GUIDANCE FOR INCLUSIVE EATING, EXERCISE, AND BODY IMAGE PSYCHOPATHOLOGY OUTREACH RESOURCES FOR MEN.** Journal of Eating Disorders. pp. 1-60.

Background: Men are underserved in research on eating, exercise and body image psychopathology (EEBIP), and remain underrepresented within healthcare settings despite growing clinical need. One barrier to men's help-seeking for EEBIP-related concerns is that public-facing healthcare information/resources often appear unwelcoming to them, suggesting the need for more inclusive, gender-sensitive resources that engage men and address their specific needs. This study aimed to explore men's perspectives on the design of inclusive EEBIP resources, to inform the iterative co-design of guidance for future resource development

Methods: This study employed a lived experience-led approach, integrating a modified nominal group technique with participatory research methods, as part of an iterative co-design of a guidance document. Six men with lived experience of EEBIP ranked their preferred features of male-inclusive resources from a broader list of content and format ideas generated through a survey of 42 men. Interview and focus group discussions followed, exploring the underlying reasons why the men with EEBIP experience believed these content and format ideas would support men's help-seeking for EEBIP. Finally, a draft guidance document, underpinned by

the results of the discussions, was designed and iteratively edited, following feedback from healthcare organisation representatives, academics, and men with lived experience.

Results: Thematic analysis of the discussions identified five themes to inform the development of future resources. The five themes are titled: 1) Designing accessible resources that navigate men's readiness; 2) Authentic voices: inclusive, conversation-led outreach; 3) Self-realisation: refraining from labelling men as 'unhealthy' or 'disordered'; 4) Purpose and progress driven resources; 5) Images: the line between helpful and harmful isn't always clear. These themes are discussed alongside EEBIP and men's mental health help-seeking literature.

Conclusions: This is the first study to centre men's experiential knowledge to explore how healthcare organisations can facilitate men's help-seeking for EEBIP-related concerns via public-facing resources. The themes generated in this study reflect findings of studies exploring the facilitation of men's general mental health help-seeking, whilst contributing novel EEBIP-specific findings. The results of this study can support EEBIP healthcare organisations to develop public-facing resources that are more inclusive of men.

BOOK SECTION: Flood Chavez, David (2025) **LISTENING TO OTHER VOICES IN TOURISM ENTREPRENEURSHIP: THE CASE OF TOURISM ORGANISATIONS IN THE MARGINS OF LIMA (PERU).** In: The Palgrave Handbook of Decolonising Entrepreneurship. Palgrave MacMillan, Cham, pp. 437-461.

There are entrepreneurs and 'other entrepreneurs'. The former are often studied in mainstream Western research resulting on their universalisation and the neglect of the latter. This is also the case in tourism entrepreneurship studies. As such, calls to redefine the conceptualisation of tourism entrepreneurs have emerged highlighting the need for breaking away from Western-centric forms. To answer this call, this chapter presents the case of tourism entrepreneurs in the periphery of Lima that aim to conserve a fragile ecosystem through ecotourism. However, their operations take place in a context that diverts from the norm. An informal housing market, a profitable

illegal economic activity (i.e. land-trafficking), and alleged collusion between criminal organisations and local authorities have shaped a violent context that challenges and conditions the operations of these tourism entrepreneurs. This chapter aims to contribute to decolonising tourism entrepreneurship by analysing how a non-Western and violent context shapes the relationships between entrepreneurs and host community, authorities, visitors, and profit. This way, this chapter demonstrates the relevance of 'listening to other voices' to better understand the nature of tourism entrepreneurship.

BOOK SECTION: *Cinpoes, Nicoleta* (2026) **'STRANGE MATTERS': SILVIU PURCARETE'S ABSURDIST MACBETH (2007, 2021)**. In: *Macbeth in Modern European Culture*. Bloomsbury, London, pp. 153-168.

This chapter argues that absurdist aesthetics provides the lens through which to see Shakespeare in post-traumatic theatre (as distinct from the post-dramatic). Focusing on Silviu Purcărete's staging of Eugene Ionesco's *Macbeth* (2007 and 2021), it explores how the dynamics between the Shakespeare–Ionesco encounter has been echoing in staging *Macbeth* in Romania. This 'theatricality of political and social criticism ... in absurdist idiom' which emerged as a necessary form of double-talk during the Cold War has 'metamorphosed after communism into a highly elaborate aesthetics in which critical perspectives were deeply embedded' (Shevstova & Innes 2013:112). Instead of losing its currency post-1989 (Billington 2007), it continues to have traction, at least east of Berlin, three decades on – and, with the Cold War having entered new stages since Russia's invasion of Ukraine, it looks like both the 'work' and its 'reception' have a lot more work to do yet.

JOURNAL ARTICLE: *Hodgkins, Angela and Solvason, Carla* (2026) **A RELATIONSHIP- BASED APPROACH TO TACKLING UNEMPLOYMENT IN DISADVANTAGED COMMUNITIES**. *International Journal of Social Pedagogy*, 15 (1 [3]). pp. 1-15. ISSN 2051-5804

As social pedagogues we have a keen interest in initiatives that benefit groups that are often overlooked, or groups suffering from multiple disadvantages. The Wellbeing Jobs Club is one such initiative. Set up by a community trust this club takes a holistic approach to supporting those trapped within the negative cycle of unemployment, recognising the impacts that this can have upon mental health and overall wellbeing. Our evaluation of the service collected survey and interview data from both club participants and job coaches. Our key findings included that: all participants were free to attend under their own volition and were always met with unconditional positive regard. This service provided a source of care and support with everyday challenges that caused attendees high anxiety and unique needs of a very diverse group were catered for. This club was clearly a lifeline to some of the most vulnerable in our communities and we call for increased funding for this, and similar initiatives.

BOOK SECTION: *Bennett, Kay and Mander, Sarah* (2026) **INCLUSIVE EDUCATIONAL PRACTICE FOR CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE AND THEIR FAMILIES**. In: *Inclusive Education Perspectives on Pedagogy, Policy and Practice*. Taylor & Francis, Abingdon, pp. 44-54.

This chapter is presented in two sections, first focussing on the contested topics of poverty and inclusion through the lens of lived experiences of children, young people and their families in relation to inclusive educational experiences. The impact of material deprivation on educational attainment is examined. Labels, such as 'hard to reach' are discussed, enabling reflection on their function in further diminishing marginalised and excluded families. The chapter critiques the progress of UK educational institutions to improve educational outcomes for children and young people experiencing inequalities, illustrating structural barriers which exacerbate exclusion. The next section focuses on the role of parents and carers as service shapers to influence quality early years' educational practice for young children experiencing special educational needs and disabilities (SEND). Conceptualising service shaping as a model of participation, the chapter explains how participatory approaches can improve educational outcomes for young children. A case study undertaken in a Sure Start Children's Centre demonstrates how parental/carers participation can increase service user satisfaction and improve accessibility for children experiencing disability. Recommendations for practice include how to amplify parent voice to achieve the highest levels of participation and consider the willingness and abilities of organisations to position parents/carers as authentic partners.

