



UNIVERSITY of
WORCESTER

RESEARCH

Autumn 2025

@worc



WELCOME

Welcome to the latest issue of Research@worc. Our feature story focuses on an important new 5-year programme of research, led by the University and funded by a National Institute of Health Research *Mental Health Leaders Award*. The THRIVE programme seeks to understand mental health challenges in the significantly rural counties of Herefordshire and Worcestershire and to develop interventions and support for adults and young people with severe mental illness not only across the two counties but more widely. In so doing, the programme will address marked health inequalities in the region *and* nationally, particularly within marginalised communities.



Prof. John-Paul Wilson
Pro Vice Chancellor Research

This rural health focus is picked up elsewhere in the issue as we highlight another new, 30-month project examining arthritis in farming communities. The research, funded by the Nuffield Foundation, that brings together researchers in geography, social policy and allied health, seeks to understand the factors that underpin the high prevalence of arthritis among farmers and to develop interventions aimed at prevention and at enabling sufferers to live well with the condition. Here too, the project is focused on Herefordshire and Worcestershire but seeks to identify UK-wide interventions.

These new research programmes highlight three key areas for the University's research going forward: an emphasis on *applied* and interdisciplinary health and social care research; a focus on rurality, recognising that much research takes place in urban contexts; and a concentration on place-based, regional research which addresses national or global challenges.

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Communicating our Research

Some of the recent public and community engagement highlights.



Esther Dobson | e.dobson@worc.ac.uk
Editor, copywriter and designer

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

IN BRIEF

SPORT RESEARCHERS TAKE DIABETES IN SPORT CAMPAIGN TO PARLIAMENT

An article co-produced by Dr Emma Richardson; Senior Research Fellow in Inclusive Sport, looking at how diabetes impacts people's ability to take part in sport and physical activity has been used to inform a parliamentary debate.

The idea behind this research was that of Chris Bright; a University of Worcester graduate who advocates for greater support to enable people with diabetes to participate in sport. Chris, who has Type 1 diabetes himself, wants to see better provision made for people with diabetes to give them equitable access to physical activity. Using a number of studies in addition to their own, Chris approached his local MP, who has now raised the issue in a parliamentary debate.

Chris said, "There are 3.5 million people living with diabetes that are also categorised as living with a hidden disability. You would expect some sort of provision for those living with a form of disability. A number of disabilities are covered in sporting pathways and actually have specific categories but for diabetes that doesn't exist. It's trying to inspire change around that. The insights from the national survey are powerful in expressing those challenges."



POWER2PLAY REPORT PRESENTED AT DOWNING STREET



Dr Pamela Murray, Senior Lecturer in Leadership & Organisational Behaviour in Worcester Business School was involved in the launch of The Power 2 Play Report in June. The new report is supported by Alliance 4 Children, of which Dr Murray is an ambassador and co-chair of the physical activity group, and the University of Winchester.

Dr Murray, along with others, attended the House of Lords Reception event at which the Report was launched. Interested parties then made their way to hand in the Report to 10 Downing Street. Dr Murray subsequently gave a presentation at the V&A Museum on 'Playful Awareness' which outlined key policy recommendations that embed unplugged/real world play in a sustainable manner and identified protective measures for plugged in/virtual world play.

The Power 2 Play Report, which looks at the importance of play in children's early years and beyond, makes a number of recommendations to policy makers, including recognising play as a fundamental right and upholding children's right to play in diverse settings, prioritising free, unstructured play.

Dr Pamela Murray pictured with The Rt Hon. Baroness D'Souza CMG, Vice-President of the Alliance 4 Children, and Dr Kristy Howells, Co-Chair of the Physical Activity Working Group, Alliance4Children.

ARTHRITIS AND FARMERS IN ENGLAND: IMPACTS, ADAPTATIONS, AND PREVENTION

Researchers from the University of Worcester have been successful in securing funding from the Nuffield Foundation to investigate the prevalence and impact of arthritis among farmers and farm workers in the UK. The project; led by Prof. Nick Evans from the School of Science and the Environment, is funded as part of the Oliver Bird fund which seeks to improve the well-being of individuals with musculoskeletal (MSK) conditions, including rheumatoid diseases, through coordinated policy, practice, and research efforts. The research team; which also includes Prof. Dez Kyte, Dr Peter Unwin, and Dale Turner, purport,

“There is little recent UK research about arthritis in farming communities. Research in the USA has found that arthritis is ever-present in a range of farming contexts. The prevalence of the condition was found to increase markedly over the age of 45, with hip and knee problems being particularly associated with the forceful nature of farm work.

The demanding nature of farming, coupled with socio-economic pressures and cultural stereotypes, often leads to neglect of personal health. Older farmers are particularly susceptible to arthritis and often continue working despite the pain. Additionally, farmers are known ‘under-users’ of NHS services, lying beyond the general reach of primary care organisational structures by virtue of their isolated rural locations.”

The research team aim to bridge the gap in knowledge and policy, shifting focus from medicalised intervention to prevention by:

- Gaining an understanding of modern farming working practices and the associated incidence of arthritis to provide insights into the nature of the condition amongst English farmers.
- Capturing the lived experience of arthritis in farming communities in Herefordshire and Worcestershire.
- Better understanding the lifestyle and behavioural factors at play, developing a range of practical solutions to encourage both prevention and living well with arthritis.

Starting in November 2025 and expected to run until April 2028, the project will utilise a multidisciplinary conceptual framework to explore cultural, occupational, and structural factors influencing arthritis in farming communities. The research will begin with a review of UK and international evidence. Farmers will be engaged through agricultural events and farm visits, aiming to observe working practices and lifestyle adaptations and discuss the most practical interventions from existing occupational therapy. Health professionals will audit and assess adaptations, which will be compared with American-based factsheets and so may result in new UK versions. A particular aim is to support the delivery of new, alternative guidance and interventions for farmers, drawing upon their own experiences, knowledge, and assessments of efficacy.



UNIVERSITY BECOMES TECHNICIAN COMMITMENT SIGNATORY

The University of Worcester has pledged support to its technical staff by signing the Technician Commitment. In doing so, the University pledges to continued recognition and career development of those staff working in technical roles. Worcester employs around 60 technicians across all eight of its academic schools and institutes, who support learning and teaching, as well as research and consultancy. The Technician Commitment is a nationwide initiative aimed at ensuring visibility, recognition, career development, and sustainability for technical staff working across all disciplines in higher education and research. Pro Vice Chancellor Research, Professor John-Paul Wilson added: "Our technicians are instrumental in the delivery of our teaching and research. While they often operate behind the scenes, they are actively involved in co-authoring research publications and in the direct delivery of teaching to our students, as well as being active professionals in their own field. In becoming a signatory to the Technician Commitment, we are strengthening an institutional commitment to provide the support, recognition and development opportunities our technician's deserve."

EVALUATION HUB TO SUPPORT HEALTH, SOCIAL CARE AND COMMUNITY SECTORS

A new evaluation hub has been developed to offer a range of flexible and bespoke services to support evaluation in the health, social care and community sectors. The hub will be managed by Dr Catharine Rose and Jess Howdle and draws on expertise from inter-disciplinary team members from across UoW. If you are approached about a funded evaluation opportunity in health or social care, the hub team may be able to support you to develop and deliver this work. A webpage is currently being developed for the hub, but if you'd like to find out more about the hub in the meantime, please contact Dr Catharine Rose (c.rose@worc.ac.uk).

UFHRD CONFERENCE AWARD

A paper authored by Chris Rebehn, Dr Annica Lau, Prof. Lynn Nichol and Prof. Robin Bell, was awarded 'Best Paper' in the Practitioner Research and Learning and Education Stream, at the University Forum for Human Resource Development (UFHRD) conference at Ulster University in June. The paper, 'Advocating Relational HRD in Academia and Practice, the Psychological Contract in Germany', explores why the concept of psychological contracts is relatively unknown in Germany and whether it would be beneficial to promote and utilize it. Besides compiling a table as overview of existing German literature and research about psychological contracts, it looked into which specific elements of the German context might explain why the concept has not found widespread attention. In addition, an argument was developed for doing so, highlighting the benefits of incorporating psychological contracts into research, teaching and practice as well as specific recommendations for doing so.



DR SEAN BRACKEN APPOINTED TO DISABILITY SUPPORT ADVISORY GROUP

Dr Sean Bracken; Principal Lecturer for Education and Inclusion, has been appointment to the project advisory group for a 57 million AUD Australian Federally established Disability Support Program Capacity Building Fund. On behalf of the Department for Education, the group will have responsibility for shaping inclusion in the Australian HE sector over the forthcoming 2-3 years.

PROF. JO SMITH AWARDED INTERNATIONAL PRIZE FOR EARLY INTERVENTION AND MENTAL HEALTH

Jo Smith OBE, Emeritus Professor of Early Intervention and Psychosis, won the Richard Wyatt Award from the International Early Psychosis Association.

The award is given for outstanding contributions to the field of early intervention in psychosis and mental health, recognising individuals whose work has significantly advanced research, clinical practice, or advocacy in mental health.

Professor Smith was selected as the recipient for her leadership and dedication to transforming early intervention in psychosis throughout a career spanning more than four decades, which has seen her directly shape national and international policy and practice.

This is the latest prestigious accolade to be awarded to Prof. Smith, after she was awarded an OBE in the King's Birthday Honours in 2023 for her services to Higher Education and her contributions to student suicide prevention and response.

Professor Smith has been involved in a number of research studies which have focussed on the needs of young people first experiencing episodes of psychosis and their families and has become one of the world's leading authorities on the subject.



THE IMPEACHMENT OF WARREN HASTINGS: THE FIRST GOVERNOR GENERAL OF INDIA

The Constitutions, Rights and Justice Research Group jointly hosted a conference with The History of Parliament Trust on Thursday 3rd and Friday 4th July 2025.

The conference focussed on the trial of Warren Hastings, one of the seminal moments in late 18th-century politics. The former governor general of Bengal, Hastings, was accused of a variety of crimes relating to abuse of the local population and peculation. Attitudes to him varied widely, with him attracting high profile supporters, while the case against him was driven forward by stars of the Whig party, such as Edmund Burke and Charles James Fox. In raw political terms it helped precipitate the collapse of any sense of unity within the former governing Whigs and helped William Pitt the Younger cement his hold on power. Quite as importantly, the trial is vital in understanding how British society viewed the government of colonial India and how Indian society responded to the process of colonization.

SLAVERY AND ABOLITIONISM IN SIERRA LEONE

An article on 'Slavery and Abolitionism in Sierra Leone' has recently been published in the Oxford Research Encyclopedia of [African History](#). The article, co-authored by Prof. Suzanne Schwarz and her former PGR student Dr. Mégane Coulon, was based on original research on archival collections in the Sierra Leone Public Archives in Freetown. When the article was accepted for publication, Professor Schwarz was informed that 'This is an excellent article, thorough, well-written and incorporating the latest research'. This article, which gave Dr. Coulon her first opportunity to publish the findings of some of her research for her Ph.D, can be accessed through the UW's E-Resources.

The Editorial Board and the [Editorial Advisory Board](#) of the Oxford Research Encyclopedia of African History are international in scope, and include leading specialists on African history from Africa, Europe and the USA.

RESEARCHER PRESENTS AT HOUSE OF LORDS EVENT

Dr Josie Welsh, Senior Lecturer in Law, was invited to an event at the House of Lords to debate the need for a written constitution in the UK.

The event, while small and exclusive, was attended by some of the most senior Kings Counsels in the country, as well as published authors and leading experts on British constitutional law.

Josie said: "It was fantastic to have the opportunity to speak with these people and make these connections. Since then, I've been sent lots of resources which I can feed into my teaching and research."



DR BARBARA MITRA CO-ORDINATES GLOBAL MEDIA MONITORING PROJECT

Dr Barbara Mitra, Principal Lecturer in Media & Film Studies, acted as the joint England and UK co-ordinator along with Dr Victoria Cann (UEA) for the Global Media Monitoring Project (GMMP). The GMMP takes place every 5 years and is the largest and longest longitudinal study on the gender in the world's media, studying women's presence in relation to men, gender bias and stereotyping in news media content. University colleagues from Journalism, Sport and Business contributed their time to code the representation and portrayal of women and men in the news. Over 120 countries took part in the project and reports will be submitted to the United Nations with Preliminary results being released in early September.

INCLUSION BY DESIGN RESEARCH GROUP PLAYS KEY ROLE IN LAUNCH OF NEW JOURNAL

The Inclusion by Design (IbD) research group has played a central role in the development and publication of a new academic journal titled 'the International Journal for Universal Design and Universal Design for Learning.' A core group of researchers from IbD organised the 'Power of Potential: Sharing Experiences from Universal Design for Learning (UDL) Journeys' conference, which was hosted by the University of Worcester in June 2024. Paper submissions from the conference form the basis for the [first Issue](#).

IJUDUDL was launched on the 4th of August. The Journal portal was made available by the Moroccan Ministry for Higher Education and Scientific Research, which recognises high quality international research. Work to secure the portal was facilitated by Ibn Zohr University, which signed an MoU with the University of Worcester last year.

According to Dr Seán Bracken, IbD's coordinator, "This is a fully peer reviewed, open access and free to contribute journal that aims to strengthen interdisciplinary theorising, practice and research in domains of inclusion and accessibility in all facets of pedagogical technological, architectural and social design based thinking and action. Our research group is hopeful that this initiative will help drive forward the imperative for inclusion and provide a much-needed research basis for UD and UDL frameworks at all stages of the learning journey". Publication of the Journal marks a key achievement milestone for Inclusion by Design and identifies it as a significant player in developing inclusive learning, teaching and assessment, not only in the UK, but across the globe.

WORCESTER-AUTHORED ARTICLE IS MOST DOWNLOADED IN JOURNAL

An article published in 2024 by UW PhD student Shilla Sommai and her supervisors, Peter Unwin and Clive Sealey, in the International Journal of Sociology and Social Policy, has been cited by the journal as its most downloaded article in the last 12 months.

The article is titled *Kidfluencers' lived experiences of influencer culture: a time for regulation?* The article explores whether there is a case for regulating the activity of kidfluencers, which refers to where young people actively use social media to exert influence on lifestyle and consumer behaviour in wider society.

RESEARCH REPORT ON STEINER WALDORF SCHOOLS IN THE UK

Research carried out by Carla Solvason, Angela Hodgkins, and Sam Sutton-Tsang in the Department for Children and Families indicates that Steiner Waldorf (SW) schools in the UK have undergone substantial transformation between 2018 and 2024. Commissioned by Waldorf UK, the study draws on Ofsted and Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI) reports, alongside interviews with sector leaders, to evaluate the “distance travelled” in school improvement.

In 2018–2019, Ofsted inspections identified systemic failings within SW schools, particularly within safeguarding, leadership, curriculum design, and teaching quality. These outcomes generated significant media scrutiny, reputational damage, and ultimately resulted in several school closures.

In response, Waldorf UK introduced a new executive board and a programme of reform aimed at addressing regulatory concerns. Through scrutiny of existing reports and interviews with the new executive, Solvason et al. were able to create a picture of drastic cultural change in Waldorf schools over the past six years. The report concluded that Waldorf UK had diligently addressed historical weaknesses, whilst still preserving their distinctive educational identity. Future priorities are also identified by the report, these include: refining assessment, enhancing provision for pupils with English as an Additional Language, giving further consideration to the role of technology, and broadening extracurricular opportunities.

The findings demonstrate that alternative educational movements can react positively and constructively to regulatory accountability; the progress made by Waldorf UK over the past six years provides a compelling model of reform and renewal. Understandably, Waldorf UK is now keen to promote its achievements to the public, and to government representatives, in an effort to counter and move beyond the negative perceptions historically linked to the Steiner Waldorf movement.

In order to access the full report please click [here](#).

ADAPTED PHYSICAL ACTIVITY RESEARCH UNIT

A new research unit has been created at the University to focus on research that contributes to the emancipation of individuals and communities experiencing disability. The Adapted Physical Activity Research Unit (APARU) will specifically focus on research on identifying and addressing issues of inequity regarding disabled communities within play, leisure, sport, recreation, exercise, etc.

“We view the exclusion of disabled communities within the physical activity (PA) spectrum as a human rights and social justice issue, and situate our work within empowering models of disability such as the social model, social relational model and human rights model. Our key aim is to work with communities invested in enhancing equity of disabled communities in PA by doing applied, impactful, meaningful research that results in positive change.”

Key research interests include, but not limited to: joy through movement, intersectional disability identities in PA, enhancing professional training/ education of PA professionals, 'cripping' research methodologies, and doing more culturally competent work in disability studies.