SUSTAINABLE FUTURES

JOURNAL ARTICLE: *Bell, Robin, Kirchberg, Liza and Warren, Vessela (2026)* **APPLYING THE GROUNDED DELPHI METHOD TO IDENTIFY CONSENSUS: FINDING CONSENSUS WITHIN SUSTAINABILITY MANAGERS REGARDING THE CORPORATE SUSTAINABLE TRANSFORMATION PROCESS.** Sage Research Methods: Business and Management. pp. 1-21.

The Grounded Delphi Method is an effective research design for building expert consensus and developing new theoretical insights in situations where knowledge is emergent or fractured. The method is particularly useful when the research seeks to explore complex, ill-defined issues through the structured views, opinions, and perspectives of experts. Unlike traditional Delphi studies, which often focus on forecasting or prioritization, the Grounded Delphi Study integrates principles of Grounded Theory, specifically qualitative coding techniques such as open, axial, and selective coding into the Delphi process. This enables the generation of thematic categories from qualitative data in the first round, which are then refined and validated in subsequent rounds to achieve consensus. This case study details how the Grounded Delphi Method was utilized to build consensus as to sustainability managers' understanding of the corporate sustainable

transformation process and their responsibilities and barriers in this process. To achieve this, qualitative data was collected through online questionnaires during two rounds of data collection. Through the discussion of the application of the Grounded Delphi Method, this case details the method's strengths, including its ability to build consensus by fostering deep understanding through iterative engagement; to maintain participant anonymity to reduce bias; and to encourage reflective feedback. However, the method also presents challenges, including combining the subjectivity of qualitative interpretation with the objectivity required to measure consensus. Researchers must also carefully manage sampling, design of data collection rounds, participant retention between rounds, and data analysis to maintain methodological rigor.

JOURNAL ARTICLE: *Kumwenda, G., Phiri, A., Chibambo, Z., Kuwali, F., Kashoni, P. and Dixon, Alan (2026)* **DEEP BED FARMING WITH MAIZE–SOYBEAN INTERCROPPING IMPROVES MAIZE YIELD AND SOIL FERTILITY IN NORTHERN MALAWI.** Agrosystems, Geosciences & Environment, 9 (1). pp. 1-18.

In sub-Saharan Africa smallholder farmers face challenges of declining soil fertility, erratic rainfall, low crop yields, and food insecurity. Deep bed farming (DBF), a conservation agriculture-based approach promoted by Tiyeni in Malawi, shows potential to address these issues. This study evaluated the effects of integrating maize (*Zea mays*)–soybean (*Glycine max*) intercropping with DBF on maize grain yield and soil fertility. A split-plot design was used, with cropping systems (CSs) as main plots and tillage systems (TSs) as subplots, replicated three times across three cropping seasons. CS included mono-maize without fertilizer (M), mono-maize with 92 kg N ha⁻¹ (M + 92 N), mono-soybean (S), and maize–soybean (MS) intercropping; TS comprised DBF and conventional tillage (CT). In season two, mono-maize without fertilizer was planted across all plots; in season three, maize was planted with 50 kg

N ha⁻¹. Results showed that MS intercropping under DBF significantly enhanced early maize growth—taller plants, more leaves, and greater leaf area compared to both mono-cropped maize under DBF and all CSs under CT. While M + 92 N yielded the most grain, intercropping showed favorable land productivity (land equivalent ratio > 1.16). Soybean yields were lower in intercrops but improved under DBF. Residual benefits from combined legume-based systems and DBF led to significantly higher maize yields and improved total N, available P, and soil organic carbon in subsequent seasons. Integrating MS intercropping with DBF enhances land-use efficiency and soil fertility, offering a climate-smart, conservation-aligned strategy for sustainable smallholder farming in Malawi and similar agroecological zones.

JOURNAL ARTICLE: *Tapia Arenas, Claudia Andrea, Comont, R., Visser, Fleur and Ashbrook, Kate (2025)*
ASSESSING MONTHLY HABITAT QUALITY FOR BUMBLEBEES IN GRASSLANDS USING A HABITAT TRAIT MODEL: A CASE STUDY IN WORCESTERSHIRE, UK. *Journal of Insect Conservation*, 30 (2). pp. 1-10.

Bumblebee decline in the UK has been associated with land use change from diverse meadows to intensive agriculture. While grasslands can offer the resources that bumblebees need to survive and thrive, the precise availability of resources through the year and between sites can vary due to differences in species composition and management. In this study, we surveyed bumblebee abundance using transects and monitored their habitat using 1-square-meter plots in 2021 and 2022 across five semi-natural grasslands located in Worcestershire, UK. These data were used to build a monthly bumblebee abundance prediction with a Generalized Linear Effects Model (GLME), which was used to rank the sites based on the predicted number of bumblebees. The selected model indicated that bumblebee abundance was most strongly associated with the proportion of the preferred bumblebee forage species and floral richness. Vegetation height and the variation of floral resources coverage had small, non-

significant coefficients in this dataset, but were retained as ecologically relevant descriptors and for their contribution to cross-validated performance. Our model successfully identified sites with the lowest bumblebee abundance, and the monthly assessments provided information to guide management actions to improve the habitat quality at a site scale. Our findings are foundational, suggesting directions for future research in broader geographical contexts to validate and refine habitat assessment methods.

Implications for insect conservation: This study highlights crucial implications for insect conservation, demonstrating that targeted management actions based on monthly habitat assessments can significantly enhance the quality of grassland habitats. This approach not only supports bumblebee populations but also other pollinator species within agricultural landscapes.

JOURNAL ARTICLE: *Erdoğan, İ., Debbarma, R., Sherry, M., Mancak, İ., Grant, M. and Tör, M. (2026)* **GENOME EDITING AND REGENERATION PIPELINE FOR ENGINEERING DISEASE RESISTANCE IN TOMATO USING CRISPR/CAS9.** *Frontiers in Plant Science*, 17. pp. 1-10.

CRISPR/Cas9 (Clustered Regularly Interspaced Short Palindromic Repeats/Cas9)-based genome editing has emerged as a powerful tool for developing disease-resistant crops. Here, we present a comprehensive and reproducible protocol for applying CRISPR/Cas9 genome editing in tomato (*Solanum lycopersicum*), covering guide RNA (gRNA) design using CRISPOR, Golden Gate vector assembly, *Agrobacterium*-mediated transformation, plant regeneration, and molecular validation of edited plants. The workflow integrates standardized bioinformatics and sequencing-based validation

tools, including DSDecodeM, TIDE, and protein-level impact analysis, to confirm targeted mutations and assess editing efficiency. Quantitative benchmarks for regeneration, transformation, and editing efficiencies were provided to support reproducibility. This protocol offers an integrated pipeline for generating and validating targeted gene knockouts in tomatoes and is intended to facilitate functional genomic studies and the development of disease-resistant cultivars. However, it is more widely applicable to gene editing in tomato plants.

HEALTH AND WELLBEING

JOURNAL ARTICLE: *Holland, Christopher, Hughes, J. and De Ste Croix, M. (2026)* **CHRONIC ANKLE INSTABILITY IN FEMALES: EFFECTIVENESS OF HOME-BASED EXERCISES FOLLOWING JOINT MOBILISATION.** *Sport Sciences for Health*, 22 (117). pp. 1-8.

Purpose Ankle sprains are the most common musculoskeletal disorder, with up to 70% developing CAI, linked to mechanical and functional insufficiencies such as reduced DFROM and disrupted afferent transmission. Joint mobilisations improve DFROM, increase afferent input, enhance dynamic balance, and self-reported function in those with ankle sprains. However, research on the combined effect of mobilisation and home-based exercises is limited. The study determines if home-based rehabilitation can enhance functional improvements in WB-DFROM and dynamic postural control, following Grade IV anterior-to-posterior ankle joint mobilisation in females with CAI.

Methods The study adopted a randomised comparative intervention design. Forty-eight female athletes (age 22.5 ± 3.5 years) with unilateral CAI were randomly assigned to intervention or control groups. All participants received three 120-s Grade IV anterior-to-posterior talar joint mobilisation sessions,

48 h apart. The intervention group then completed 4 weeks of home-based rehabilitation exercises, with the control group maintaining normal activities. WB-DFROM and SEBT (ANT, PM, PL) were measured bilaterally before the first session, after the third, and weekly during rehabilitation. The uninjured limb served as a control. Data were analysed using mixed model ANOVAs and effect sizes with Hedge's *g*.

Results Significant differences were found after initial mobilisation in both groups ($p \leq 0.001$) with 'huge' effect sizes. The intervention group showed significant improvements in WB-DFROM, PM, and PL across all 4 weeks, and in ANT for weeks 1, 2, and 3.

Conclusion Joint mobilisation followed by home-based rehabilitation effectively treats CAI in females. An effective protocol includes three 120-s joint mobilisations in the first week, followed by 2 weeks of daily exercises targeting self-mobilisation and dynamic postural control.

JOURNAL ARTICLE: *Chapman, L., Latif, Z., Stack, Rebecca, Keenan, A., Gul, H., Emery, P., Mankia, K., Raza, K. and Siddle, H. (2026)* **LIVING WITH PALINDROMIC RHEUMATISM: A QUALITATIVE INTERVIEW STUDY.** *Rheumatology Advances in Practice*, 10 (1). pp. 1-9.

Objectives Palindromic rheumatism (PR) is an unpredictable and under-researched inflammatory condition, and patients with PR are at risk of developing inflammatory arthritis (IA). This study aimed to explore patients' perceptions and experiences of living with PR, including symptoms, impact, treatment outcomes and potential progression to IA.

Methods Patients were recruited from ongoing cohort studies identifying individuals at risk of developing IA. Semi-structured interviews were conducted at two UK sites. Data were analysed using reflexive thematic analysis. Patient research partners co-produced the interview schedule and contributed to coding decisions.

Results Eight patients were interviewed. Three themes (seven subthemes) were identified: experiencing symptoms (symptoms, perceptions of triggers, referral experiences); impact of symptoms (activity limitations, psychological impact);

treatment expectations and knowledge seeking (treatment outcomes and progression, information and support needs). Symptom severity was likened to that associated with severe physical injury, and PR impacted on daily activities and caused psychological distress, but referral delays were frequently reported. Patients expressed concerns about taking medication for PR, primarily due to side effects. Most highlighted a lack of information about PR (e.g. medication options and self-management advice) but varied in how much they wanted to understand about PR progression and treatment options.

Conclusion This study captured valuable insights into the perceptions and experiences of PR, from the perspective of patients. Findings highlight the severity of symptoms and impact of the condition. Further work to standardize classification criteria and outcome measurement in PR is critical to facilitate meaningful clinical trials in this area.

JOURNAL ARTICLE: Webber, M., Hughes, Elizabeth , Kammersgaard, T., Lloyd, C., Papworth, A. and Yardimci, O. (2026) **MENTAL HEALTH AND ROUTINE POLICE WORK: A SYSTEMATIC SCOPING REVIEW.** Health & Justice, 14 (18). pp. 1-17.

Background There is increasing attention to the amount of contact between police and those experiencing mental health problems. This includes the amount of time and resource spent by police in attending to calls related to mental health, as well as what the role of the police should be in relation to other agencies, including mental health and social care services. The aim of the scoping review was to identify what research has been conducted about police response to mental health in terms of decision making, responses, as well as skills and interventions.

Methods A scoping review using the PRISMA extension for scoping reviews was conducted. Papers were included if they reported research on routine police work when responding to people with mental health problems or experiencing mental distress. Seven databases were searched and a two-stage searching procedure was followed. Screening and data extraction was completed by two researchers working independently.

Results A total of 14,608 texts were found; 7,164 were removed as duplicates and 7,281 were removed after screening titles and abstracts. After full text

screening a further 100 were excluded, leaving 63 papers for data extraction. About half of the papers included police only as participants ($n = 31$) and only 10 papers were from the perspective of people with lived experience. Three themes emerged from the thematic analysis: "policing decisions and actions"; "coordinating with other providers" and "lived experience".

Conclusions Police have skills that have been developed experientially rather than through formal training. There is often a lack of shared understanding between police and other agencies leading to uncertainty about how to best help the person with mental health concerns. Police can and do make a positive contribution to the multi-agency response to people with mental health problems, though should not necessarily be the first (or only) response to mental health calls. Most of the research to date has focused on the police role in mental health crisis. Further research is needed on understanding the police role in encountering mental health problems in routine work (as victims, witnesses or perpetrators).

JOURNAL ARTICLE: Opoku Mensah, Bismark , Fondjo, L. , Nsiah, P. , Edwards, Emma and Gurumalles Prabu, P. (2026) **URINARY EPITHELIAL CELL ADHESION MOLECULE (EPCAM) AS A NONINVASIVE BIOMARKER FOR DETECTING CLINICALLY SIGNIFICANT PROSTATE CANCER IN MEN WITH EQUIVOCAL PSA LEVELS** BioMed Research International, 2026 (1). pp. 1-10.

Background Prostate-specific antigen (PSA) is widely used for prostate cancer screening, but its limited specificity in the diagnostic "grey zone" (4–10 ng/mL) results in unnecessary biopsies. This study evaluated urinary epithelial cell adhesion molecule (EpCAM), normalised to urinary creatinine, as a noninvasive biomarker for identifying clinically significant prostate cancer (csPCa) in men with equivocal PSA levels.