APA RU adopts the following core values:

- **Inclusivity:** Ensuring equitable access and participation for all.
- **Excellence:** Conducting high-quality, rigorous, impactful research.
- **Collaboration:** Building partnerships and co-production across disciplines, sectors, and communities.
- **Innovation:** Leveraging technology and creative solutions to address challenges.
- **Impact:** Translating research into actionable policies and practices.



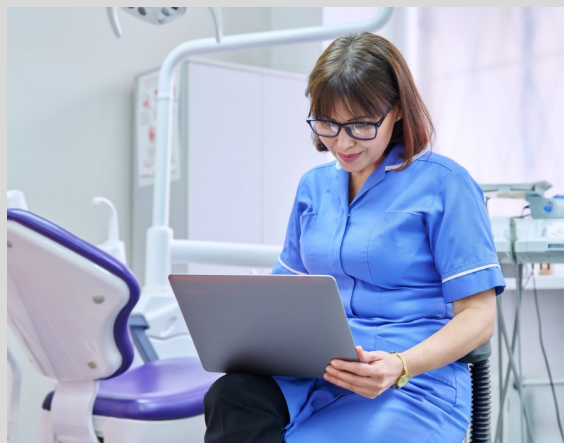
DR LUCY ARNOLD TO CHAIR BRITISH ASSOCIATION OF CONTEMPORARY LITERARY STUDIES

In September, Dr Lucy Arnold, Senior Lecturer in Contemporary English Literature, became Chair for the British Association of Contemporary Literary Studies (BACLS). The BACLS is a scholarly association that brings together academics and practitioners from across the UK and beyond in order to explore the current moment and its contexts, with two peer-reviewed journals and a series of academic prizes.

LAUNCH OF NIHR HCP INTERNSHIP PROGRAMME

The University of Worcester is a partner on the recently launched West Midlands National Institute for Health and Care Research (NIHR) Health and Care Professional Internship Programme, hosted by the Midlands Partnership University NHS Foundation Trust (MPFT).

The programme offers health and care professionals from across our region the chance to build their research skills, experience, and confidence. Registered health and social care professionals (excluding doctors and dentists) working in the West Midlands can apply. For each successful intern, the programme offers up to 30 days of funded research support and training, salary backfill and a bespoke research development schedule. The UW has put forward supervisors and mentors to support successful interns, in areas of expertise aligned to our research centre, units and groups including dementia, rural mental health, long-term conditions, co-production and service evaluation.



More information about the programme can be found at <https://www.mpft.nhs.uk/NIHRInternships>

PREVENTING HARM AT THE HEART OF POLICING CONFERENCE

The University hosted the Evidence-Based Policing Conference on the 30th June 2025, focusing on harm reduction within the framework of evidence-based policing. The event, attended by students, staff, and representatives from a host of organisations, addressed topics ranging from serious domestic abuse to deaths on our roads, with an aim to develop interdisciplinary collaborative research.

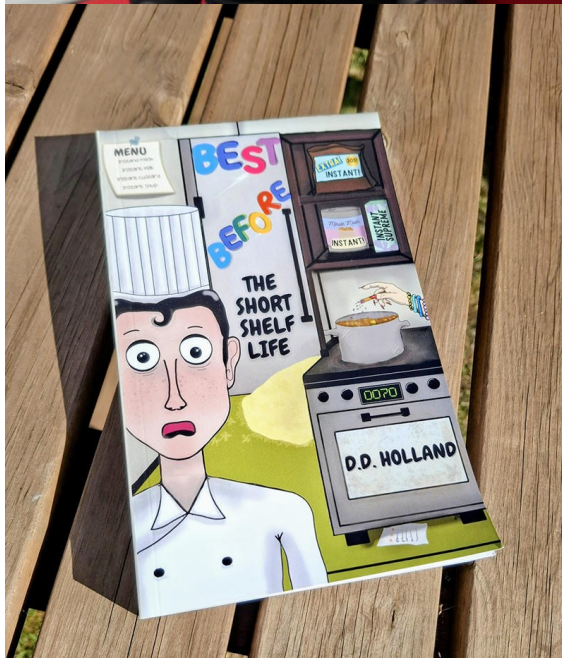
Speakers included Jane Monckton-Smith, Professor of Public Protection at the University of Gloucestershire, and the University of Worcester's own Dr Gillian Harrop, Senior Lecturer in Forensic Psychology, as well as the Chief Constable of West Mercia Police; Richard Cooper, and people with lived experience of the criminal justice system.

EDUCATION PROFESSOR APPOINTED TO NATIONAL RESEARCH PANELS

Alison Kington; Professor in Psychology of Education and lead of the Social Psychology of Education Research Group, has been announced as a sub-panel member for REF2029, the UK's system for assessing the quality of research in UK higher education institutions. Prof. Kington will sit on Sub-Panel 23, covering the national submissions for education and the sub-panel will be responsible for developing discipline-specific criteria and carrying out detailed assessment of submissions.

Prof. Kington has also been selected to sit on the ESRC Research Talent Advisory Group. The purpose of this group is to provide advice and support to ESRC regarding the oversight of their strategy and funding for research development. The scope of the role covers doctoral training, support for early career researchers, research skills and methods across the researcher life-course, and research leadership, ensuring that these are as inclusive as possible.

DOCTORAL STUDENT TRUDI HOLLAND RELEASES DEBUT NOVEL



Trudi Holland, doctoral student in creative writing, has had her first novel published under the pen name DD Holland. *Best Before: The Short Shelf Life*, is a social comedy exploring life inside a care home and is now available from Waterstones and other retailers.

Published by Black Pear Press, the novel follows London hotel chef Szechwan Le Duc, whose career takes an #unexpected turn when he finds himself working in a care home. "I think community was a big theme that I was interested in and women working in care," said Trudi. "An unspoken sector of women that put in all this work and don't get the credit for it. There's a lot of talk about care settings as being negative places. I wanted to investigate them as places of community rather than places we don't want to be put in." Developed over four years, the story originated from short pieces Trudi wrote during her degree in Creative Writing at Worcester. Black Pear Press also published a short story collection by Trudi; *The Lady Doth Protest*, in 2022 after she won the University of Worcester's Black Pear Press Prize for fiction.

Trudi credited her time at the University of Worcester in helping to develop her confidence in writing. "I honestly rave about this university; I came back here for my PhD because I loved it. If I hadn't had the opportunity to win the Prize, I wouldn't be here launching the book. I was struggling with the confidence to write, feeling that I had something worth saying. The University was just adamant that my voice was important; what I had to say and how I wanted to say it. They have been very supportive, so my confidence has blossomed every year I've spent here. They made me a more sensitive writer, a more aware writer."

DR MICHAEL LANE PROVIDES INPUT TO PARLIAMENT'S JOINT COMMITTEE ON HUMAN RIGHTS

Dr Michael Lane; Lecturer in Law, appeared at a public hearing of the Joint Committee on Human Rights on 25 June. The purpose of the hearing was to inform the Committee's ongoing work scrutinising the Government's international human rights obligations. Dr Lane's evidence drew on his forthcoming book on the United Nations 'Universal Periodic Review' (UPR), a process whereby all UN member states review each other's human rights records. It is hoped the evidence will help the Committee to better understand the UPR and how they can interrogate the Government's engagement with the process.



Image credit: parliamentlive.tv

DOCTORAL SCHOOL

Outreach Resources with Men in Mind

Doctoral student, George Mycock, has developed bespoke guidance to help ensure that men with eating disorders feel able to engage with the support they need. George, who himself experienced eating disorders and body image concerns for over a decade, created the guidance to help charities and health services when designing marketing materials, such as leaflets and posters, to ensure they do not unconsciously exclude or alienate men, and even seek their input. He said, "I hope that the perspective can shift from 'men don't access care because men don't want it and don't want to speak about their feelings' to something more constructive. Maybe that's the case, but there are also some things that we could be doing as organisations, as researchers, as clinicians and people providing that care to support them. There is a responsibility of healthcare providers to meet men where they're at to some degree and

utilise strategies to reach out to men and make this care seem more engaging and enticing for them."

George's guidance has been taken up by REDCAN (Regional Eating Disorders Charities Network and Alliance), an alliance of regional eating disorders charities across the UK, who are distributing it to their member charities.

The guidance can be accessed on George's website [Myominds](#).



George Mycock

Meeting, Learning, and Sharing: My Visit to the Association for Dementia Studies

Livia Wright

As a PhD candidate at the Free University of Bolzano in Italy, under the supervision of Prof. Zinn and the co-supervision of Prof. Chattat and Prof. Quaranta, I had the opportunity to undertake a one-month academic visit to the Association for Dementia Studies (ADS) at the University of Worcester. Hosted by Dr Shirley Evans, Director of ADS, the visits included a rich itinerary of visits across the UK Meeting Centre network, enabling me to engage with a wide range of communities and practices.

The journey began in Scotland at the Meeting Centres Scotland conference. I was genuinely impressed by the organising team for creating such an engaging, informative and enjoyable event that was truly co-produced.

Following the conference, I visited eleven Meeting Centres across Scotland, England, and Wales. Each had its own distinctive character, shaped by local culture and context, yet all were united by a strong sense of inclusion, support, and community. And a good cuppa, of course!

As this was my first extended trip through the UK, I appreciated the opportunity to learn more about the local environments, customs, and perspectives that

inform these community settings. The experience reinforced my understanding of the importance of local engagement and the power of simply being present with one another.

This visit has enriched my academic and practical understanding of dementia care and community support and deepened my appreciation for the subtle beauty of everyday encounters. I will always treasure the stories and insights from this journey and look forward, with gratitude and anticipation, to returning to ADS in 2026.



Livia Wright

POSTGRADUATE RESEARCH CONFERENCE



23-24 June 2025

Under the theme of ICE – Ignite. Connect. Engage - the conference brought together postgraduate researchers (PGRs) from all disciplines, stages of research, and backgrounds, providing them with the opportunity to present and discuss their research in front of a supportive audience.

Over the two-day event, over 100 delegates attended and researchers were welcomed from across the university and beyond, with delegates travelling from partner institution in Germany - Fachhochschule des Mittelstands (FHM) - who are currently studying on the Doctor of Business Administration (DBA) course, and PGRs from the Universities of Gloucestershire, Northampton, and Indian Institute of Technology Jodhpur.

The conference was opened and a keynote presentation delivered by Prof. John-Paul Wilson, Pro Vice Chancellor Research titled 'A Short History of Doctoral Education in the UK' followed by a roundtable discussion led by PGN Chair, Trudi Holland. The programme also included a panel session on balancing doctoral study with life, featuring two University of Worcester doctoral graduates; Dr Gilda Davis (School of Nursing and Midwifery) and Dr Andrea Tapia Arenas (School of Science and the Environment), DBA student Anke Trischler, and doctoral supervisor Dr Helen Watts (Worcester Business School). Presentations were delivered by 45 current Worcester doctoral students providing an overview of their studies and research so far.



Staatlich anerkannte, private
**Fachhochschule des
Mittelstands (FHM)**



**UNIVERSITY of
WORCESTER**



2025 saw the tenth anniversary of the Images of Research competition and exhibition. To mark the milestone, a celebration event and prize giving ceremony was held on the 23rd June following the first day of the Postgraduate Research Conference.

In addition to this year's entries, the exhibition also included a look at the winners from previous years of the competition.

JUDGES' CHOICE AWARD



WINNER

Sarah Jatau

'The Unheard Story of Walnim Women Farmers'

RUNNER UP

Irene Conti

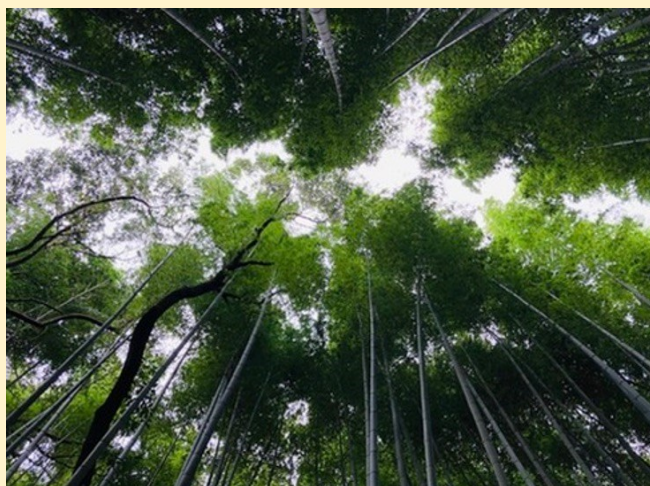
'Behind the Curtain - Making Hidden Families Visible'

RUNNER UP

Chris Cattell & Dr Christian Edwards

'A possible future self: Prison, resettlement, and transformative physical activity'

PUBLIC CHOICE AWARD



WINNER

Krista Easton

'Blurring lines'

RUNNER UP

Beas Banerjee

'At the Edge of Fragility: Landscapes Shaped by Risk and Resilience'

RUNNER UP

Prof. Eleanor Bradley, Prof. Lynn Nichol,
Dr Helen Watts, Dr Sajad Razaei,
Dr Catharine Rose, and Jess Howdle

*'The National Hive Service: ground-up
'innovation to thrive. A real-world project be-
tween Herefordshire and Worcestershire NHS
Health and Care Trust and the University of
Worcester'*

GRADUATION

SEPTEMBER 2025



Congratulations to our recent graduates!

Dr Frances Chilton | Dr Gilda Davis | Dr Marei Ghalilib | Dr Annika Hesse | Dr Emma Innes
Dr Liza Kirchberg | Dr Emma Laurence | Dr Eya Meddeb | Linda Pike MPhil | Dr Nathan Stephens
Holly Mead MRes



Dr Gilda Davis

'Places of Farewell: a liminality informed exploration of parents' narratives when their child's death is expected'

Supervisory Team: Prof. Gyozo Molnar (DoS), Dr Jackie Bentley

"The purpose of this research was to explore the parent's choice of place for the death of a child with a life limiting or life-threatening condition, and to consider this through the process of liminality. Place of death is considered to be a key indicator in evaluating the quality of end of life care and is a factor in a good death. Whilst there are differences in opinion about what defines a good death, core elements include being free from pain, in control of symptoms and in an environment that is aligned with the wishes of the dying person and their family.

Although most expected child deaths occur in hospitals, there is an assumption in clinical practice that home is the preferred place. For some families, home is the place of choice, however, whilst home is familiar and loved, it can also feel unsafe if there is no medical or nursing support that can be easily accessed. Hospices aim to provide a home-like environment, combining comfort and safety; whereas for some families, the hospital ward is familiar and safe, the staff are known, and the routines provide security.

The findings of this study show that where death has not happened in the place of choice, the reasons can be complex and include staff anxiety about transferring a child; parents not believing that their child was dying as they (the child) had presented like this before and had recovered; parental concerns about clinical support in the home and how easily support services could access the house, if they were required. A significant finding is that the importance of the place of death can move to the place where the family are last able to spend time with their child after they have died. The findings also suggest liminality as a multi-directional journey, challenging traditional notions of linear progression through the bereavement process.

I love studying, and as a part-time student, trying to juggle life with a full time job, time often presented difficulties. I frequently felt full time student envy, and there have been many nights when I have worried about not having enough hours in a day. Since

starting my doctoral studies I have changed jobs twice, moving from clinical nursing practice to higher education, and from one university to another. The small academic wins along the way have helped to keep my studies high up my priority list i.e. winning the poster award at my first conference; receiving the Runner-Up Judges Award in an Images of Research competition; conference abstracts accepted for both poster and sessions; my first journal publication.

Family and friends have been amazing, and having my supervisory team still offering support is beyond what I expected. My current challenge is not letting my studies slip into the background.

Being a student here as well as staff, has widened my knowledge of other schools and the staff within them. I have a greater awareness of the various areas of research interests beyond my own school, and I am not sure I would have had that had I not also been a student here."

What are you doing now?

The same as I have done during my studies, Senior Lecturer in Children's Nursing.





Dr Liza Kirchberg

'Understanding the Responsibilities and Barriers for Sustainability Managers in Corporate Sustainable Transformation in the German Finance Industry'

Supervisory Team: Prof. Robin Bell (DoS), Dr Jane Keenan

"My DBA project explored the responsibilities and perceived barriers of sustainability managers in driving corporate sustainable transformation within the German finance industry. I aimed to fill a gap in the academic discourse by highlighting the practical realities and strategic potential of these key change agents.