Methods This cross-sectional study included 286 men with PSA levels of 4–10 ng/mL scheduled for prostate biopsy. Histopathological outcomes were classified using ISUP Grade Groups. Urinary EpCAM was quantified by ELISA, and diagnostic performance for csPCa was assessed using nonparametric analyses, ROC curves and logistic regression.

Results Urinary EpCAM/Cr levels increased significantly across diagnostic categories and were highest in men with csPCa ($p < 0.001$). EpCAM/Cr showed strong discrimination for csPCa (AUC = 0.816), outperforming serum PSA and PSA density. In multivariable analysis, EpCAM/Cr (aOR = 1.07; 95% CI: 1.02–1.14; $p = 0.009$) and PSA density (aOR = 1.81; 95% CI: 1.20–3.18; $p = 0.013$) were independent predictors of csPCa, and EpCAM/Cr correlated positively with tumour aggressiveness ($\rho = 0.609$; $p < 0.001$).

Conclusion Urinary EpCAM/Cr shows promise as a noninvasive biomarker for detecting csPCa in men with PSA levels in the diagnostic grey zone.

DIGITAL INNOVATION

JOURNAL ARTICLE: *Opoku Mensah, Bismark , Anim, E., Ahenkorah Fondjo, L. , Gyan, B. and Dapare, P. (2025) DIAGNOSTIC PERFORMANCE OF URINARY ADIPSIN AS A SCREENING BIOMARKER FOR PRE-ECLAMPSIA.* International Journal of Gynecology & Obstetrics, Early (View). pp. 1-8.

Objective This study evaluated the diagnostic performance of urinary adipsin as a potential biomarker for pre-eclampsia screening in a low-resource setting.

Methods A case-control study was conducted involving 150 pregnant women classified into three groups: 50 healthy pregnancies, 50 high-risk pregnancies without pre-eclampsia, and 50 pregnant women clinically diagnosed with pre-eclampsia. Urinary adipsin concentration was measured with a commercial sandwich ELISA kit. Linear regression was conducted to examine the relationship between urinary adipsin levels and pre-eclampsia risk, while receiver operating characteristic (ROC) curve analysis was used to assess the diagnostic performance of urinary adipsin.

Results Urinary adipsin levels were significantly higher in pre-eclamptic women compared to healthy controls and the high-risk group (1258.70 ± 342.88 ng/mg Cr vs. 284.16 ± 24.04 ng/mg Cr and 305.15 ± 36.10 ng/mg Cr; $P < 0.001$). At a cutoff value of 750 ng/mg Cr, urinary adipsin demonstrated a good

diagnostic performance, with a sensitivity of 83.6% and a specificity of 88.9%. Combining urinary adipsin with blood pressure measurements significantly improved the predictive performance ($P < 0.001$), with 96.7% sensitivity, 91.0% specificity, and an area under the curve (AUC) of 0.930. The combination of urinary adipsin, urine protein-to-creatinine ratio (uPCR), and blood pressure measurement further enhanced specificity (99.7%) with a sensitivity of 90.5% (AUC = 0.909).

Conclusion Urinary adipsin showed high sensitivity, specificity, and predictive value in diagnosing pre-eclampsia. This highlights its potential as a non-invasive biomarker for pre-eclampsia screening in low-resource settings. Routine urinary adipsin assay and blood pressure monitoring could enhance early detection strategies and improve maternal and perinatal outcomes.

JOURNAL ARTICLE: *Sohrabi Safa, Nader (2026) TOWARDS PRIVACY-PRESERVING DEEP LEARNING FOR INTELLIGENT IOT BOTNET DETECTION.* Applied Sciences, 16 (3). pp. 1-68.

Internet of Things (IoT) botnets are networks of infected smart devices controlled by attackers, posing a serious cybersecurity challenge. Developing detection approaches that maintain high accuracy while protecting privacy presents considerable challenges, particularly in large and heterogeneous IoT networks. This paper empirically compares three modeling approaches on Bot-IoT and N-BaloT in binary and multiclass settings: hand-crafted machine learning with Random Forest (RF), centralized deep learning (CDL) with DNN/LSTM/BiLSTM, and federated deep learning (FDL) with the same architectures. Model hyperparameters are selected via randomized search on stratified subsets and then fixed for final training. Results show near-perfect performance for all approaches in binary detection: on Bot-IoT, CDL-DNN attains perfect accuracy, and

RF is virtually perfect (only four benign-to-attack false positives), while FDL models are similarly strong with only small false-positive and false-negative counts. On N-BaloT, RF and CDL (especially LSTM) are near-perfect, and FDL is very close to CDL. For multiclass detection, CDL-DNN leads on Bot-IoT, RF remains near-perfect with minimal cross-class confusion, and FDL trails slightly; on N-BaloT, FDL-BiLSTM and RF are essentially perfect, with CDL-LSTM close behind. Overall, the findings validate RF as a competitive classical approach, show where centralized representation learning adds value, and demonstrate that federated training preserves most of the centralized accuracy while avoiding raw-data centralization (data locality) for scalable deployment.

JOURNAL ARTICLE: *Rogers, S., Wedgbury, Kirsty, Wilson, Sarah, Read, A. and Mairs, H. (2026)* **STUDENT SATISFACTION AND SELF-CONFIDENCE IN LEARNING THROUGH PHARMACOLOGY VIRTUAL REALITY SIMULATIONS: A MIXED METHODS EVALUATION.** *Teaching and Learning in Nursing.* pp. 1-6.

Background Pharmacology remains challenging in preregistration nursing education. Virtual reality (VR) may support learning by visualizing medication mechanisms within patient scenarios. This study evaluated preregistration nursing students' satisfaction and self-confidence when learning pharmacology through 3 patient-based VR simulations.

Methods A sequential exploratory mixed-methods design was conducted at a university in the United Kingdom. Phase 1 explored usability and learning experience through focus groups to inform iterative refinements to the simulations. Phase 2 evaluated student satisfaction and self-confidence using the National League for Nursing Student Satisfaction and Self-Confidence in Learning questionnaire.

Qualitative data were analyzed using reflexive thematic analysis, and quantitative data were descriptively summarized.

Results Phase 1 identified themes of presence, flow, usability, learning consequences, and technology adoption. Phase 2 demonstrated high levels of student satisfaction and self-confidence.

Conclusions Patient-based VR pharmacology simulations were associated with high levels of student satisfaction and self-confidence. Immersive visualization embedded within a structured learning sequence may support pharmacology education in preregistration nursing programs. Future research should examine knowledge retention, clinical performance, and transfer to practice.

JOURNAL ARTICLE: *Ejem, Agbaeze, Nwakanma, C. I, Ejem, E. A. and Odii, J. N. (2025)* **EVALUATION OF AN EFFICIENT RING-BASED TOTAL ORDER PROTOCOL IN A FAIRNESS-CONTROLLED ENVIRONMENT.** *Digital,* 5 (4). pp. 1-23.