One of the most striking findings was the disconnect between the official job descriptions of sustainability managers and their actual day-to-day responsibilities. Many act as change agents and knowledge brokers, navigating between regulatory pressure, top-management expectations, and internal resistance. A key enabler identified was the active commitment of leadership and a change-conducive corporate culture – without which sustainable transformation is unlikely to succeed.

The research process itself was a journey of professional growth. I conducted a two-stage Delphi study with 28 sustainability managers from across the German financial sector. Achieving consensus in such a diverse expert group was both challenging and deeply rewarding. Presenting my research at international DBA conferences and connecting with peers globally added another enriching dimension to my academic journey.

Graduating feels both surreal and deeply gratifying. It marks the end of a long, intense, and transformative journey – and the beginning of a new chapter where I get to apply the insights in practice.

What are you doing now?

Since January 2024, I have been working independently as a strategic sustainability consultant. Building on over a decade of experience in the banking sector and roles at international firms like Hansgrohe Group, Haufe Group, and ADA Cosmetics, I now support companies in developing and embedding robust sustainability strategies. My work focuses on strategy development, cultural transformation, stakeholder engagement, employee empowerment, and aligning sustainability with core business processes. The doctorate has strongly sharpened my approach – and I feel deeply fulfilled being able to support several organizations in their sustainable transformation journey. I'm always open to new collaborations and exchange.

My time at the University of Worcester was incredibly enriching. Beyond the academic learning, I especially appreciated the international networking, the opportunity to present at conferences, and the support from my supervisors. Working in English throughout the programme strengthened my international communication skills, which now benefits me in my consultancy work. I'm especially grateful to be part of my cohort 6 – a brilliant and supportive group of peers who accompanied me through all highs and lows.

I would like to express my sincere gratitude to my two supervisors, Dr. Robin Bell and Dr. Jane Keenan. Their consistent, transparent, and empowering support enabled me to complete this thesis within my planned timeframe – a success I'm very proud of. Without their guidance, encouragement, and honest feedback, I wouldn't have made it this far. Thank you from the bottom of my heart. "





Dr Emma Innes

'Recurrent Diabetic Ketoacidosis: A phenomenological case study exploring the experiences of young women with Type 1 Diabetes Mellitus'

Supervisory Team: Dr Yvonne Thomas (DoS), Prof. Eleanor Bradley

"Diabetic Ketoacidosis (DKA) is a life threatening complication for those living with Type 1 diabetes and often occurs in adolescents and during young adulthood. The research using in-depth interviews explored first person lived experience of developing DKA and the resulting effects of this on the individual.

Participants were profoundly affected physically and psychologically by having developed DKA, the legacy of which lasted beyond the initial hospital admission. DKA was not caused by a lack of knowledge in how to manage Type 1 diabetes. Rather insulin omission offered a brief opportunity to be free from having and living with Type 1 diabetes. Whilst the young women in this study understood the futility of such an approach, it was insufficient to overcome taking a break from having diabetes. Intentional insulin omission enabled participants to regain some control. It feels amazing to be graduating! I am proud to have been able to continue to develop nursing knowledge for the delivery of diabetes care.

I am so pleased to be graduating at Worcester, throughout the process it has been supportive and has enabled me to reach my potential."



What are you doing now?

I continue to work as a senior lecturer but I am moving my teaching focus to leading the MSc Dissertation in Advanced Clinical Practice and working with the next generation of nurses on their BSc Dissertation module as a Deputy Module Lead. Sharing my passion for research. I am in the process of writing up findings for publication.



Dr Frances Chilton

'Shared Decision-Making: A phenomenological exploration into the experiences and interpretations of patients with early rheumatoid arthritis'

Supervisory Team: Prof. Eleanor Bradley (DoS)



"My PhD study explored the experiences and interpretations of patients with early rheumatoid arthritis who participated in shared decision-making within a multidisciplinary team, and examined whether shared decision-making occurred at key time points during patients' initial treatment year.

Key findings from my study included:

- Family and friends require greater recognition as key members of the rheumatology multidisciplinary team, and defined roles within the team at each stage of early rheumatoid arthritis.
- Patient expertise in symptom experiences needs to be given greater recognition when considering referral in Primary Care.
- Shared decision making is not isolated to health professional and patient. It is an approach that occurs between participants, family and friends and health professionals.

What are you doing now?

I am already in the planning stages of identifying potential publications from my PhD studies and subsequent dissemination of findings. I have already incorporated ideas from my PhD into clinical practice, which include incorporating shared decision-making into the initiation of group education clinics for patients with early inflammatory arthritis.

Thank you to all the patients who participated in the study, without whom there would be no PhD.

At the outset of PhD study I was very proud to be awarded a PhD fellowship bursary by the Royal College of Nursing towards my part time PhD study, without this I would not have been able to pursue PhD study. There have been many challenges I faced along the PhD journey which included juggling study with the demands and challenges of busy clinical nurse specialist practice.

Managing the responsibilities of being the main carer for family member with terminal illness and overcoming bereavement. Unfortunately periods of temporary withdrawal meant the PhD took longer than I expected. I am also proud of the successful publication of research article in a peer reviewed journal.

I have been lucky enough to complete both my MSc and PhD studies at Worcester. Both the surroundings and academic facilities are excellent. My supervisors have always listened to any suggestions I have offered to improve the student academic study experience. The research school staff have always been responsive.

Whilst there is a big sense of relief in graduating, I do feel extremely proud and excited, and looking forward to the future."

SPOTLIGHT



A SPOTLIGHT ON...

Prof. Dez Kyte

Professor of Physiotherapy,
School of Health and Wellbeing

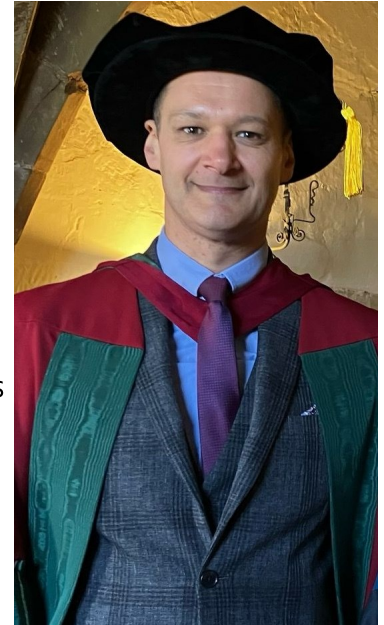
d.kyte@worc.ac.uk

Research Area

Patient-reported outcomes in long-term conditions, with a particular focus on kidney disease.

What is your professional background?

I began my career as a physiotherapist in the NHS, working across the UK, New Zealand, and Australia. Over time, I transitioned into academia, holding roles at the University of Birmingham before joining Worcester. My work has spanned clinical practice, teaching, and research, with a strong emphasis on improving patient care through better measurement of health outcomes.



What are you currently working on (research project)?

I'm currently a co-investigator on two NIHR-funded projects: *THRIVE*, which addresses rural mental health inequalities in Herefordshire and Worcestershire, and *APRAISE-AS*, which explores remote patient monitoring for people with asymptomatic severe aortic stenosis. I'm also contributing to a Nuffield-funded project titled *Arthritis and Farmers in England*, which aims to develop practical guidance to support arthritis prevention and management in farming communities.

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

Be curious, collaborative, and resilient. Academia offers a unique opportunity to shape practice and policy, but it's not without its challenges. Find good mentors, build networks, and stay grounded in the real-world impact of your work.

What is your biggest achievement to date?

Securing and delivering my first large grant as lead: an NIHR-funded postdoctoral fellowship. It explored the benefits of online symptom monitoring for people living with advanced chronic kidney disease. Despite the challenges of the pandemic, I delivered the project on time and under budget, returning over £30,000 to NIHR. That return was important to me, I hoped it might contribute, even in a small way, to a future grant award for an upcoming researcher.

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

Two people stand out. Prof. Heather Draper, whose work in bioethics has shaped my thinking around patient-centred care. And Prof. Paul Cockwell, a leading figure in nephrology, whose clinical insight and collaborative spirit have been instrumental in my research journey.



A SPOTLIGHT ON...

Arden Masters

MRes Student,
Institute of Arts and Humanities

"A critical analysis of autistic representation in 21st century television with a focus on canon and coded representation"

masb1_20@uni.worc.ac.uk

Supervisor:
Dr Barbara Mitra

Why did you undertake PGR studies at UW? I attended the University of Worcester for my bachelor's degree. The community within the University was something that I enjoyed and helped me develop as a person. Through my time studying Theatre, Acting and Performance I worked very closely with a variety of Film students which reinvigorated my passion for studying and discussing film and television. So, after graduating when I saw the opportunity to study a Research masters at the University of Worcester studying a topic I was passionate about alongside staff that share my research passions I jumped at the opportunity to do so.

What opportunities have you had during your study? I have had the opportunity to talk on a panel about neurodiversity within the university and how best to support students and staff with accommodations and help provide understanding from personal and professional standpoint. As well as this the opportunity to work alongside lecturers on this course within their fields of expertise has been invaluable to my personal growth as well as to my research.

Highlight of my PGR study? A highlight of my studies has been knowledge and support I have gained through the lectures. The network that has been provided to me combining lecturers, researchers and other students has helped my studies massively by providing a network of supporters that I could lean on when needed. The lectures provided on this course were fundamental to my studies and provided the opportunity for further academic growth.

What is your Professional background? I completed my BA in Theatre, Acting and performance. Whilst studying I volunteered as a youth tutor, aiding in teaching theatre to students with special educational needs and neurodiversities.

Biggest achievement to date? My biggest achievement to date is the completion of my MRes dissertation and using the research that I have conducted over the past year to inform the launch of my own production studio. Khaos Enby Studios is a production company highlighting individuality and talent. The studio will create films and television series with disabled and neurodiverse representation and actors created and written by the disabled and neurodiverse community. This journey can be followed on Instagram @khaosenbystudios.

Where do you see yourself after you have completed the course? I would like to continue my research studying neurodiversity and disability within film and television in a research post and pass on my knowledge that I have gained through this research through a lecturing position. I also intend to continue working on projects within Khaos Enby Studios and develop more projects to highlight the neurodiverse and disabled communities.

What is one piece of advice to students wanting to study an MRes? My advice would be to follow your passion. If you are passionate about a subject, a long-term project like an MRes provides the space to delve into the topic and provide so much understanding. If you are enthusiastic about your topic, you keep the motivation for your project. I would also say do not be afraid to ask for help; things will get difficult but there are plenty of people within the university who are available to help you.



A SPOTLIGHT ON...

Isobel Dawes

PhD Student,
Institute of Education

(Studentship funded by the
University of Worcester)

*"The role of peer relationships in
the working lives of post-pandemic
primary teachers in England"*

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Supervisory Team:

Dr Karen Blackmore (DoS),
Prof. Alison Kington,
Dr Dan Owens

Research Area

My research explores how primary school teachers in England perceive and experience their relationships with colleagues, and the ways these relationships shape their working lives. Set against the backdrop of the ongoing teacher retention crisis, it builds on evidence that supportive social conditions, particularly collegial ties, play a crucial role in sustaining job satisfaction and helping teachers cope during periods of stress.

Why did you decide to undertake study at Worcester?

The University of Worcester has always felt like a second home to me. I studied here as an undergraduate and had such a positive experience, both academically and personally. Worcester also holds a special place in the field of education. Originally established after the Second World War as a teacher training college, the University's history and ongoing commitment to teacher education and educational research really resonate with me.

When I saw the studentship advertised, I was immediately drawn to the project. The focus, set within the wider teacher retention crisis, was an area I was already passionate about as a former teacher. I was equally excited to see that Dr Karen Blackmore and Professor Alison Kington were on the supervisory team. I remembered them well from my undergraduate course, and I knew their expertise in education and research would really aid me in my doctoral journey.

What opportunities have you had during your time at Worcester?

One of the real strengths of studying at Worcester has been the opportunity to work within a collaborative and supportive research community. I've been involved in projects such as the International Council on Education for Teaching's Teacher Voice Webinar, in which we spoke to teachers' experiences of the pandemic from across the globe. I am also involved in research into teacher burnout, as well as research in the University's Social Psychology of Education (SPoE) research group. Alongside this, I've had the chance to present my work in the (SPoE) Seminar Series, at the Institute of Education Conference, and most recently at the British Educational Research Association (BERA). These opportunities have stretched me academically and personally, giving me the confidence to share my ideas with wider audiences. Although what I value most about these opportunities is the chance to network with colleagues from various contexts.

What has been the highlight of your PGR study so far?

For me, the highlight has been the sense of community. I've developed some great relationships with fellow doctoral students at Worcester, friendships that go well beyond the office. Last year, for example, I ran the Cardiff Half Marathon with two of my peers to raise money for charity. I wasn't a runner before this, so crossing that finish line felt like a huge personal achievement as well as a celebration of the support and encouragement we give one another. Whether it's working alongside colleagues at Jenny Lind, sharing ideas at Institute of Education events, or connecting with the wider

research community at BERA, these networks of support and inspiration have made all the difference, particularly in the more stressful moments of doctoral study.

What is your professional background?

I trained as a primary teacher in Worcester before spending several years teaching in Birmingham. Most of my career has been as a Special Educational Needs Coordinator (SENCo), an area I remain deeply passionate about. After completing my Master's, I worked as a Visiting Lecturer at Newman University on the SEN and Inclusion pathway, before moving into college leadership as SENCo and Safeguarding Lead.

What is your biggest achievement to date?

Undertaking a doctorate, especially one that is a funded studentship, is something I once thought was out of reach. As an undergraduate, I dreamed of pursuing research but didn't believe I was 'academic enough,' and I saw my neurodivergence as a barrier. With the support of a fantastic dyslexia specialist during my Master's, I achieved a First, but more importantly, I gained belief in myself. My biggest achievement isn't just starting the doctorate, but the mindset shift that made it possible. As a mother, I hope my son sees this journey as an example that success can take many different forms and our journeys aren't always linear.

Where do you see yourself after you have completed your course?

Continuing with research and building collaborative projects that make a difference in education. I'm excited to keep exploring the themes that drive my work and stay connected to the networks I've built.

What would be your one piece of advice to students wanting to study for a PhD?

At the beginning of a PhD, it's tempting to want to cover everything, but clarity is essential. Take time to define your focus, refine your research questions, and imagine the difference your work could make. These definitions aren't fixed; they will evolve, but having a strong starting point gives direction when things feel overwhelming. Believe in your own voice, trust your curiosity, and remember that even in moments of uncertainty, your imagination and commitment will carry you forward.

“Definitions are vital starting points for the imagination. What we cannot imagine cannot come into being. A good definition marks our starting point and lets us know where we want to end up.” – bell hooks



A SPOTLIGHT ON...

Dr Beverley Gilbert

Senior Lecturer Domestic/
Sexual Violence and Criminology,
School of Health & Wellbeing

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Research area

Peer mentoring and peer support for women who experience multiple disadvantage linked to histories of abuse and trauma. Domestic and sexual violence, including effective work with individuals who are abusive.

How long have you worked at the University of Worcester?

I started as an Associate Lecturer in 2011 and was appointed as Senior Lecturer in January 2014.

What is your professional background?

I left school at 16 after a difficult experience for many reasons and left with very little in the way of qualifications. I did know that I needed to be financially independent and made a choice to look for employment with a good salary to make this a swift reality. In the mid 1980s it was possible to work as a police officer after taking an entrance exam to show appropriate numeracy and literacy skills, this was the start of my career in the criminal justice sector, working in policing, then as a local authority licencing officer after having my children, then in probation. Later in life I discovered higher education and found that I was quite academically able, I then found I didn't want to stop learning.

What are you currently working on?

As I write this, I am writing up research reports evaluating a behaviour change programme for domestically abusive individuals and for a lived experience advisory network of survivors of domestic abuse.

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

I never imagined that I would either have the capacity or opportunity to move into an academic role after decades working in criminal justice practice. From this experience, I've learned that your past, whether directly related to education or not, shouldn't limit aspirations or achievement. By following your interests and embracing new opportunities to learn and to acquire academic qualifications, you may find doors opening in unexpected ways. Combining specialist knowledge and practical experience with academic learning can create a powerful foundation of expertise, one that can support both your own growth and the development of others in community and in higher education. Add in lived experience, and I have found it is quite a comprehensive knowledge base.



Beverley delivering the keynote presentation at the Rights and Justice Festival, University of Worcester, 2025.

Beverley delivering a keynote presentation in Malta at the President's Palace celebrating 30 years of domestic abuse services on the island.



What is your biggest achievement to date?

My biggest achievements are all within my personal life. However, if I were to look at professional achievements, these would be related to my community work in developing peer mentoring for individuals who survive abuse and experience multiple disadvantage in society. I founded a peer support community organisation in 2014 to support women with multiple disadvantage, disability and those surviving abuse. We were awarded the Queens Award for Voluntary Service in 2020 and this is the highest award that a community or charity organisation can attain, this was such an honour and a recognition of the successful nature of peer support and peer mentoring. Another high point was achieving my PhD in 2023.

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

In terms of my late move into academic life, there were two women colleagues who encouraged me to think about moving into an academic career. Without their belief about my capabilities, I would not be here at the University of Worcester now. The first is Ruth Jones OBE, who some 20 years ago designed and launched the first Pg Cert in Professional Development: the Dynamics of Domestic Violence. I will always be grateful to Ruth for her encouragement regarding my academic journey, for accepting me as a post graduate student here at Worcester, then subsequently selecting me as an Associate Lecturer, then appointing me as Senior Lecturer at the University of Worcester. The second key influence was another colleague Dr Jane Ellis, a colleague who encouraged me to believe that I could study at doctoral level whilst working on a subject area and research question close to my heart and mind. I thank both incredible women for inspiring me academically and for encouraging me to believe in myself.

Then there are survivors of abuse, the women who I have met and learned from over my practice and academic career. I am very fortunate to spend time in my life amongst such amazing individuals who, despite their lived experiences, lead their lives making a difference to others in this at times, difficult world. There is such a power in creating communities of strength and in coming together to support ourselves and each other.

Image by unsplash.com



A SPOTLIGHT ON...

Violence & Trauma Prevention Research Group

If you have been affected by trauma and abuse, or are worried about a child or adult affected by abuse and trauma – then please contact:

Domestic Abuse – [How to get help](#) | Men's Domestic Abuse Helpline – FREEPHONE 0808 8010327 | [Galop](#) – National LGBT+ Domestic Violence Helpline – 0800 999 5428 | Samaritans (for any support): 116 123 | [Victim Support](#). Support line 0808 168 9111 | West Mercia Women's Aid 24 hour helpline – 0800 9803331 | Mind – [Seeking help for a Mental Health Problem](#) | NSPCC Childline – 0808 800 5000 OR help@nspcc.org.uk | Rape Crisis England & Wales | National Telephone Helpline: 0808 802 9999, [Coping techniques](#), Find a rape crisis centre [near you](#).

If you would like to know more about the Trauma and Violence Prevention Research Group, or would like to become a member then please email Dr Claire McLoone-Richards (RGL) c.richards@worc.ac.uk

Who are we? The Trauma and Violence Prevention (TVP) Research Group comprises representation from the academic community of the University of Worcester, that is, staff who are actively involved in research and staff who are interested in becoming involved with research. The membership also includes PhD students who are conducting research involving themes of trauma and abuse, such as Gender-Based Violence. The TVP recognises the critical importance of meaningful collaboration with practitioners and agencies in our community, who have expertise in the focus area of this research group. Currently, we have a wide-reaching membership of key agencies, including Women's Aid, public health and community safety partnerships. The TVP will also be developing more active links with Experts with Lived Experience of abuse and trauma. However given the high incidence of trauma and violence in our society, we are also mindful that the current membership will likely include victim/survivors of trauma and abuse.

What do we do?

The focus of the TVP Research Group will continue to be the prevention of all forms of violence, abuse and trauma, inclusive of culture, gender, sexuality, intellectual and/or physical ability, age, black minority and ethnic group, and social status. Our work will relate to the experiences of victim/survivors, bystanders, perpetrators, practitioners, policy makers and researchers. Our collective research interests encompass all aspects of Gender-Based violence, misogyny, violent crime and trauma. This involves examining and understanding the impact of violence, the response to violence and abuse, and strengthening the evidence base to influence policy and practice, with the overall aim of preventing violence and reducing harm. Our key aims are:

1. To coproduce purposeful and excellent research with those who know – as experts by experience
2. To conduct and promote impactful research to stakeholders, the wider public, the academic community, in the spirit of inclusivity and accessibility to all – including Open Access science.
3. Develop ethical research in response to complex and challenging issues.
4. Actively pursue funding streams and opportunities for sponsored research for the future
5. Ensure published outputs to promote the research with acknowledgement and input of all academic and non-academic partners.
6. Facilitate Knowledge Exchange events for the multi-professional audiences, academics and importantly, the public.

We remain committed to developing innovative interdisciplinary methods through which social scientists (health scientists and practitioners, educators, psychologists, sociologists, criminologists, social policy makers) join with colleagues in all relevant disciplines, to develop new ways of combating violence, abuse and trauma. This includes new ways of understanding violence and abuse to raise public awareness and/or engage broader public audiences in debates

about violence prevention. The TVP Research Group will have a commitment to a feminist ethos within current and prospective research, including the intersectionality of violence and the multiple facets of abuse compounded by discrimination. The TVP Research Group will embrace all research paradigms and innovative research methodologies that seek to promote better understanding on the problems of violence and abuse, while promoting impactful research.

We are also interested in further developing representation of the following stakeholder groups:

- Local and indeed national commissioners and funders of service delivery, service evaluation and research
- Policymakers, such as local government officials
- Service providers - extending our reach to the wider voluntary and community sector and statutory sector services
- Lived experience coordinators / advisory group leads across the West Mercia region and beyond as appropriate
- All Researchers interested on TVP research in academia and practice related fields, to promote research-informed practice and practice-informed research.

What we have achieved

Our areas of research work include:

- Implementation and evaluation of interventions and programmes aimed at domestic abuse perpetrators
- Helpline services for male victims of domestic abuse
- Understanding attitudes towards sexual violence
- Understanding support needs of military and veteran families in coping with visible and nonvisible traumas
- Implementation and evaluation of an active bystander programme to respond to domestic violence, coercive and controlling behaviour and sexual violence
- Understanding the impact of adverse childhood experiences (ACEs)
- Understanding police decision making around domestic abuse, particularly in relation to risk assessment and coercive control
- Peer mentoring and peer support workers with lived experience
- The experience of domestic abuse cyber stalking and harassment

- The experience of violence, trauma and abuse by emergency services and healthcare staff
- Policing and vulnerability
- Problem solving in policing and partnerships
- Research on the experiences of and harassment of the running community in Worcestershire
- Examining the taught experiences of postgraduate students with triggering education content and materials who are survivors of trauma and abuse.

What next?

The forthcoming and updated national Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) strategy will take a cross-governmental approach with a strong focus on prevention – ‘to better protect victims, support their journey to justice and hold perpetrators to account’ (UK Parliament, 2025). Currently, the Home Office does not collect data about young people under the age of 16, despite the most vulnerable age group of sexual violence is between 11 and 20 years of age (HoL, 2025). One in five women and one in eleven men aged 16 and over have been a victim of stalking at least once as reported by the Crime Survey for England and Wales (ONS, 2024) – with an estimate of 1.5 million being affected as victims in 2023-2024, while younger people are most vulnerable to this experience. Other concerns about abuse and trauma are identified by the Revenge Porn Helpline which has experienced a significant hike in calls from 521 to 22,000 over the last nine years (UK Safer Internet, 2025). This mere snapshot of data attempts to sharpen the focus of the realities of abuse, violence and trauma within our communities, and their aftermath, including the enduring and radiating impacts on victims’ families, and the community.

The TVP Research Group membership will be presented with a *skeleton draft* 3-year strategy for discussion and sign off. It is important that all members have input and ownership of the strategy so that it has meaning, connection, impact and is deliverable. The skeleton strategy is outlined by the Research Group Lead (RGL), but there is an acknowledgement that this draft has been prepared *without* the wider collaborative consultation with the current membership. It is also likely that the listed priorities could in fact change once there is an opportunity to consider this strategy more widely. Please see priorities for year 1, for forthcoming discussion and agreement by the TVP membership.

TACKLING HEALTH INEQUALITIES AND UNMET RURAL MENTAL HEALTH NEEDS IN VULNERABLE COMMUNITIES ACROSS HEREFORDSHIRE AND WORCESTERSHIRE: *THE THRIVE PROGRAMME*

Serious mental illnesses like schizophrenia, bipolar disorder, and major depression make it hard for people to live their daily lives. These illnesses are becoming more common, especially in rural areas with high levels of poverty such as those found within Herefordshire and Worcestershire. Male suicide rates in Herefordshire and Worcestershire (H&W) are higher than the national average, and the number of people admitted to hospital under the Mental Health Act is particularly high for the most deprived patient groups. There is a pronounced link between inequality and serious mental illness.

Rural deprivation is different and can be a hidden feature of rural communities as it is often dispersed amongst affluence. This is evident across the H&W region, with some of the rural areas which reveal the most affluence (Malvern, Wychavon, Leominster, Hereford) revealing areas of significant deprivation and high mental health burden. Mental illness in rural areas can go unnoticed due to social isolation, stigmatised attitudes, and reduced service access. People living in rural areas often travel long distances to reach services, and public transport can present a range of aligned challenges, including cost and timely availability. Digital services are also less accessible in these areas, with evidence of digital poverty and digital hesitancy. Consequently, people living in the most rural, deprived areas of H&W are subject to the highest intersecting risks associated with developing a serious mental illness and / or suicide risk, including social and digital exclusion, poverty and stigma.

There is an urgent need for more research on rural mental health to enable us to better understand these challenges. However, participation in mental health research in our region is currently low and many local health and social care workers have limited experience in leading research. This lack of capacity limits our ability to work together to address these important local mental health issues.

To tackle this, the University of Worcester has been funded by the National Institute for Health and Care Research (NIHR) to launch a new 5-year programme of research: THRIVE. The award brings just over £2



million of funding to develop and deliver regionally significant, rural mental health research. Research will focus around three themes: 1) Suicide Prevention 2) Earlier Intervention and Detection 3) Digital Support.

A new team of researchers funded by the NIHR have been appointed to lead the programme: Professor Liz Hughes, Professor of Mental Health Inequalities, and Dr Molly Miley, Research Fellow in Mental Health. A Senior Research Fellow, Suicide Prevention, will join the team on 1st December. Professor Dez Kyte (Professor of Physiotherapy) will lead the Digital Support thematic area. The THRIVE team will work closely with colleagues from the Institute for Mental Health, University of Birmingham to develop this research and support the newly appointed team. Colleagues include Professor Matthew Broome, Director of the Institute for Mental Health; Professor of Psychiatry and Youth Mental Health, and Dr Maria Michail, Associate Professor of Suicide Prevention.

Small, rural communities are strong and cohesive, and the voluntary and community sector provision across H&W is rich and varied. As such, there is a strong community emphasis across this planned programme. Christine Price (Chief Officer, Healthwatch Herefordshire, and Community Power) will chair a newly constituted Mental Health Patient and Public Involvement and Engagement Network. Regional NHS and Public Health colleagues will be engaged with coproducing the

work, including early priority setting.

A key objective for the programme is to develop our regional capacity for mental health research. To achieve this, new Principal Investigators will be identified from local health and care organisations and offered support and development opportunities. New clinical academic posts will be created with our local NHS Trust in areas of adult psychiatry and child and adolescent mental health (CAMHS) to attract new talent. A series of funded PhD studentship opportunities will be offered across the 5-year programme. The first 2 are currently being advertised, with successful applicants due to start in January 2026.

Within the first 2 years of the programme, an application to become a NIHR funded Mental Health Research Group will be submitted. If successful, this would bring additional resource, whilst establishing our long-term regional commitment to improve mental health in rural communities and enhancing our research culture. Our long-term vision is to work collaboratively with our residents, leaders and community connectors to tackle mental health inequalities.

A launch event for the programme is being organised for January 2026 and a webpage for the rural mental health research unit is underway. Further information and contact details about this important programme of work will be available from the webpage and a blog is currently being developed. If you'd like to find out more, please contact either Professor Eleanor Bradley (e.bradley@worc.ac.uk) or Professor Elizabeth Hughes (Elizabeth.hughes2@worc.ac.uk)

This study / project is funded by the National Institute for Health and Care Research (NIHR) Mental Health Research Groups Programme (NIHR08862). The views expressed are those of the author(s) and not necessarily those of the NIHR or the Department of Health and Social Care.

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NIHR | National Institute for
Health and Care Research

PROGRAMME TEAM



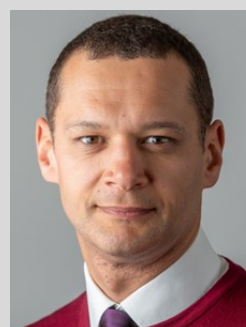
Prof. Eleanor Bradley
Principal Investigator



Prof. John-Paul Wilson
Joint Principal Investigator



Prof. Jo Smith
Co-Applciant /
Mentor



Prof. Dez Kyte
Co-Applciant / Digital
Support Theme Lead



Prof. Liz Hughes
THRIVE lead,
Professor of Mental
Health Inequality



Dr Molly Miley
Research Fellow in
Mental Health

Dr Christopher Poyner
Senior Research Fellow

Dr Maria Michail

Institute for Mental Health, University of Birmingham: Co-Applciant / Joint lead for Suicide Prevention theme

Professor Matthew Broome

Institute for Mental Health, University of Birmingham: Co-Applciant / Mentor

Christine Price

Chief Officer, Healthwatch Herefordshire: Co-Applciant / Chair of Mental Health PPIE Network

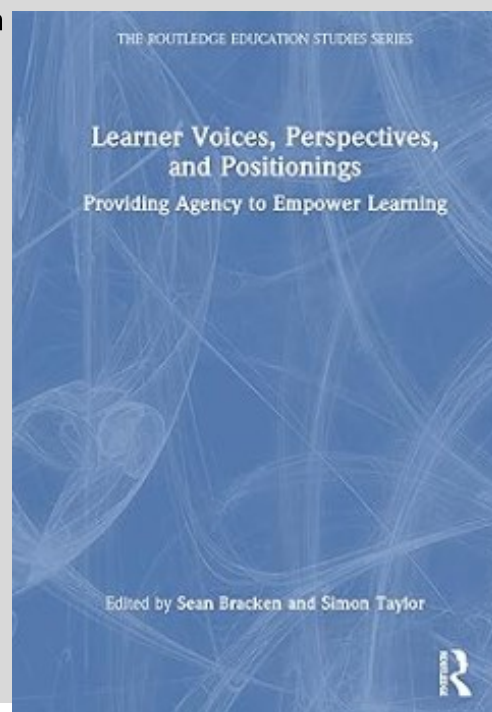
RECENT PUBLICATIONS

A selection of research outputs published since May 2025.

BOOKS & MONOGRAPHS

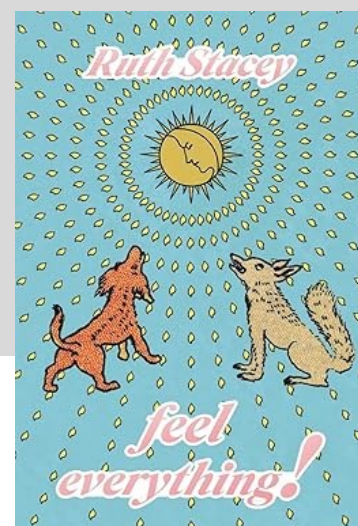
Taylor, Simon and Bracken, Seán (2025) **LEARNER VOICES, PERSPECTIVES, AND POSITIONINGS: PROVIDING AGENCY TO EMPOWER LEARNING**. Routledge, London.

This book explores the multifaceted concept of learner voice in education, emphasising its significance across various contexts and historical periods. It brings together diverse perspectives from multiple authors, addressing how learner agency can shape educational practices and policies, particularly in contemporary settings. The chapters delve into critical themes such as the influence of teachers' beliefs on student learning, the impact of polarisation in our current educational discourse and the historical voices of children in Victorian schools. Notable case studies include a narrative approach to understanding higher education students' experiences and the examination of learner voice within prison education. The book also addresses pressing issues such as the representation of marginalised voices and the importance of inclusive practices in school leadership and curriculum design. Groundbreaking content includes discussions on "epistemic violence", highlighting the need for a more nuanced, considered and critically aware approach to learner representation. This important collection will be essential reading for educational studies students and trainee teachers, as well as educators working in further or higher education. It provides practical insights and theoretical frameworks that constitute a roadmap for strengthening diverse learners' voice and agency, thereby advancing educational equity and inclusion for all.