Crash-tolerant systems rely on total order protocols to ensure consistent request execution across replicated servers. The Logical Clock and Ring (LCR) protocol employs a ring-based, leaderless design that provides a high throughput but suffers latency inefficiencies under a high message concurrency due to its use of vector clocks and a fixed last-process rule for ordering concurrent messages. This paper presents the Daisy Chain Total Order Protocol (DCTOP), an enhanced version of LCR that integrates

Lamport logical clocks for message sequencing and introduces dynamic last-process identification based on sender activity to accelerate message stabilisation and delivery. A modified fairness-control mechanism further balances message distribution among processes. The simulation results show that the DCTOP achieves an over 40% latency reduction compared to LCR while maintaining the same fairness and throughput across various cluster configurations.

BOOK SECTION: *Koven, Mikel (2025)* **RETURN OF THE LIVING SLAVE: JORDAN PEELE'S GET OUT AS ZOMBIE FILM.** In: *The Palgrave Handbook of the Zombie.* Springer Nature Switzerland, Cham, pp. 1-14.

Jordan Peele's 2017 film, *Get Out*, seems far removed from the gut-munching excesses of the zombie movies of George A. Romero or the exotic Haitian "voodoo" ceremonies wherein this folklore originated. However, the connection between the film and the original folk belief traditions is quite pronounced. Firstly, by looking at the Haitian Revolution (1791-1804), and then to the folk beliefs within vodou, specifically those beliefs about zombification, a pattern of denunciation and fearmongering about Haitians and their beliefs spread throughout the (white) Western Euro-

American worlds. The "first black republic" threatened the assumptions of the right of white rule across the eighteenth to the twenty-first centuries. Peele picks up on those white fears and satirically explodes their inherent absurdity with his variation on *Guess Who's Coming to Dinner* (Stanley Kramer, 1968), wherein a young black man finds, at first, a warm liberal welcome at his white girlfriend's family's home. But this warm welcome turns sinister as Chris uncovers the Armitages' plot to re-enslave healthy young African-American men.

COMMUNICATING OUR RESEARCH

RESEARCH SALONS

Inspired by Natalie Clifford Barney, the host of a famous literary salon during the early twentieth century in Paris, Casey Maeve, Lecturer in Sociology, has hosted monthly research salons since 2025. These events aim to foster an informal space for staff and students to discuss their interests and talk about their ideas and works-in-progress in a welcoming, supportive setting.

As well as hosting dance recitals, poetry readings and music performances, Barney's weekly Friday evening events allowed queer women writers and creatives to get feedback and criticism on their work outside of restrictive academic and professional spaces. In this context, the research salon's aims have been to provide a space for members of staff to share (informally) what research they are working on and develop cross-departmental knowledge exchange between researchers, students and members of the public.

23rd October 2025, City Campus

'Lesbian Literary Networks', Casey Maeve, Lecturer in Sociology and Politics

25th November 2025, City Campus

'Sappho's Selene as precursor to Shekhinah: The transmission of moon symbology from classical Greek and neoplatonist sources to the Jewish mystical tradition'

Dr Luke Devine, Head of History & Sociology

Poetry reading and discussion of *Pamela Colman Smith*, Dr Ruth Stacey, Lecturer in Creative Writing

15th December 2025, City Campus

'Analysing The Substance as a feminist body-horror phenomenon'

Morgan Kyeretwie, BA(hons) Sociology and History

'Alone in the Dying Room at Midnight', Prof. Darren Oldridge, Professor of Early Modern History

24th February 2026, City Campus

'Muslim names in Sierra Leone in the 19th century', Malina Yallanki, Doctoral Researcher in History

'Bacbus, the Priestess of the Holy Bottle', Dr Luke Devine, Head of History & Sociology

19th March 2026, City Campus

'Nonbinary identity in the work of Beautiful Confusion Collective'

Dr Daniel Somerville, Senior Lecturer in Theatre, Film and Media Production

'The Origins of the First Crusade Context and Causes (c.600-1096)'

Blake Mitchell, BA(hons) Sociology and History

'Taylor Swift and Fan Cultures', India Denton, MA Cultural Studies

23rd April 2026, City Campus

'Psychopolitics and the new model of power underpinning international aid appeals'

Jack Flinders, MRes Sociology

'Forever vs fog: Twilight's perfect marriage against Silent Hill 2's torment'

Danielle Hopton Jones, Lecturer in Law

'A political analysis of BioShock', Jack Daniels, LLB(hons) Law and Politics

SEX AND THE DEVIL

9 October 2025, Script Haven, Worcester

The Devil has long been associated with dangerous sexual passions. This talk, delivered by Prof. Darren Oldridge, explored the history of this complicated relationship - from the punishment of sexual transgressors in hell to the imagined excesses of seventeenth-century witches - and reflects on some of its implications today.

TALK OF THE DEVIL

13 October 2025, online (Scientific and Medical Network)

The Christian Devil has loomed large in western history, and remains a lively and complicated figure in contemporary culture. This presentation considered the various manifestations of the ancient enemy since the late Middle Ages, with a particular focus on the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. It touched on ideas that are perennially fascinating and tricky, including the nature of temptation and the idea of hell.

DIABOLICAL OLD BOOKS

31 October 2025, The Hive, Worcester

Halloween is a good time to think about the Devil. The Hive has a remarkable selection of early printed books with diabolical themes, including an early account of Oliver Cromwell's alleged meeting with the prince of darkness in Worcester. Prof Oldridge will introduce the demonic topics in these books, most of which were printed in the 1600s.

REPRESENTING THE PAST WITH EMPATHY: THE CASE OF LAURENCE OLIVIER

4 November 2025, Royal Birmingham Conservatoire

Professor Emeritus of Theatre Studies, Claire Cochrane, delivered a talk at the Royal Birmingham Conservatoire looking further into historical performance effect and audience response. The Focusing on Laurence Olivier once dubbed 'the greatest actor in the world', this talk argued the need for 'historiographic empathy' in evaluating the critical records of the past.

MEN, MUSCLE, AND MENTAL HEALTH: AN INTERNATIONAL MEN'S DAY EVENT

19 November 2025, The Hive, Worcester

International Men's Day celebrates men and boys and their diversity, while also drawing attention to the key health and well-being challenges they may face. One growing—but often overlooked—issue is the rise in body image concerns among men (particularly those related to muscle-building) along with an increase in disordered eating/eating disorders. Despite research showing a sharp rise in these issues, men remain underrepresented in both academic studies and mental health support services.

This International Men's Day event, led by researchers at the University of Worcester in collaboration with First Steps ED, aimed to raise awareness of the growing social impact of body image-related issues and the influence these concerns can have on men's mental and physical well-being. The event featured talks and discussions on two key topics: What We Know About Men's Muscle-Oriented Body Image and Eating Concerns (with Dr Christian Edwards), and How We Can/How to Support Men Struggling With These Issues (with George Mycock and William Colgrave).



George Mycock

BEING HUMAN FESTIVAL

6-15 November 2025

Marginalised Motherhoods

SPINNING A YARN: FAMILY, FEELINGS AND FABRIC

7 November 2025, Tudor House Museum, Worcester

This workshop on collecting and preserving family histories, especially stories of motherhood, discussed how these histories are often preserved through heirlooms, possessions and valued belongings, often material goods (such as a baby blanket). Stories connected to these objects are often not written down but are passed on through conversations.

Those in attendance practiced oral history techniques using objects brought with them as a 'conversation starter', as well as making a quilt, using a technique called foundation piecing: stitching together scraps of material, using an easy-to-learn hand-stitched running stitch.



LOVE NOT LACK:

CONVERSATIONS ON BEING CHILDFREE BY CHOICE

8 November 2025, The Kiln, Worcester

This drop-in pop up featured displays and short talks from Dr Anna Muggeridge and Dr Lucy Arnold on historic and literary representations of being childfree in Britain. Attendees also had the option to sign up to be part of an oral history project which seeks to gather stories from people who have consciously decided not to have children.

MUM'S THE WORD

13 November 2025, George Marshall Medical Museum, Worcester

During this event, a series of 'bite-sized' talks, explored representations of being, and not being, a mother in the UK. Attendees also had the opportunity to visit the George Marshall Medical Museum after hours. The museum exhibits Mr. George Marshall's fantastic collection of objects illustrating the way that medicine and healthcare have developed over the past 250 years.

MOTHER FOLK-ERS CRAFTIVIST WORKSHOP

15 November 2025, St Swithun's Church, Worcester

This event allowed attendees to discover stories of 'marginalised' motherhood in literature and history, and reflect on personal experiences of motherhood through crafting.

Mothers have often been, and continue to be marginalised: that is, their lives are made harder because of their gender, race, or class, at work, on public transport, or when they try and access health care. But mothers have also fought hard for their rights! In addition to crafting activities, Dr Anna Muggeridge and Dr Lucy Arnold delivered a series of short talks.



TOWARDS TOURETTIC STUDIES: THE FUTURE OF TOURETTE SYNDROME RESEARCH

24 November 2025, Online

Dr Daniel Whittaker, Senior Lecturer in Education, delivered a talk entitled 'Who owns Tourette Syndrome as a concept?' as part of an online symposium on the 24th November.

The event brought together key stakeholders and thinkers in Tourette Syndrome research spaces to imagine a future of Tourettic studies, which actively works to bring together disciplines and sectors, and uses the Tourettic (culture, politic, aesthetic, joy, woe, experience and so on) as a starting point for research instead of employing a sole focus on syndrome.

THE MYSTERIES OF THE SHAKESPEARE'S MARRIAGE

2 December 2025, the Hive

Following the sell-out success of our previous event earlier this year, Nicoleta Cinpoes, Professor of Shakespeare Studies was joined by Rev Dr Paul Edmondson (Shakespeare Birthplace Trust), Professor Gary Watt (University of Warwick) and law expert Prof Gary Watt (University of Warwick), to explore the mysteries of Shakespeare's marriage.

This was a rare opportunity to view the Shakespeare marriage documentation, held in The Hive, followed by an exploration of the mysteries of the documents, marriage in the period and the plays with internationally renowned Shakespeare experts, in light of recent scholarship and the two documents discovered in 2025 questioning the traditional narratives of the Shakespeare's marriage.

Photo Credit: Explore the Past



WHY ARE WE OBSESSED WITH JANE AUSTEN?!

3 December 2025, the Hive

Over the last quarter of a century in particular, a growing interest and demand for all things Austen has seen numerous television and film adaptations - in settings as diverse as India to an American high school. There has been book continuations and re-imaginings, plays, musicals and significant critical re-appraisal. And that is not to mention the museums, tours, societies and festival, and of course merchandise, all celebrating the beloved author.

As part of a year of celebration to mark 250 years since Jane Austen's birth, Dr Sharon Young, Course Leader for undergraduate English Literature, Prof. Nicoleta Cinpoes, Professor of Shakespeare Studies and Dr Whitney Standlee, former Senior Lecturer in English Literature came together to answer the question: what is her secret? why have her novels endured the test of time? And how do we explain our enduring fascination with this author and her six finished novels?



L-R: Dr Whitney Standlee and Dr Sharon Young

CHRISTMAS CRACKED

9-10 December 2025, the Hive, Worcester

TINSEL & TINKERING: THE CHRISTMAS TRADITIONS OF CRAFT AND DECORATION IN A MODERN SOCIETY

9 December 2025

It wouldn't be Christmas without 'decking the halls', or Nanna's handknitted jumpers. Join us as we explore gift-giving, decoration, and Christmas craft and how they are connected to gender and class.

Esther Dobson, *Associate Lecturer in History*

CHRIST-LESS-MAS: THE PRE-CHRISTIAN AND SECULAR WINTER FESTIVAL

9 December 2025

This talk will explore how pre-Christian winter festivals informed and shaped Christmas practices and how Christmas has transformed into the largest annual festival in the UK despite a decline of Christianity and the rise of a secular and/or multifaith society.

Holly Barnes-Bennetts, *Lecturer in Media and Culture*

REINDEER & SNOWFLAKE SECRETS: UNWRAPPING THE SCIENCE BEHIND FESTIVE WONDERS

10 December 2025

Can Santa's reindeer really fly? And why is every snowflake unique? Explore the biology of antlered aeronauts and the physics behind ice crystals to discover how science explains the sparkle of the season.

Dr Kate Ashbrook, *Senior Lecturer in Biology*



L-R: Holly Barnes-Bennetts and Esther Dobson

THE FALL OF THE FOX-NORTH COALITION AND WARREN HASTINGS AS COLLATERAL DAMAGE

7 January 2026, Pembroke College, University of Oxford

As part of the Annual Conference for the British Society of Eighteenth-Century Studies (BSECS), Dr Chris Monaghan; Principal Lecturer in Law, delivered a paper as part of a panel that explored the impeachment of Warren Hastings, the first governor general of Bengal. Hastings was a controversial figure who ended up being impeached and his impeachment trial lasted for over seven years in the House of Lords. Dr Monaghan's paper looked at the consequences of George the third's decision to dismiss the infamous coalition government in December 1783 and why this then led to Hastings eventual impeachment. The annual in-person meeting of BESCS is Europe's largest and most prestigious annual conference dealing with all aspects of the history, culture, and literature of the long eighteenth century. This year marked the conference's 55th event, with a theme of 'Big and Small' to recognise the 300th anniversary of Jonathan Swift's *Gulliver's Travels*.

THE GAME'S AFOOT: UNDERSTANDING ANKLE INJURIES FOR S&C COACHES

15 January 2026, Online

Dr. Christopher Holland, Head of Department for Sport Management, Therapy and Exercise at the University, and Chair of the Society of Sports Therapists, delivered a webinar in January discussing the key aspects of ankle injuries for S&C coaches. Dr Holland is a Certified Strength and Conditioning Specialist and Graduate Sports Therapist with over 20 years' experience in elite sport, rehabilitation, and academia. His research centres around chronic ankle instability.