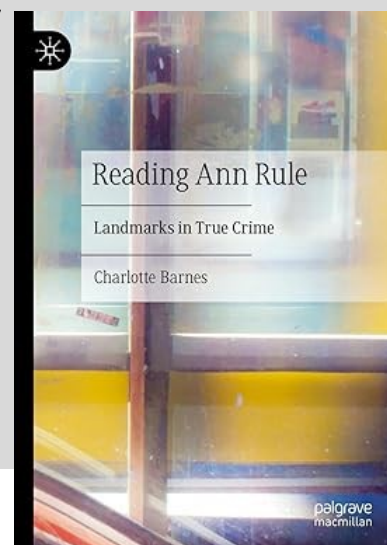
Stacey, Ruth (2025) **FEEL EVERYTHING!** Forks and Spoons Press, Newton-le-Willows, Merseyside.

The subject of Ruth Stacey's poetry collection is Pamela Colman Smith (16 February 1878 - 18 September 1951). Pamela Colman Smith was a British artist, illustrator, writer, publisher, and occultist. She is best-known for illustrating the Rider-Waite tarot deck (also called the Rider-Waite-Smith or Waite-Smith deck) for Arthur Edward Waite. This tarot deck became the standard among tarot card readers, and remains the most widely used today. Smith also illustrated over 20 books, wrote two collections of Jamaican folklore, edited two magazines, and ran the Green Sheaf Press, a small press focused on women writers.



Barnes, Charlotte (2025) **READING ANN RULE: LANDMARKS IN TRUE CRIME**. Palgrave Macmillan, Cham, Switzerland.

This book studies the works of Ann Rule, aiming to shed light on her literary career as a largely uncelebrated True Crime writer, in addition to works by other lesser-known female True Crime writers including Alia Trabucco Zerán, Katherine Ellison and Caitlin Rother. Barnes argues that Rule's works should be regarded as landmarks in True Crime fiction. In so doing, she critically considers how Rules blended non-fiction and fiction to produce character- and plot-driven works through reliance on figurative language and varied but impactful narrative methodologies. Barnes also draws parallels between the success of iconic female writers, such as Agatha Christie and Dorothy L. Sayers, in the Golden Age of detective and crime fiction and considers the similarities, differences and connections between these genres.



SUSTAINABLE FUTURES

JOURNAL ARTICLE: Olajumoke, Taiwo and Rezaei, Sajad (2025) **STORYTELLING AND THE SUSTAINABILITY OF FASHION AND LUXURY BRANDS: THEORY AND PRACTICE**.

Sustainable Digital Marketing for Fashion and Luxury Brands. Springer Nature Switzerland, Cham, pp. 409-423.

As the world enters the innovative and transformative era of digital marketing technology, businesses, sectors, organisations, firms, trades, companies, and industries wonder what is ahead of them; they face challenges to adopt and adapt to the new generation of digital marketing strategies, especially storytelling and digital content marketing. In the past ten years there has been a deceleration in the effectiveness and use of traditional advertising and marketing channels within the fashion and luxury brands industry. Some media channels, tactics,

methods, and techniques are less relevant and are now unsuccessful in the marketing of luxury and fashion brands. This chapter conceptualises storytelling and the sustainability of fashion and luxury brands. It discusses issues with unidirectional marketing in relation to the evolution of digital tools. The roles of storytelling, digital content marketing, and sustainable storytelling in the fashion and luxury brands industry are emphasised. The way forward for future sustainable practices of storytelling and digital marketing are highlighted.

BOOK SECTION: Hill, Rosemarie and Hughes, Daniel (2025) **NATURE CONNECTEDNESS AND THE COMMON THIRD WITHIN THE PRIMARY CURRICULUM - EXPLORING SUSTAINABILITY THROUGH A CROSS-CURRICULAR APPROACH**.

In: Sustainability Education for Children and Young People: Educating for the Environmental Crisis. Routledge, Oxford, pp. 109-121.

This chapter will explore the concept of connections: connections with nature and with each other. We will examine the theory of nature connectedness and its links to sustainability. We will explore how primary school teachers could use the common third to not only build connections and relationships between pupils, parents and school, but seek to work collaboratively to teach sustainability using a cross-curricular, holistic and measured approach. There will

be a focus on teaching the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) through the foundation subjects as these areas provide ample opportunity to reconnect with nature within the primary national curriculum. Towards the end of this chapter, the discussion will focus on practical ideas for implementing common third activities within a primary school setting to nurture children's understanding of sustainability.

JOURNAL ARTICLE: Mateos Fierro, Zeus, Garratt, M., Fountain, M., Ashbrook, Kate and Westbury, Duncan (2025) **CONTRIBUTION OF POLLINATORS TO DELIVERING FRUIT QUALITY IN COMMERCIAL SWEET CHERRY ORCHARDS.** JSFA Reports. pp. 1-7.

Background: Pollinators provide an essential ecosystem service to many crops, including sweet cherry (*Prunus avium*), which can be quantified in terms of fruit number and/or quality. Most studies in sweet cherry have explored the extent to which fruit set relies on pollinators but have neglected pollinators' contribution to fruit quality. We investigated the impact of pollinators on fruit set (2018–2019) and fruit quality (2017–2019). In 10 commercial sweet cherry orchards under polytunnels, we conducted insect-exclusion experiments comparing insect-excluded blossoms (mesh-bagged blossoms) to blossoms exposed to floral visitors (open blossoms). We then investigated relationships between fruit set and fruit quality.

Results: Pollinators were key to underpinning commercial fruit set (15.4% fruit set from open blossoms compared to 1.1% with bagged blossoms), equivalent to a contribution of 92.8%. Pollinators

were also essential to achieving higher cherry fruit quality. With open blossoms, fresh mass, width, dry matter, and flesh/pit ratio of cherries increased by 19.8%, 7.9%, 19.8%, and 10.5%, respectively, compared to cherries from bagged blossoms. In contrast, firmness was similar between both pollination treatments. We did not find a significant relationship between fruit set and quality, suggesting trees did not carry an excessive fruit burden.

Conclusion: Our results highlight the importance of pollinators, not only for underpinning commercial yields in terms of fruit set, but also for higher fruit quality. We recommend growers adopt effective pollinator management practices to help underpin commercially viable yields consisting of fruit with a higher marketable potential.

JOURNAL ARTICLE: Gol, Deniz, Okechukwu, Emeka Chibuzor, Ünal, Gizem, Webb, A., Wood, T., Hong, Yiguo, Sherif, S., Wacker, T., Studholme, D., McDowell, John and Tör, M. (2025) **ADVANCING RNAI-BASED STRATEGIES AGAINST DOWNY MILDEWS: INSIGHTS INTO DSRNA UPTAKE AND GENE SILENCING.** bioRxiv. pp. 1-46.

Downy mildew (DMs) diseases are caused by destructive obligate pathogens with limited control options, posing a significant threat to global agriculture. RNA interference (RNAi) has emerged as a promising, environmentally sustainable strategy for disease management. In this study, we evaluated the efficacy of dsRNA-mediated RNAi in suppressing key biological functions in DM pathogens of *Arabidopsis thaliana*, pea and lettuce DM pathogens, *Hyaloperonospora arabidopsidis* (Hpa), *Peronospora viciae* f. sp. pisi (Pvp) and *Bremia lactucae* (Bl), respectively. We specifically targeted the cellulose synthase 3 (CesA3) and the beta tubulin (BTUB) genes. Silencing CesA3 impaired spore germination and infection across multiple species, while BTUB silencing reinforced the potential of dsRNA-mediated inhibition. Reduction in gene expression levels correlated well with the sporulation assays confirming the effectiveness of dsRNA-mediated gene silencing. We used dsRNAs that were chemically synthesized, in vitro transcribed (IVT) or produced in *E. coli*. We found that the length and

concentration of these dsRNAs significantly affected uptake efficiency, spore germination, and sporulation, with higher concentrations enhancing inhibitory effects. Confocal microscopy using Cy-5-labelled short-synthesized dsRNA (SS-dsRNA) provided direct evidence of spore uptake, confirming the potential of SS-dsRNA for pathogen control. However, species-specific sequence variations influenced dsRNA efficacy, underscoring the importance of target sequence design. Multiplexed RNAi impacted silencing synergistically, further reducing germination and sporulation in Hpa. Additionally, we demonstrated that SS-dsRNA-mediated gene silencing is sustained over time, with a significant reduction in gene expression level at 4, 7, 10 and 11dpi. This indicates the durability and efficacy of this approach. Taken together, these findings demonstrate the potential of dsRNA-mediated gene silencing as a precision tool for managing DM pathogens.

PROFESSIONAL EDUCATION

JOURNAL ARTICLE: *Hughes, Susan (2025)* **EXPLORING MIDWIVES PERCEPTIONS AND EXPERIENCES OF HOME BIRTH.** MIDIRS Midwifery Digest, 35 (2). pp. 119-124.

In the context of the low national home-birth rate, a local home birth service was developed. Since its implementation, there has been no formal review of factors that may influence the home birth service's effectiveness. Midwives' perceptions and experience of home birth, which can have an impact on the home birth rate, has been largely unexplored. This

service evaluation used a qualitative approach, which highlights that midwives believe issues such as: exposure to home birth, midwifery philosophy, essential home birth training and investment from management would increase midwives' feelings of confidence in home birth, potentially increasing local home birth rates.

JOURNAL ARTICLE: *Sewell, Alexandra (2025)* **DEVELOPMENT OF A CONTEXT-BASED FORMATIVE FEEDBACK PRACTICE FRAMEWORK: A HIGHER EDUCATION ACTION RESEARCH PROJECT.** Journal of Perspectives in Applied Academic Practice, 13 (2). pp. 31-46.

Formative Assessment (FA), and Formative Feedback (FF) as a central part of FA, in Higher Education (HE) is a complex and contested process with various definitions, ranging from the nebulous to the highly specific. This has made the practical task of enhancing FA and FF processes in undergraduate courses challenging. This paper reports on an Action Research (AR) project that sought to understand and develop FA and FF practices within an HE Institute of Education. Emphasis was placed on student experiences and perceptions, as well as the importance of considering learner opinions as a valid source of knowledge generation. The starting point for the project was a theoretical exploration of the

broader concept of FA, which highlighted the different interpretations within the literature. It also revealed the potential challenges surrounding its practical implementation regarding FF, particularly the divergences between students and lecturers regarding purpose and goals. Following an iterative AR process, the project used this starting point to develop project goals and ethos, collect and analyse data to audit existing FA and FF practices, and design and apply a framework for evaluating and evolving these practices. The paper concludes by reviewing the benefits and limitations of the AR project and offering proposals for further actions.

JOURNAL ARTICLE: *Menara, Barbara (2025)* **BALANCING INTEGRATION AND ROLE DELINEATION IN PUBLIC ADDICTION SERVICES: INSIGHTS FROM NORTHERN ITALY.** International Journal of Multidisciplinary Approach Research and Science, 3 (2). pp. 693-707.

This study explored the complex dynamics within multidisciplinary organizations involved in addiction treatment services by investigating how professional roles, operational tasks, and systemic challenges interact and affect overall performance and service outcomes. The research was conducted within public services for addictions in Northern Italy, utilizing an ethnographic approach that included participant observation and semi-structured interviews with professionals from various disciplines. An analysis of the organizational system revealed inconsistencies between the intended goals and actual strategies, with a homogeneous approach aimed at increasing the similarities among professional categories. Upon closer examination, this homogeneous approach revealed several challenges including an unclear

delineation of professional groups and overlapping responsibilities. Consequently, an excess of integrative work was observed, potentially compromising the system functionality and efficiency. While integration is important, our findings suggest the need to balance integration with other systemic functions and clearly define roles in multidisciplinary settings. By employing an ethnographic approach to public services for addictions, this study provides a novel perspective on organizational structure and its impact on service delivery. The application of Parson's four-function paradigm to understanding system functionality also offers fresh insights into the complexities of these organizations.

JOURNAL ARTICLE: Prouska, R., Ali, S., Tungtakanpoung, M., Bell, Robin, Bektaş, O., Halila, F., Godts, I., Moser, K., Mulier, L., Pillalamarri, K. and Saraç, M. (2025) **PREPARING BUSINESS GRADUATES FOR A MULTICULTURAL WORKFORCE.** British Educational Research Journal, Online. pp. 1-33.

This research examines how higher education institutions can enhance the employability of business graduates by exploring the supply and demand for intercultural competencies, as perceived by both students and employers across Europe. It addresses two key research gaps: first, whether recent graduates in Europe meet employer expectations regarding intercultural competencies, and second, how higher education institutions in Europe—particularly business schools—can improve graduates' employability by designing curricula that align with employer needs. Drawing on a cross-national study that includes 102 student and employer interviews conducted in the UK, Belgium, Sweden, and Turkey, the research seeks to gain

insights into the demand and supply of intercultural competencies from both employer and student perspectives. The study identifies seven key intercultural competencies: cultural empathy, cognitive flexibility, conscientiousness, social initiative, emotional stability, open-mindedness, and willingness to tolerate ambiguity. It also proposes an eighth critical dimension—digital competencies for intercultural collaboration. These eight dimensions are conceptualised in an 'Intercultural Competencies Framework,' which includes three categories of learning activities based on the findings. This framework can assist educators and employers in designing training programmes that enhance intercultural communication and collaboration skills.

JOURNAL ARTICLE: Flórez-Gil, E., Vaquera, Alejandro, Rodríguez-Fernández, A. and Rodríguez-Marroyo, J. (2025) **ANTHROPOMETRIC PROFILE OF FEMALE BASKETBALL PLAYERS: THE INFLUENCE OF COMPETITIVE LEVEL AND PLAYING POSITION.** Journal of Human Sport and Exercise, 20 (3). pp. 821-828.

This study aimed to analyse the anthropometric characteristics of female basketball players, focusing on competitive level and specific playing position. The sample included 62 female basketball players from teams across all senior women's basketball leagues in Spain, (1st to 4th division). Different anthropometric measurements were evaluated to evaluate body composition and somatotype. Significant differences emerged between competitive levels, with higher-level players showing more

favourable results in some measures. Furthermore, a distinctive profile was identified based on playing position: centers were generally taller, heavier and had higher percentages of body fat and muscle mass compared to forwards and guards. This study provides valuable information on the physical attributes of female basketball players across competitive levels, improving knowledge of the demands of current women's basketball.

SOCIAL EXCLUSION, CULTURE AND IDENTITY

JOURNAL ARTICLE: Mycock, George, Foye, Una, Molnar, Gyoza and Edwards, Christian (2025) **MEN'S FORMAL HELP-SEEKING FOR EATING AND/OR BODY IMAGE PSYCHOPATHOLOGY: A SYSTEMATIC REVIEW OF BARRIERS AND FACILITATORS.** Journal of Men's Studies, Online. pp. 1-33.

This systematic review synthesized findings from 15 articles that report barriers and/or facilitators to/of adult men's formal health-related help-seeking for eating and/or body image psychopathology (EBIP). A convergent integrated approach was used to summarize studies into eight synthesized findings (SF; six barriers, two facilitators). Barrier SFs are located at individual (e.g., viewing EBIP as a "women's illness"), cultural (e.g., lacking knowledge

of men's EBIP), and organizational (e.g., lack of male-inclusive healthcare systems) levels. Facilitator SFs were found mostly at individual (e.g., recognition of the issue following critical life events) and cultural/social (e.g., family/peer interventions) levels. This review highlights concerns within EBIP and men's help-seeking literature, and suggests issues with the available support for men experiencing EBIP.

JOURNAL ARTICLE: *Sundari, Sethu, Fernandez-Mills, K. and Mauro-Bracken, Lisa (2025)*

CONSTRUCTING CULTURALLY SAFE LEARNING SPACES FOR INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS.

The International Journal of Universal Design and Universal Design for Learning (IJUDUDL), 1 (1). pp. 224-226.

This commentary explores the intersection of cultural safety and Universal Design for Learning (UDL) principles to establish inclusive and supportive educational environments for international students in UK higher education. Reflecting on our transition from international students to educators, we share insights derived from literature, academic discussions, and practical experiences, including the development of a staff workshop for the Power of Potential Conference (2024). We propose a Model of Evolving Cultural Competence that underscores cultural humility and continuous learning as pivotal to creating culturally safe learning spaces.

Through an analysis of three UDL checkpoints—sustaining effort and persistence, language and symbols, and expression and communication—we offer actionable strategies for educators to foster engagement, representation, and participation. These

include integrating diverse student perspectives, leveraging multimodal resources and providing inclusive assessment methods to empower international students. Our approach challenges normative biases, promotes cultural curiosity, and addresses power imbalances, emphasising the co-creation of knowledge and mutual learning. By combining cultural safety and UDL principles, this paper advocates for a dynamic and reflective pedagogy that enhances student belonging, inclusivity, and equitable engagement. These practices aim to benefit both students and educators, fostering transformative learning environments that support diversity and cultural competence.