This webinar; delivered as part of the International Universities Strength and Conditioning Association, also serves as Christopher's inauguration as a Master International Strength and Conditioning Practitioner (mISCP) with the IUSCA.

THE POLITICS OF MOTHERHOOD

5-6 February 2026, Online

Researchers at the University are hosted a two-day online conference in February focused on the history of people's idea and experiences of motherhood in the last century.

It explored how things have changed since 1900, drawing together over 60 individual papers exploring motherhood in contemporary and historical settings in Britain and Ireland, from a variety of disciplines.

This conference was part of a UKRI Future Leaders' Fellowship 'Voices of Motherhood' Project led by the University's Lecturer in History, Dr Anna Muggeridge. It aims to explore how women were politicised by their experiences of motherhood.

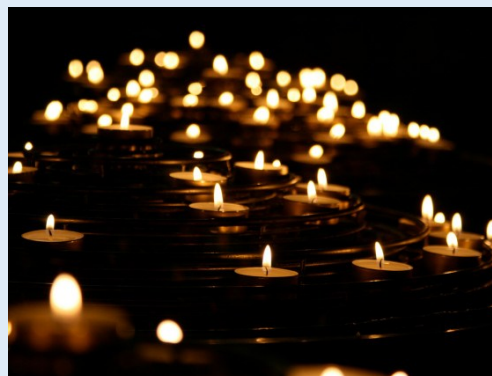
With scientific and medical advances impacting practices of pregnancy, birth, and infant and mother care, and policy and legislation responding to social and economic changes, giving new responsibilities and rights to mothers, Dr Muggeridge says all this has affected the experience of motherhood. With this in mind, the conference sought to define and explore motherhood from different angles.



THE HOLOCAUST: UNDERSTANDING THE ROLE OF DIVINE PRESENCE IN JEWISH HISTORY, TRADITION, AND RESPONSES TO AUSCHWITZ

5 February 2026, The Hive

Dr. Luke Devine examines the role of divine presence in Jewish history, tradition, and responses to the Holocaust. In the process, Luke identifies how traditional understandings of divine presence, Shekhinah, in Jewish history, tradition, and modernity have underpinned responses to Auschwitz. These responses have precedents in earlier Jewish traditions and in new and developing Judaism that continue to wrestle with the impact and legacy of Auschwitz and the question of divine presence in history since biblical and rabbinic times. In particular, the lecture focuses on Shekhinah as a continuity and presence in shaping understandings of suffering both historically and in responding to the Holocaust.



ENGLISH, MEDIA & CULTURE SERIES

A series of talks delivered by English, Media and Culture researcher at the University were delivered throughout Spring at the Hive library in Worcester. The mix of workshops and short classes were designed to give attendees a taster of the topics offered within the English, Media and Culture department, as well as an accessible insight into their research practices.

HOW TO WRITE YOUR BEST "BADDIE"

11 February 2026

Dr Charley Barnes, *Lecturer in Cultural Studies*

HOW TO FINISH A NOVEL (AND NOT JUST START ONE)

18 February 2026

Dr Ruth Stacey, *Lecturer in Creative Writing*

IN SEARCH OF A HERO: SHERLOCK HOLMES AND A STUDY IN SCARLET

25 February 2026

Dr Sharon Young, *Senior Lecturer in English Literature*

NOT JUST KID'S STUFF: WHAT WRITING FOR CHILDREN SAYS ABOUT LIFE

11 March 2026

Prof. Jean Webb, *Professor of International Children's Literature*

FAT ACTIVISM: THE GRASSROOTS ACTIVISM BEHIND BODY POSITIVITY

18 March 2026

Robyn Platt, *Lecturer in Sociology*

THE WORLD WE LIVE IN NOW: SURVEILLANCE SOCIETY AND A CHANGING SOCIAL LANDSCAPE

1 April 2026

Dr Barbara Mitra, *Principal Lecturer in Media & Film Studies*

VIDEO TELESTRATION AT CHELSEA ACADEMY

26th February 2026, Chelsea Football Club

Following research conducted with MSc Sport students, Senior Lecturer in Performance Analysis, Dr John Francis, was invited to deliver CPD to 15 Chelsea Academy performance analysts around telestration, feedback and learning.

Telestration is the visual annotation of video (lines, arrows, shapes, highlights, pauses) used to direct attention to critical cues such as space, movement, timing and relationships between players. Therefore, telestration is a tool for attention guidance, a cognitive scaffold and a clarity mechanism when precision surrounding learning is needed. It can reduce misunderstanding and support players with lower tactical knowledge or remove language barriers.

This work enables Chelsea to enhance its telestration processes by shifting from a tools-led approach to a learning-centred, age-appropriate design framework. Rather than defaulting to dense, coach-led annotation, analysts now periodise telestration across the week and adapt its use to the cognitive maturity, experience, and developmental needs of each age group.

ENGINE ROOM LECTURES

The Engine Room Lectures series brought experts at the forefront of their fields to the public. Dr Lucy Arnold, Course Leader for English Literature and organiser of the series, said: *"These lectures are about taking important academic discussions beyond the university and making them accessible to people who are genuinely passionate about these subjects. Attendees will gain new perspectives and be invited to think differently about familiar questions."*

KEEPING HOLD: A HISTORY OF POSSESSION IN EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY BRITAIN

25 February 2026, The Hive

Dr Kate Smith, University of Birmingham

What does it mean to own something? What did this relationship of possession mean in the past? This lecture explored these questions by looking to the eighteenth century, a period when people came to own more, but also when people wrestled with what (or more pointedly who) could be owned.

It examined understandings of ownership by studying instances of loss and the ways in which people responded to these experiences by seeking out reclamation. It followed attempts to find lost dogs, reclaim forgotten watches, identify missing bank notes and pursue runaways. In following these stories, it drew on anthropology, sociology and literary studies to show how they are revealing of understandings of ownership, but also the self and self-worth at the dawn of the modern age.

STITCHING THE WORLD WITHIN AND WITHOUT HILARY MANTEL'S CROMWELL TRILOGY

4 March 2026, The Hive

Dr Lucie Bea Dutton, Independent Scholar

Using a long term sewing project inspired by Hilary Mantel's Cromwell Trilogy, this lecture explored how her descriptions of needlework have led to a body of stitched artworks including Letters to Cromwell, the Cromwell Cloke, the Cromwell Narrative Cloth, The Book of Queens, and the Wolf Hall Quilt.

Textiles are central to Mantel's Cromwell Trilogy, woven through the narrative as thread through fabric. Stitchery is ever-present: from the child Jo's awkward little backstitch in Wolf Hall to the treasonous embroidery of Margaret Pole in The Mirror and the Light. Queens' initials are sewn and unsewn as fortunes rise and fall.