JOURNAL ARTICLE: *Stephens, Nathan, Evans, Shirley, Russell, Christopher and Brooker, Dawn (2025)*

DEVELOPMENT AND IMPLEMENTATION OF A NOVEL APPROACH TO SCALING THE MEETING CENTRE INTERVENTION FOR PEOPLE LIVING WITH DEMENTIA AND THEIR UNPAID CARERS, USING AN ADAPTED VERSION OF THE TEMPLATE FOR INTERVENTION DESCRIPTION AND REPLICATION (TIDIER) CHECKLIST.

Behavioural Sciences, 15 (5). pp. 1-26.

Complex interventions are often poorly described, making it difficult to understand their development, implementation, and evaluation (i.e., context), which can aid in replicating and translating evidence into practice and policy. Therefore, we examined the development and implementation of an approach to scaling-out (increasing the numbers of) a psychosocial intervention for people affected by dementia across a rural county in England during 2019–2024. We used an adapted version of the TIDieR checklist to consider key items essential for replicating complex interventions at scale. We triangulated document analysis with interview data, and key programme stakeholders ratified the results of this study. We identified three programme components and sub-components, including how planned components were delivered, by whom, and

under what conditions. Implementation outcomes related to the inner (e.g., top-down structure) and outer contexts (e.g., market failures) led to modifications that increased programme complexity. This study highlights the importance of programme leaders who can convene and drive systems and culture change to address implementation challenges, as well as the need for scaling science during programme development, for example, to determine optimal scale. Further research should include testing implementation outcomes to understand if the intervention is a scalable solution to the gap in post-diagnostic support in the UK.

JOURNAL ARTICLE: *Yasin, N., Haq, Muhibul, Dana, L. and Salamzadeh, A. (2025) "TRY TO KEEP THEM DUMB AND UNDER THE THUMB": EXPLORING THE 'DARKER SIDE' OF PSYCHOLOGICAL CONTRACTS IN 'OVERLY EMBEDDED' IMMIGRANT ENTERPRISES.* Employee Relations: The International Journal.

Purpose: This paper investigates the employment dynamics of immigrant enterprises by examining psychological contract (PC) relationships between immigrant entrepreneurs (IEs) and their workforce within immigrant enclaves in Northern England. By integrating Psychological Contract Theory (PCT) with the mixed embeddedness framework, the study explores how informal employment relationships lead to inadvertent PC violations and their operational and competitive consequences.

Design: A qualitative approach was adopted using semi-structured interviews that were conducted with 43 Pakistani immigrant entrepreneurs and 68 employees between March 2022 and August 2023. The data were analysed using Template Analysis, allowing for a structured examination and comparison of themes and patterns across participants' narratives.

Findings: The study reveals distinct PC dynamics, illustrating how different relationship 'types' within immigrant enterprises are related to varying competitive and operational risks. Kinship-based relationships foster loyalty but introduce operational risks related to role misalignment and limited skill development. Second-level relatives pose the highest competitive threat by leveraging their positions for skill acquisition and future competitive behaviour. Co-ethnic employees present moderate competitive

risks, often exhibiting counterproductive behaviours or leaving to start their businesses. Non-co-ethnic employees, though rare, pose the lowest competitive threat but can introduce legal and compliance risks due to transactional PC breaches. These findings illustrate the complex interplay between relationship types, competitive pressures, and operational stability within immigrant enterprises.

Originality: This study uniquely combines Psychological Contract Theory (PCT) with the mixed embeddedness framework to provide a nuanced perspective on immigrant entrepreneurship within Northern England's immigrant enclaves. By focusing on the unintended consequences of over-embeddedness, this research challenges the traditional view of ethnic networks and social capital as uniformly beneficial, illustrating how excessive reliance on informal agreements can undermine business sustainability. The study highlights the importance of formalised management practices, offering new insights into the discourse on immigrant entrepreneurship theory and practical implications for workforce management within ethnic enclave enterprises.

DIGITAL INNOVATION

JOURNAL ARTICLE: *Malomo, Michelle and Purcell, Sarah (2025) CO-CREATION OF AN INCLUSIVE STUDY SKILLS PORTAL REMOVING BARRIERS THROUGH UDL.* The International Journal of Universal Design and Universal Design for Learning, 1 (1). pp. 212-223.

This paper will reflect upon how the development of an online study skills portal within a HEI was enhanced by using Universal Design for Learning (UDL) principles and a community of practice (COP). In response to the crucial need to retain students and support their academic development, this paper will explore how the UDL design principles were applied in creating a study skills portal. This paper will examine current literature and thinking for both UDL and the need for students in HE to develop study skills. A reflective discussion will consider how using

accessible technology, the development of student-centric materials, and working within a community of practice can enable the removal of barriers for students accessing materials to support and develop their study skills. The paper concludes by emphasising the value of underpinning and progressing the design of a study skills resource using UDL and COP frameworks.

JOURNAL ARTICLE: *Poultney, Susan and Wedgbury, Kirsty (2025)* **WALKING IN SOMEONE ELSE'S SHOES – CAN A TRANSFORMATIVE SIMULATION HELP STUDENT NURSES COMPREHEND SENSORY OVERLOAD?** *International Journal of Healthcare Simulation*. pp. 1-10.

Introduction: Atypical sensory processing is a difficulty in regulating and managing sensory input in a meaningful way. Sensory processing disorder (SPD) is common in individuals with autism spectrum disorders (ASD), pervasive development disorders, specific learning difficulties (SpLD) and neurodiversity.

The Experiencing Sensory Overload simulation aims to champion inclusive practice and reduce health inequalities by encouraging student nurses to reconsider their working environments to create sensorily safe spaces for individuals who experience SPD.

This paper explores the impact of the transformative simulation on nursing students' confidence and knowledge of sensory overload and inclusive practice.

Methods: A quasi-experimental method with pre and post simulation surveys and a written reflection was utilised. A convenience sample of 26 BSc Nursing students were recruited to this evaluative first-stage assessment of a new simulation.

Data was gathered from participants about the value of engaging with the simulation. Questionnaires using a Likert score to explore experiences, knowledge and confidence about neurodiversity,

ASD and sensory overload were administered. Participants also submitted a short, written reflection examined via reflexive thematic analysis.

Results: The Likert data shows a clear shift in pre and post knowledge. Calculated median of pre-experience knowledge was 4.5 rising to a median of 8 post-experience. 90.5% of participants would recommend this simulation.

Reflexive thematic analysis of qualitative data derived three themes:

- 'The penny dropped' - Understanding / awareness,
- 'Walking in someone else's shoes' - Appreciation of uniqueness of experience for individuals
- 'Ask, listen, do' - Strategies to adapt & inform practice

Discussion: The participants enhanced their understanding of the challenges of sensory overload, envisaging reasonable adjustments to ensure inclusive practice. The authors believe that this simulation is effective and will positively impact on nursing students' ability to care for neurodiverse individuals.

JOURNAL ARTICLE: *Gbadegeshin, S., French, A., Olajumoke, Taiwo, Al Zahrani, I., Farah, S. and Jegede, O. (2025)* **IMPACT OF ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE ON DIGITAL MARKETING: THEORETICAL AND EMPIRICAL EVIDENCE.** *Tech Fusion in Business and Society: Harnessing Big Data, IoT, and Sustainability in Business. Studies in Systems, Decision and Control, 2 (234)*. Springer, Cham, pp. 23-33.

The recent surge in the application of Artificial Intelligence (AI) within digital marketing warrants investigation to better understand its effects on business operations. Consequently, this paper explores the impacts of AI on digital marketing, given their interconnection. It aims to provide both theoretical and empirical evidence regarding these impacts. A qualitative approach was employed, involving a review of 75 articles and conducting 5 in-depth interviews with practitioners from medium and large corporations. The findings indicate that scholars have identified AI's influence on digital marketing in areas such as big data collection and analytics, search engine optimisation (SEO),

augmented and virtual reality, Artificial Design Intelligence (ADI), and real-time content creation. Practitioners noted both positive and negative effects of AI, including the provision of real-time information, support for forecasting and decision-making, performance enhancement, high costs, and low return on investment. The results suggest that AI is unlikely to replace digital marketers' job roles. This paper contributes to the literature on AI and digital marketing and provides valuable insights for practitioners and decision-makers.

JOURNAL ARTICLE: Neal, D., Craven, M., Cross, J., Evans, Shirley, Fox, C., Oksnebjerg, L., Alexandre, I., Aryankhesal, A., Astell, A., Begde, A., Ditton, A., Engelsma, T., Gregersen, R., Heims, P., Hogervorst, E., Humeysra Kafadar, A., Poos, J., Robinson, L., Sezgin, D., Smaling, H., Szczesniak, D., Tan, J., de Vugt, M. and Meiland, F. . (2025) **DIGITAL ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGIES FOR COMMUNITY-DWELLING PEOPLE WITH DEMENTIA: A SYSTEMATIC REVIEW OF SYSTEMATIC REVIEWS BY THE INTERDEM AI & ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY TASKFORCE.** Digital Health, 11. pp. 1-15.

Introduction: The use of digital assistive technologies by and for people living with dementia is promising for supporting social health and advocated as a partial solution to growing prevalence worldwide. A state-of-the-art position paper published in 2017 identified challenges regarding digital assistive technologies, around five themes: development, usability, (cost-)effectiveness, implementation and ethics. This systematic review summarizes progress on the challenges found in 2017, and persisting or emerging challenges.

Methods: A systematic review of systematic reviews was conducted, focused on studies published after 2016. The inclusion criteria required that the target group included, at least in part, people with dementia living in the community and that the technologies aimed to support social health. For the five themes, literature searches were conducted in Medline, CINAHL, PsycINFO, and Embase databases.

Results: A total of 112 reviews were included, covering various applications such as smart homes, care robots, exergaming and everyday technologies.

No applications of artificial intelligence were included. The challenges included personalization of applications (development); limited use of standardized methods (usability); insufficient quantity and quality of randomized controlled trials (cost-effectiveness); overly high expectations of assistive technologies (implementation); and the need for more equitable access to technologies (ethics).

Conclusion: Much research has been conducted since the 2017 state of the art position paper. While some challenges identified at that time remain relevant, others have been addressed, and new challenges have emerged. Future research should prioritize emerging artificial intelligence applications; the development of integrated assistive technologies; evaluation using robust methods and meaningful outcomes; and the promotion of more accessible and inclusive technologies.

HEALTH AND WELLBEING

JOURNAL ARTICLE: Roberts, J. , Naunton Morgan, B., Hedd Jones, Catrin and Windle, G. (2025) **EXPERIENCES OF DEMENTIA IN FARMING COMMUNITIES: A SCOPING REVIEW.** Journal of Rural Studies, 119 (103710). pp. 1-10.

Farming communities experience significant rates of dementia, however research exploring the support needs of this population is scarce. In response, this scoping review examined published literature on the experiences of dementia in farming communities. Five databases were searched for peer-reviewed articles and a general google search conducted for grey literature. Eighteen articles were included in the review. The majority (n = 12) were grey literature including magazine and newspaper articles, demonstrating a large research gap in this area. Thematic analysis generated thirteen sub-themes that are presented within two overarching themes: 'challenges' and 'fostering resilience'. A stakeholder

meeting was organised with representatives from eight organisations that support farmers in Wales, to discuss themes and gain additional insights. Findings indicate a unique set of challenges faced by farming communities in relation to dementia, that are in addition to those faced by people living rurally in general. Importantly, this review also highlights helpful advice around opportunities for fostering resilience in people living with dementia and their families in farming communities. The findings of this review could be used to guide the development of healthcare information and support tailored to the unique needs of farming populations.

JOURNAL ARTICLE: *Unwin, Peter and Hulmes, A.* (2025) **INEQUALITIES IN MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES FOR ROMANI AND TRAVELLERS - TIME FOR SOCIAL WORK TO STEP UP?** *Critical and Radical Social Work*, pp. 1-17.

Romani and Traveller communities in the UK and Ireland are in the midst of a mental health crisis. These communities have suffered epistemic injustices over the centuries and social work has been part of this structural oppression. Historical and ongoing trauma is ever present, there are disproportionate numbers of their children in care in England and suicide rates are high, yet social workers have very little knowledge of Romani and Traveller communities and are slow to recognise professional complicity in perpetuating inequality. The research below used mixed methods to elicit views from Romani and Travellers and associated

staff about experiences of mental health services and offers social workers an example of authentic co-produced research.

Conclusions are that social work has colluded in the perpetuation of epistemic injustice that has excluded Romani and Traveller people from being able to access mental health services (hermeneutic injustice) and from being listened to or valued (testimonial injustice). Future social work education and practice must be trauma-informed and address this unhappy legacy of epistemic injustices.

JOURNAL ARTICLE: *Grocutt, Sarah and Wood, Colin* (2025) **WALKING WITH PURPOSE - EIGHT SOLO WOMEN'S PILGRIMAGE HIKING AND WELLBEING EXPERIENCES ON THE VIA FRANCIGENA.** *Journal of Outdoor Recreation and Tourism*, 52 (100943). pp. 1-9.

There is little research on women who undertake solo pilgrimage walking. This study examined the experiences of women who undertake solo pilgrimage walking, and to consider its impact on their wellbeing. Interviews were conducted with eight solo female walkers who had walked between 200 and 1662 km on the via Francigena pilgrimage route. Interpretative phenomenological analysis was used to explore the data and draw tentative conclusions. The study finds that the walkers were seeking solitude, seeking adventure, seeking connection to others, and seeking connection to themselves. The

study concludes that solo pilgrimage walking improved participants' sense of wellbeing by building identity and resilience, and that the search for community was an important part of solo pilgrimage walking experience. The study highlights that and that solo pilgrimage walking can be seen as a source of wellbeing as it appears to be a means to release tension, process grief and engage in physical movement that creates a meditative and reflective state.

JOURNAL ARTICLE: *Norman, Kay and Houghton, P.* (2025) **STUDENT NURSE PERCEPTIONS OF TEACHING EXCELLENCE.** *British Journal of Nursing*, 34 (15). pp. 784-788.

Background: To continually improve programme delivery, it is important that student nurses have an opportunity to voice opinions on teaching excellence within their programme of study.

Aim: To explore final year pre-registration nursing students' views on teaching excellence.

Method: A qualitative survey approach drawn from Braun et al (2021) was employed to collect anonymous feedback from one cohort of final year nursing students with 64 responses (25% response rate).

Findings: Four themes were generated from the responses received which related to perceptions of

teaching excellence: Interactive learning; Assessment; Practice experiences; Student support

Conclusion: Factors associated with teaching excellence are varied depending on individual viewpoints. Clinical skills/simulation, and practice focused sessions were most equated with this term, alongside an identified need for varied interactive teaching and learning activities related to assessment requirements. Feeling valued as a student is seen to be instrumental in achieving teaching excellence.

JOURNAL ARTICLE: *Vickers, J., Goodliffe, G., Porter, Lisa and Thompson, V. (2025) NAVIGATING HEALTHCARE REALITIES: EXPLORING ACCESS AND ENGAGEMENT FOR TRANSGENDER AND NON-BINARY INDIVIDUALS IN ENGLAND.* International Perspectives on Health Equity, 1 (1). pp. 39-61.

Purpose: Engaging transgender, non-binary and gender-diverse (TNBiGD) individuals in healthcare beyond transition-related care is necessary for improving health outcomes. Because of a lack of legislative protections in the UK, this population faces substantial barriers to accessing healthcare, characterised by negative experiences and discrimination. This study aims to explore the healthcare experiences of TNBiGD individuals in England, focusing on access and engagement within primary and secondary care services.

Design/methodology/approach: Adopting a participatory research approach, this study involved 17 TNBiGD individuals in England through online focus groups and semi-structured interviews, conducted in three phases. Ethical clearance was obtained, and participants were recruited via snowball sampling from LGBTQIA+ networks. Thematic analysis was used to interpret the data, with a focus on healthcare engagement and barriers to access.

Findings: Participants highlighted the necessity of equitable healthcare access as a fundamental human right, often hindered by discrimination, restricted access to gender-affirming care and a lack of provider knowledge. Systemic exclusions and identity erasure were identified as major barriers, with participants experiencing misgendering, incorrect use of gender markers and diagnostic overshadowing. Positive healthcare experiences were noted when gender identity was respected and integrated into care.

Originality/value: This study underscores the significant healthcare barriers faced by TNBiGD individuals in England, highlighting the need for systemic changes to ensure accessible, respectful and inclusive care. Recommendations focus on education, policy changes and further research to address these challenges and improve healthcare outcomes for the transgender and non-binary community.

JOURNAL ARTICLE: *Sturrock, B. and Frank, Helen (2025) AN EXPLORATION OF STAKEHOLDER PERCEPTIONS OF PHYSIOTHERAPISTS UNDERTAKING COMMUNITY ADVANCED CLINICAL PRACTICE ROLES.* International Journal for Advancing Practice, 3 (3). pp. 113-118.

Background: Advanced clinical practitioners (ACPs) with a physiotherapy background undertake a range of activities in the community setting. Since this is a novel role for physiotherapists, there is a paucity of literature related to physiotherapists working as ACPs in the community.

Aim: This study explored stakeholders' perceptions of physiotherapists undertaking such roles in the community.

Methods: A qualitative approach, using semi-structured interviews, was conducted involving a total of eight participants, including ACPs, GPs and advanced clinical practice managers. Reflexive thematic analysis was used to analyse the data.

Findings: Both benefits and challenges of physiotherapists undertaking advanced clinical practice roles were identified. The benefits included improving the patient journey and an opportunity for career progression. However, prescribing was identified as a challenge and a barrier to the physiotherapist's role as an ACP.

Conclusions: Further research is needed into physiotherapists and other allied health professionals undertaking advanced clinical practice roles. There is an opportunity for NHS organisations and academic institutions to address uncertainties that may deter future physiotherapists considering this role.

Implications for practice: This study provides an insight into the novel role a physiotherapist ACP can undertake in a community setting and offers understanding around the benefits and challenges that individuals and organisations face when physiotherapists undertake these roles.

IMPACT

ENHANCING WELLBEING THROUGH NUDGING TECHNIQUES

Dr Felix Why, Senior Lecturer in the Department of Psychology and Mental Health and a registered health and occupational psychologist, was invited to the Universitas Negeri Semarang (UNNES), Indonesia, in July 2025. This visit to UNNES marked the second in an annual series that began in 2024, with a productive collaboration as evidenced by numerous research outputs, talks, and workshop activities. Collaboration between Dr Felix Why and UNNES has produced research output on personality in occupational outcomes and dietary change interventions. Other activities during this visit included being an invited speaker to the Education and Psychology International Conference (EPIC), where he delivered a talk on System 1 approaches to behavioural change - an area of research that explores intuitive, emotional, and automatic decision-making processes.

Drawing from his research, Dr Why illustrated how these insights can be applied to real-world interventions, sparking interest among academics and practitioners alike. For instance, some of these strategies include replacing the default food choices with healthier options in cafeterias and placing less healthy food options less physically accessible than healthier ones. He also delivered two intensive half-day workshops where he shared his strategies and approach to research project design and manuscript writing to postgraduates and staff at UNNES. In these workshops, he covered how to design research projects that are novel and of publishable quality in Q1 research journals and how to communicate research data to achieve these goals. The workshops were part of a broader initiative to elevate research standards at UNNES and foster a culture of scholarly excellence.

Dr Why also extended his expertise beyond academia by engaging with professionals from the Central Java Human Resources Development Division. Members of this Division are people working in Human Resource in Central Java who

were interested in finding out evidence-based ways improve health and wellbeing among employees in their organisation. His talk, titled “Enhancing Wellbeing through Nudging Techniques,” introduced psychological strategies that subtly guide behaviour without restricting choice—a concept known as “nudging.” The session attracted a wide range of HR practitioners eager to explore evidence-based methods for improving employee wellbeing. A lively Q&A followed, where attendees shared workplace challenges and received tailored suggestions from Dr Why, blending theory with practical application. Some issues raised involve different nutritional needs for employees in an organisation and how nudge can be tailored to these various needs.

The visit also included strategic discussions with Prof. Dr. Edy Purwanto, Dean of the Faculty of Education and Psychology, and representatives from the international office. These meetings explored opportunities for student exchange between UNNES and the University of Worcester, aiming to enrich academic experiences and foster cross-cultural understanding. The dialogue underscored a shared commitment to internationalisation and laid the groundwork for future initiatives that will benefit students and staff alike.



Dr Felix Why's visit to UNNES exemplifies the power of international collaboration in advancing research, education, and community service. Through conferences, workshops, and strategic dialogue, the partnership continues to flourish—bringing mutual benefits to both institutions.

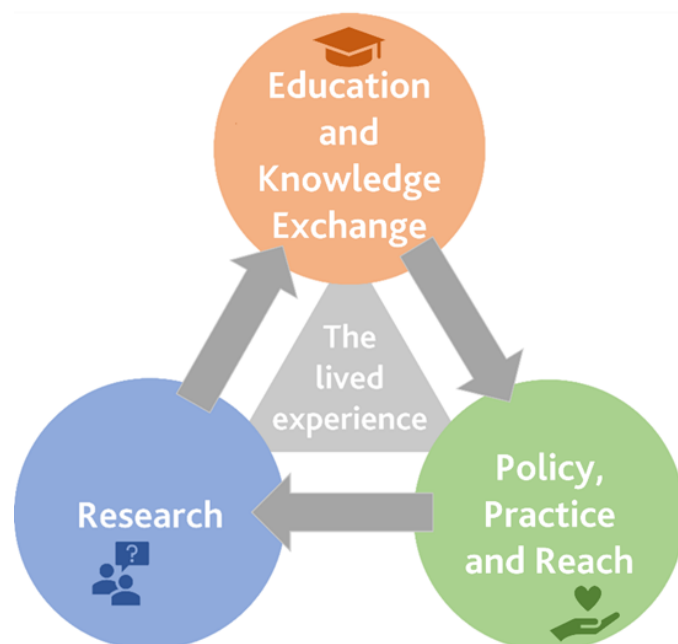
PUTTING RESEARCH INTO PRACTICE THROUGH EDUCATION: ASSOCIATION FOR DEMENTIA STUDIES

The Association for Demetia Studies (ADS) at the University of Worcester has designed and delivered multiple educational interventions, grounded in their research, across the care sector, creating tangible benefits and impacts to organisations and those living with dementia.

"We work from a position of evidence-based practice, bringing the latest and most up-to-date evidence from international research and best practice into all our courses. With this approach we are able to significantly impact on the lives of people affected by dementia." Dr Shirley Evans, Director of ADS.



Through their Postgraduate Certificate in Person-Centred Dementia Studies, CPD opportunities, and bespoke training courses, ADS have worked with a variety of professionals to create change within their organisations.

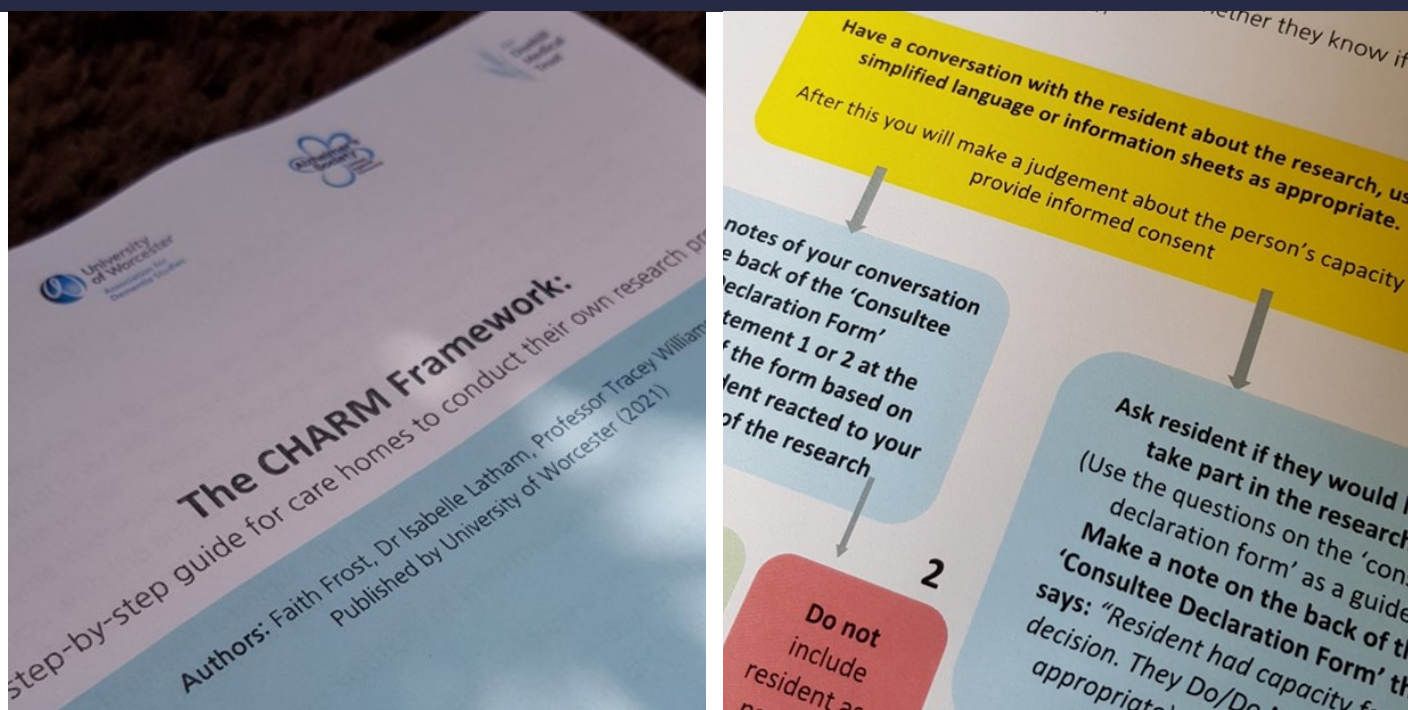


Here are some examples of the educational teaching,

guidance, and resources produced by ADS informing practice across the dementia care pathway:

Namaste Care is a multi-sensory intervention for people living with advanced dementia and at the end of life. Having led an Alzheimer's Society funded implementation project introducing Namaste Care into UK care homes, findings demonstrated significant improvements in quality of life. ADS have since developed, piloted, and evaluated, a course to train care home staff on how to administer the Namaste Care programme which provides a change to the focus and structure of care given to care home residents. Prior to attending the course, many of the care homes they work with have little to no specialist provision for those living with advanced dementia. The calm environment and person-centred one-on-one activities involved in Namaste Care, focus on sensory engagement through touch, smell, taste, and sight, often reducing feelings of agitation and encouraging pleasure, comfort, and enjoyment. Many of the care organisations trained by ADS now include Namaste Care as a brand standard. As participants on the pilot course commented, Namaste Care is *"an experience rather than an activity"*, and seeing how residents respond is *"like a magic moment"*.

The **'Focussed Intervention Training and Support (FITS) into practice'** programme was designed, implemented, and evaluated by ADS alongside the Alzheimer's Society to be delivered across a large number of care homes. FITS seeks to reduce the inappropriate prescription of psychotropic drugs by offering a person-centred framework for understanding and caring for people with behavioural symptoms. Dementia Practice Development Coaches (DPDCs) who have successfully completed the University of Worcester, are able to cascade their knowledge throughout care organisations. FITS has created significant positive changes in care homes across the UK and internationally, resulting in a postgraduate level academic module at the reduction in inappropriate prescribing, improved staff knowledge, person-centred care and higher resident wellbeing.



The **CHARM** project is a 'Care Home Action Researcher-in-residence Model'. Designed by ADS, this framework resource supports care home communities to design and undertake their own unique and meaningful small research projects involving visitors and residents in the collaborative process. These projects empower care home staff to find solutions to challenges or questions that arise as part of their everyday work in the sector. Recent CHARM research projects have included moving the 'big' meal of the day from lunchtime to evening time to improve resident activity levels; determining the best way to gather life histories about residents from surveying family members, friends and visitors; and discovering the needs and preferences of residents in order to plan and design a garden and related outdoor activities. Each project involves the opportunity to 'reflect, think, discuss and change', once the data is analysed, in order to create an action plan for next steps in the care home. The CHARM step by step manual is available to download online.

The **Leadership: the VIPS Approach** postgraduate module is based on the internationally recognised VIPS Framework developed by ADS and is supported by the **Care Fit for VIPS** tool. This framework breaks the delivery of person-centred care into manageable sections and illustrates its delivery across diverse service settings including care homes, hospital wards, supported housing, and domiciliary care. The VIPS Approach has been tailored to individual organisations, including the Welsh hospital sector, in cooperation with Improvement Cymru and NHS Wales, and is used as a means of transformation across the care sector.

For more information about the wider educational remit of ADS please contact the team via email on dementia@worc.ac.uk.



COMMUNICATING OUR RESEARCH

WHY IS CLIMATE CHANGE SO PREVALENT IN CHILDREN'S BOOKS?

15 April, Script Haven Bookshop, Worcester

As part of the Curious Minds Literary Festival, Jean Webb, Professor of International Children's Literature at the University of Worcester, delivered a talk entitled 'Environmental Havoc in Contemporary Fiction for Children and Teenagers', at Script Haven bookshop on Tuesday 15 April.

Professor Webb said: "Around the 1990s we started to see more and more books aimed at children where the audience were being made more and more aware of climate change. Books like Tony Davis' *The Big Dry*, which explored droughts in Australia, or Marcus Sedgewick's *Floodland*, which sees Norwich turned into an island by flooding, and the children have to go and make a new life. Throughout recent history, authors have been writing about the impact of weather on characters. The authors write about the things that matter to them, and they want to protect the younger generations by getting them to think about these things. Parents also read these stories too, so the writers make a difference simply by making more people aware of these issues".

SIRENS OF SUSTAINABILITY EXHIBITION

15 April– 26 May 2025, the Hive, Worcester

Illustration experts at the University of Worcester held a series of workshops with schools, colleges and community groups to explore these issues through myths and folktales about the protectors of our rivers alongside stories of modern-day activism. The posters produced in response to these sessions were displayed at the Hive as part of the Sirens of Sustainability exhibition.

The workshops, which began at the Hay Literary Festival in May 2024, are a spin off from the University's hugely successful *Sea Change*, an international art project looking at the impact of environmental issues like climate change, flooding and water pollution. Artists from all over the world responded with a postcard reflecting on these issues which then went on display in The Hive before the exhibition travelled around the world and was collated into a book.



Members of Worcester Craftivists with the work they produced in a Sirens of Sustainability workshop that will be part of the exhibition, alongside exhibition lead lecturer Tobias Hickey (left)

KEYNOTE ADDRESS AT THERAPIE LEIPZIG

22-24 April 2025, Leipziger Messe, Leipzig, Germany

In April, Dr Pauline Kuithan, Senior Lecturer in Physiotherapy, delivered a keynote address at Germany's leading trade fair and congress for therapy, medical rehabilitation, and prevention - Therapie LEIPZIG. With 3,000 participants, the therapie LEIPZIG congress is the largest advanced training event in the German-speaking industry. Pauline opened the day with a one-hour session titled: "I Like to Move It – Endogenous Pain Modulation: How Physiotherapy Can Influence Pain Sensitivity" providing an overview of how movement can influence pain perception.

ASSOCIATION FOR DEMENTIA STUDIES

ENHANCING RESIDENTIAL CARE: HOW RESEARCH CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE TO PRACTICE

13 May 2025, Online

In May, members of the Association for Dementia Studies delivered presentation the 'Enhancing Residential Care: How Research Can Make a Difference to Practice' online conference organised by the Hallmark Foundation and Hallmark Luxury Care Homes, with support from the National Institute for Health and Care Research. Research Associate Faith Frost, and Doctoral Student Suzanne Mumford, delivered the following presentations:

- Frost, F (2025) Care Home Action Researcher-in-residence Model (CHARM): Supporting Care Homes to develop evidence-based practice through research
- Mumford, S (2025) Supporting person-centred/relational care using the Care Fit for VIPS Framework.

This event featured and showcased practical and policy-influencing research projects with care homes, older people, their families and carers.

THE BIG SOCIAL MEETING CENTRES CONFERENCE

19-20 May 2025, Dundee

The Big Social Meeting Centres Conference, organised by Meeting Centres Scotland, took place in May, with keynote presentations from Professor Rose-Marie Dries, Joke Bos, and University of Worcester Emeritus for the Association for Dementia Studies (ADS), Professor Dawn Brooker. The conference was a sell out with over 180 registrations with speakers and delegates from Scotland, England, Northern Ireland, the Netherlands, Italy and Australia.