Mantel's writing of the act of stitching, combined with archival research, inspires my creative practice. An inventory of long-lost objects is reinvigorated when its contents are stitched onto cloth. Letters to Cromwell can be represented as entries on a spreadsheet, or be reimagined and sewn into a reconstituted "letters-in" collection.

A STORY ABOUT MAKING AND PRINTING BOOKS, CONNECTING WITH PEOPLE AND PLACES THROUGH RESEARCH AND STUDIO PRACTICE

15 April 2026, The Hive

Dr Angie Butler, University of the West of England

'The object we call a book is not the real book, but its potential...' (Rebecca Solnit).

Introducing Book Arts practice and research through examples of historical and contemporary writing, visuals, actions and experiences. The talk was divided into chapters, with each relating to an artefact, project or event that combined knowledge, creative disciplines and methods together, working with people and environments associated to book practices. The book is celebrated as a vital visual art form, where the book format itself is an integral part of artistic expression, blending literary and visual elements and challenging traditional boundaries between artistic disciplines.

NEMLA 2026 CONFERENCE

6 March 2026, Pittsburgh, US (hybrid)

Dr Luke Devine and Casey Maeve recently presented online at the prestigious Northeast Modern Language Association's (NeMLA) 2026 conference (6 March 2026). Luke and Casey presented at the panel: "Sapphic Echoes: Representations of Female Desire."

"Suffering Sapphos!': Renee Vivien and Natalie Barney's queer poetics at the fin de siècle"

Casey's paper focused on the Sapphic poets Renee Vivien and Natalie Barney, who were both active at the fin-de-siècle in re-writing the previously heterocentric Sapphic canon. Casey explored Vivien and Barney's Sapphic, "lesbian," relationship and its manifestation in poetic verse and the utilisation of Sappho's classical Greek aesthetic. In doing so, utilising queer perspectives, Casey highlighted complex non-normative literary contributions to the Victorian canon, particularly in how Vivien and Barney used Sapphic discourses to covertly signal to the queer community while simultaneously eulogising the ancient "Lesbian Poet."

"Sappho, gendered moon symbology, and its echoes in neo-Platonism and Jewish mysticism"

Luke's paper examined the gendering of the moon in Sappho's earliest fragments and its impact not only on Greek theology and philosophy and the construction of Selene, but also on Jewish mysticism. Luke's paper tracked the construction, gender, and role of Shekhinah in Jewish mysticism, back through neo-Platonism to Selene, and to the Sapphic fragments. In the process, Luke showed how Sapphic echoes continued to influence later Greek and Jewish philosophical and theological traditions.

DIVIDED WORLD, SHARED FUTURE

7 March 2026, St John's Campus

The Sustainable Environments Research Group held a conference at the University's St John's Campus in March around the theme of identifying and addressing global divisions and challenges to 'build pathways for a more sustainable future'. The conference responded to the 2025 UN 'Be Hope' report which stated:

"We live in a world that feels like it's teetering. We're surrounded ...by signs of despair. Our trust in institutions and each other is eroding. Inequality is on the rise and democracy in retreat. Countries, communities and families are divided"



Tom Collins MP

The conference brought together a panel of speakers, including Worcester MP Tom Collins, Steve Dent, Chair of Trustees at Worcester Community Garden, as well as academics from Worcester and Lancaster University, to examine how global instability is affecting everyday life, and what practical steps can be taken to create positive change.

THE SENSATIONAL LIFE OF SHEILA SCOTT

10 March 2026, the Hive

To mark International Women's Day, a special event was held at the Hive to celebrate the extraordinary life and achievements of Sheila Scott OBE, one of Britain's most accomplished aviators.

Born in Worcester in 1922, Sheila Scott became a trailblazer in aviation, breaking more than 100 flying records during her career, and making three solo flights around the world among many other spectacular achievements. A blue plaque was installed at RGS Worcester in 2023 in her honour, and back in 2010, the University of Worcester named one of its buildings after her.

Organised by Tom Mandall, Academic Liaison Librarian for Arts and Humanities, the event explored Scott's groundbreaking accomplishments, her Worcester roots, and the lasting legacy she left behind.

ANNUAL RESEARCH LECTURE: 'JUSTICE FOR VICTIMS AS WELL AS DEFENDANTS: IS THAT IMPOSSIBLE?'

18 March 2026, Jenny Lind Building

The Constitutions, Rights and Justice Research Group's Annual Research Lecture, took place on Wednesday, March 18. The lecture entitled 'Justice for victims as well as defendants: Is that impossible?' was delivered by Dame Vera Baird DBE KC, who is the Chair of the Criminal Cases Review Commission. She is a barrister and politician who has held roles as a Government Minister, Police and Crime Commissioner, and Victims' Commissioner for England and Wales.

TRUE CRIME AND BRITISH CULTURE SYMPOSIUM: 'AN AWKWARD MARRIAGE: CONSIDERING THE SERIAL KILLER'S SOCIAL STANDING IN A CHANGING BRITISH CULTURE'

30 March 2026, City Campus

This conference; organised by Lecturer in Cultural Studies, Dr Charley Barnes, brought together academics to discuss how the serial killer figure has featured historically in this landscape, into a contemporary setting. The event offered distinct, unique and nuanced perspectives from leading voices in the industry offering ground-breaking research and theories into British culture and society.

Professor David Wilson, a leading expert in Criminology and serial killer culture, delivered a keynote address entitled 'There is Attraction of Repulsion for Me'. David spoke about the ethical dimensions of true crime and the ways in which we are both attracted to and repulsed by some of true crime's practices. In conjunction with this, he also spoke to the tensions that exist between true crime and criminology, and how both areas might be enriched by a nuanced engagement with each other.

Papers presented throughout the day addressed both well-known names within British serial killing history - such as Fred and Rose West - to lesser known names, alongside explorations of queer theory, representations of evil, and the ethical queries that relate to true crime.

SOFT BODIES, COLD MACHINES

17 April - 2 August 2026, arebyte Gallery, Camden, London

Amber Sparrey, Technical Manager and Associate Lecturer at the University of Worcester's Institute of Arts and Humanities, was selected as the winner of arebyte* Gallery's Hotel Generation 2025; a national award supporting digital artists. Following her success, she hosted a solo exhibition *Soft Bodies, Cold Machines* at the arebyte Gallery in Camden, London.

She said: "It's a multidisciplinary installation, merging sculpture, film and interactive technology. It examines how nostalgia and technology shape the way we perceive ourselves and our bodies online. The show will blur the line between physical and virtual space, inviting viewers into a nostalgic dreamworld."

Under artist name, Ambie Drew, Amber purchased and tested popular beauty gadgets promoted to her through social media ads. The artworks that emerge from this process reflect both the physical and psychological impact of living amongst a constant stream of images and consumption. As boundaries blur between private and public life, human and machine, and reality and representation; the 'girl-bedroom' is reimaged as a cybernetic organism where these forces collide.



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