ADS delivered the MeetingDem project (2014-2017) which first brought Meeting Centres to the UK and developed a suite of resources to support organisations through the process of setting up their own Meeting Centre. ADS now facilitates the Meeting Centres UK network providing ongoing support to Meeting Centres across the UK. Since then, Scotland has really embraced Meeting Centres and they are included within the Scottish Dementia Strategy as a model of post-diagnostic support. Meeting Centres Scotland was created to support the establishment, growth, and sustainability of Meeting Centres throughout Scotland. They are able to provide more hands-on, tailored support than Meeting Centres UK, with a focus on the Scottish context. Professor Brooker (former ADS Director) is Honorary President of Meeting Centres Scotland, and ADS continue to work closely with them.

CROSSING THE LINE WEBINAR

22 May 2025, Online

The Association for Dementia Studies hosted a webinar in May to disseminate a newly produced suite of resources for people living with dementia as part of the 'Crossing the Line' project.

The Crossing the Line project explored the experiences of family carers relating to their provision of personal care to people living with dementia. Personal care includes helping with going to the toilet, washing, bathing, dressing, mouth-care, shaving, haircare, foot and nail-care. Family carers that support people with dementia have highlighted that the issue of personal care is very important to them, though research has shown that little is known about it in the context of dementia and family care.

The project co-produced a [suite of resources](#) to help families cope with the challenges that they face, including a series of 15 booklets and video clips from family carers sharing their own experiences and advice on what helped them. A recording of the webinar is available [here](#).

EPICC NETWORK INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE 2025: WHY DOES SPIRITUALITY MATTER IN PERSON-CENTRED CARE?

7-9 May 2025, St. John's Campus, Worcester

Nursing Academics from The School of Nursing and Midwifery successfully hosted an International Conference about the role of spirituality in person-centred care on 7th-9th May 2025. The conference was hosted on behalf of EPICC (Enhancing Nurses' and Midwives' Competence in Providing Spiritual Care through Innovative Education and Compassionate Care). EPICC is a global network of nursing/midwifery educators and practitioners which is dedicated to the advancement of evidence-based spiritual care education and practice.

The conference was designed to inspire and connect people to make changes in clinical practice. We were privileged to welcome to Worcester inspiring speakers from Norway, the USA, Malta, the Netherlands, Ghana, Portugal and across the UK which included over 70 delegates. The conference brought together Professors, healthcare professionals, educators, researchers and students to share current research, knowledge and experiences of spiritual care. The event featured keynote presentations from; Professor Melanie Rogers from the University of Huddersfield, Anne Taylor from the Parish Nursing Ministries UK and Revd Dr David Southall from Worcestershire Acute Hospitals NHS Trust. Over 30 abstract presentations were featured which showcased global perspectives on spiritual care, the conference also included a range of wellbeing sessions. Nursing students from Worcester presented their posters and one student (Adela Morchova) provided an oral presentation. This was a fantastic event which showcased evidence-based practice and high-quality research to inspire our students and the next generation of researchers in this field.



ALCHEMY OF WORDS 2025

20 May—7 June

Script Haven Bookshop, Worcester

As part of the Worcester-based literary festival, a number of colleagues from the University of Worcester delivered sessions to engage members of the public in the subject.

Course Leader for Creative Writing; Dr Jack McGowan, said, "It's really important that the course and the University has links to the local arts community and we reach out to celebrate the amazing work they're doing. I think there's a wealth of talent to be tapped into in Worcester and there's more and more opportunities every day to engage with that and to get like-minded writers sharing their work".

Why Do We Like the Devil?

31 May 2025

Prof. Darren Oldridge,
Professor of Early Modern History

Workshop : Writing review & feedback

3 June 2025

Dr Jack McGowan, Senior
Lecturer in Creative Writing

Resilient Women

4 June 2025

Dr Ruth Stacey, Lecturer in
Creative Writing

FEMALE HEAT LAB

THERMAL PHYSIOLOGY IN HEALTH AND DISEASE: MECHANISMS AND THERAPEUTIC APPLICATIONS

3-4 June 2025, Brunel University, London

At the recent Physiological Society conference on “Thermal Physiology in Health and Disease – Mechanisms and Therapeutic Applications,” Dr Jessica Mee delivered an invited talk exploring the critical, yet often overlooked, sex-specific differences in thermal physiology. Titled “Sex Specific Considerations in Thermal Physiology,” Jessica’s presentation focused on how biological and hormonal factors affect females’ responses to heat stress, shedding light on a vital dimension of climate resilience.

Jessica also emphasized a pressing issue in the research landscape: females are significantly underrepresented in heat stress studies. This gap, she argued, stems from the perceived difficulty of accounting for hormonal variability, but ignoring these factors risks incomplete or misleading conclusions about human vulnerability to heat. Her talk concluded with a call to action: As heatwaves become more frequent and intense, incorporating sex-specific data into public health planning and climate resilience strategies will be essential to ensure interventions are inclusive, effective, and equitable.



Olivia Barnes; doctoral student and Research Associate, also presented at the conference, delivering a presentation that shed light on how vulnerable adults in the UK experience and manage heat waves. Her talk, titled “Preparing for a Heat Wave and Perceived Heat Illness Symptoms During a Heat Wave in the UK – Insights from Vulnerable Adults,” explored how prepared people feel for extreme heat and the health impacts they experience during such events.

Olivia’s study surveyed over 200 UK residents following the July 2024 heat wave, which reached peak temperatures of 32°C and met official heat wave thresholds across most regions. Participants included a broad range of individuals, with many reporting physical or mental health conditions or being aged over 65.

Olivia emphasized that while people are increasingly aware of the risks of extreme heat, the systems meant to support them—such as workplace education and public health outreach—are falling short. Her research calls for improved distribution of heat-health guidance, especially targeting vulnerable groups who face the greatest risks.

GLOBAL CLIMATE AND HEALTH SUMMIT

16-17 July 2025, QEII Centre, London

The Global Climate and Health Summit, held at the QEII Centre in London on 16–17 July 2025, brought together world-leading researchers, policymakers, and practitioners to tackle the health impacts of climate change. A major focus of the event was on heat resilience—a critical strand devoted to developing strategies to protect people health from rising global temperatures. The Summit’s steering group, which shaped this strand, included Dr. Jessica Mee. Dr. Mee – whose ongoing research explores how to improve women’s health and performance in heat – helped guide discussions on possible policy interventions. Her expertise added a vital perspective to the Summit’s action-driven agenda, especially as it moves from evidence to implementation. With heatwaves becoming more frequent and severe, Jessica’s role in supporting the Summit’s heat resilience initiatives underscores the importance of combining academic insight with policy action—ensuring strategies are inclusive, effective, and grounded in real-world physiology.

PODCAST: LOOKING PAST THE STEREOTYPES – DISABLED PEOPLE AS FOSTER CARERS

25 June 2025, CoramBAAF (online)

Dr Peter Unwin, Principal Lecturer in Social Work, has recorded a podcast with CoramBAAF, the UK's leading membership organisation for professionals working across adoption, fostering and kinship care. In this [episode](#) of their podcast, Dr Unwin and researcher Becki Martin, discuss their research into the underrepresentation of disabled people as foster carers, highlighting the systemic barriers and stereotypes that prevent their inclusion. They outline how fostering agencies can better recruit and support disabled carers through inclusive practices, training, and a shift away from deficit-based thinking.

KEYNOTE ADDRESS AT ADCET UDL SYMPOSIUM IN AUSTRALIA

25-26 June 2025, University of Sydney, Australia

Dr Seán Bracken, Principal Lecturer in Education and Inclusion, delivered the keynote address for the Australian Disability Clearinghouse on Education and Training (ADCET) 2025 UDL (Universal Design for Learning) Symposium in Sydney. His presentation, titled 'Turbocharging Accessibility? Negotiating Paradigm Shifts for Inclusive Learning, Teaching and Assessment', explored the evolving role of UDL in the age of generative AI.

Following the keynote, Dr Bracken facilitated a hands-on masterclass, 'Preparing the Ground for Systemic Inclusive Change', which was developed for educators and leaders ready to scale UDL from individual practice to institutional transformation.



GRTSB CELEBRATION EVENT: A KUSHTI DIVVUS FOR ROKKERING (A GOOD DAY FOR TALKING)

30 June 2025, The Hangar, St. John's Campus, Worcester



This event celebrated the rich histories, voices, and cultures of the Gypsy, Roma, Traveller, Showman, and Boater (GRTSB) communities, honouring identity, tradition, and the power of sharing experiences.

As part of the event, Dr Peter Unwin and Professor Győző Molnár disseminated findings from their ongoing research seeking to understand GRT Communities in Health, Education & Social Care. They explored the key challenges faced by Gypsy, Roma, and Traveller communities in the UK, highlighting a lack of awareness and action in higher education, health, and social care, sharing insights from recent NHS-funded research, including work on ethnic classification, health access, and mental health inequalities. The event was featured on national news site - [The Travellers' Times](#).

Prof. Gyozo Molnar | Photo credit: The Travellers' Times

SEA CHANGE EXHIBITION AT THE ESTONIAN CHILDREN'S LITERATURE CENTRE

1 July—6 Sept 2025, Estonian Children's Literature Centre, Tallinn, Estonia

Led by the International Centre for the Picture Book in Society, based at the University of Worcester, and curated by Senior Lecturer in Illustration Tobias Hickey, Sea Change brings attention to the alarming state of the world's oceans and ecosystems. Over 200 unique postcards have been illustrated by artists from all over the world that express their concerns, hopes, and visions regarding the threats faced by our oceans and natural environments. The exhibition highlights a creative and international approach to environmental issues and invites visitors to reflect on how our individual actions shape the future. Prior to Estonia, the exhibition has been showcased in Nami Island in South Korea and the UNESCO-supported Biennial of Illustration Bratislava.

RIGHTS AND JUSTICE FESTIVAL

8 July 2025, the Hive, Worcester

The event offered a full programme of talks and presentations on contemporary legal topics including: colonialism, the death penalty, the jury system, human rights, children's rights, family law, social rights within the criminal justice system, the judiciary, last year's summer riots, and the US constitution. Hosted by the University's Constitutions, Rights and Justice Research Group, the aim of this event was to address legal issues relevant to today in an accessible way. Dr Chris Monaghan, Principal Lecturer in Law at the University of Worcester and director of the Research Group, said: *"At the University of Worcester our approach is inclusive, and we are keen to share the exciting work being undertaken by our colleagues with the local community."*

*Jenny Watkins, Lecturer in Law,
Sarah Lloyd, Lecturer in Forensic Psychology,
and Dr Chris Monaghan, Principal Lecturer in Law*



THE INTERNATIONAL CONGRESS ON MOLECULAR PLANT-MICROBE INTERACTIONS

12-17 July 2025, Cologne, Germany

In July, Prof. Mahmut Tor; Molecular Plant and Microbial Biosciences Research Unit lead presented and chaired a concurrent session at the International Congress on Molecular Plant-Microbe Interactions in Germany. The session "RNA on the Move: Advances in Cross-Species Communication & Translational Research" explored the pivotal role of RNA molecules in mediating communication across species boundaries, particularly in plant-microbe and host-pathogen interactions. Leading experts presented cutting-edge research on mobile RNAs, including dsRNAs, tRNAs, small RNAs and mRNAs, highlighting their roles in signalling, defence, and pathogenicity. The session emphasized translational applications, such as RNA-based technologies for crop protection and enhanced agricultural sustainability. By bridging fundamental discoveries with innovative solutions, this session aimed to foster discussions on leveraging RNA biology to address global challenges in agriculture and ecosystem health.

DESIGNING INCLUSIVE ENVIRONMENTS FOR PEOPLE WITH DEMENTIA

22 July 2025, Webinar

As part of the ongoing Dementia Community series, the Association for Dementia Studies delivered a webinar in July, which focused on 'Designing Inclusive Environments for People with Dementia'. It centred around the suite of Environmental Assessment Tools to help health and care organisations develop supportive and inclusive environmental design for people living with dementia.

It explored the underpinning principles behind dementia-friendly design before showing how the assessment tools, including an App version, can be used to effect change.

A recording of the webinar is available to view [here](#).

WITCHCRAFT AND RELIGION IN ELIZABETHAN ENGLAND

15 August 2025, Worcester Cathedral

As part of MedievalFest 2025, Prof. Darren Oldridge delivered a talk in the Undercroft at Worcester Cathedral exploring witchcraft and religion in the Elizabethan era, reflecting on some classic works of Elizabethan demonology held in the cathedral library, including Reginald's Scot's sceptical masterpiece *The Discoverie of Witchcraft* (1584).



THE MEDIEVAL JEWISH HISTORY OF HEREFORD

17 September 2025, Hereford Cathedral

Dr Luke Devine delivered a lecture at Hereford Cathedral in September to commemorate the 750th anniversary of a number of Jewish communities settling in Hereford.

The lecture served as an introduction to the history of the Jewish community in Hereford, which expanded significantly in the early 13th century following the expulsion of Jews from Worcester, Gloucester and Bath in 1275.

Building upon Dr Devine's remarks, Dr Dean Irwin, visiting fellow at the University of Lincoln, explored the records relating to the Hereford Jewry, including both records produced at Westminster, in the Chancery Roll, Receipt Rolls, and Plea Rolls of the Exchequer of the Jews, as well as those which were produced in Hereford(shire).

BOOK LAUNCH: LEADING WORKS IN THE HISTORY OF THE CONSTITUTION

24 September 2025, City Campus, Worcester

The School of Law hosted a special book launch, with a keynote lecture from The Rt Hon. the Baroness Hale of Richmond DBE on Wednesday, September 24. The event formally launched 'Leading Works in the History of the Constitution' edited by Dr Chris Monaghan and published by Routledge. The book brings together a team of contributors to analyse leading contemporary accounts of the British Constitution with key constitutional documents and sources.

Baroness Hale, the former President of the Supreme Court, who contributed a chapter on *Entick v Carrington* to the book, delivered the keynote lecture, 'Constitutions Matter'. Lady Hale was also the first woman to be appointed to the Law Commission. Lady Hale and her team completed law reforms resulting in the Children Act 1989, the Family Law Act 1996, and the Mental Capacity Act 2005.

The keynote was followed by a panel discussion featuring several of the contributors.

IN MEMORIUM

Dr Paddy McNally *Principal Lecturer in History*

In July, the University lost a much-loved and longstanding colleague, Dr Paddy McNally. Paddy had worked at the University since 1991 and played a key role in the development of research and research culture in the Department of History and Sociology over the ensuing 30+ years, through his publications, his doctoral supervision and his mentoring of younger colleagues and students. Over this period, he developed an international reputation for his work on the history of Ireland from the 17th to 19th century, with a particular focus on the complex political and social history of the period.



Dr McNally was awarded his PhD from Queen's University, Belfast in 1993 for his thesis entitled "Patronage and politics in Ireland 1714-1727" which would form the basis of his 1997 book, *Parties, Patriots and Undertakers. Parliamentary Politics in Early Hanoverian Ireland*. Shortly after the publication of the book, Paddy was elected a fellow of the Royal Historical Society, an early recognition of his status in the field. In a review of *Parties, Patriots and Undertakers* in *Irish Historical Studies* 32 (125), 134-5, Taylor describes the work as "a well-researched and impressive volume that significantly advances our knowledge of the period". The detailed and provocative analysis demonstrated in this book has flowed through his subsequent research on Irish Identity and Nationalism, the Protestant Ascendancy and Irish political systems over the next 25 years.

In 2016, he co-edited with Kenneth Milne, a volume of letters, some not before published, to and from Hugh Boulter, archbishop of Armagh and primate of the Church of Ireland from 1724 until his death in 1744, during which time he was a central figure in the government of Ireland and the foremost upholder of the 'English interest' in Ireland. These letters offer a fascinating insight into the political and ecclesiastical history of Ireland in the first half of the 18th century and this carefully curated volume has become an indispensable resource for historians of the period. More recently, Paddy was working on a wider socio-political history of Ireland from 1688-1848 which no doubt would have added significantly to our body of knowledge.

However, Paddy's excellent research only tells half the story of a generous, funny and supportive academic willing and able to provide his wise counsel to students and colleagues alike. He played a prominent role in creating and maintaining a doctoral student community in history and in the wider university, supporting PhD students to successful completion, acting as a PhD examiner, whilst also acting as course leader for the PhD across the Humanities. He will be much missed by all at the University, not least by those across the research community.

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Doctoral School / research@worc.ac.uk
Ethics (existing applications) / ethics@worc.ac.uk
Ethics (general enquiries) / ethicshelp@worc.ac.uk
Researcher Development / researcherdevelopment@worc.ac.uk