



Megaphone Online

February 2023

the voice of Health Sciences' staff and students

Graduating students awarded prizes

In January some 200 students were able to graduate in person from the Department and it was good to see some of the graduates after the ceremony at the central reception. As it was a joint reception, Departmental prizes were sent out after the ceremony to the winners and congratulations go to the following:

Emily Neil - Outstanding Taught Postgraduate Academic Achievement Prize: MIHA

Tuyen Hoang Tong - Outstanding Taught Postgraduate Academic Achievement Prize: MPH

Gloria Mongelli - Outstanding Taught Postgraduate Academic Achievement Prize: HR

Temidayo Osunronbi - Outstanding Taught Postgraduate Academic Achievement Prize: PGCert

Rebecca Butterfield - Outstanding Taught Postgraduate Academic Achievement Prize: ACP

Tanya Thompson - Outstanding Taught Postgraduate Dissertation Prize

Rebecca Heath - Outstanding Academic Achievement Prize: BSc Nursing and Outstanding Practice Achievement Prize: BSc Nursing

Kate Grainger - Outstanding Academic Achievement Prize: MNursing and Outstanding Dissertation Prize: MNursing

Elizabeth Cunningham - Outstanding Practice Achievement Prize: MNursing

Louise McCloskey - Outstanding Practice Achievement Prize: Midwifery

Sophie McDonnell - Outstanding Academic Achievement Prize: Midwifery

Lily Atkinson - Outstanding Dissertation Prize: Midwifery



Also the following Nursing Associate Programme awards have been announced for:

Jessica Paylor - Outstanding Academic Progression

Karen Dennis - Outstanding Academic Achievement

Diane Pearson - Outstanding Achievement in Practice

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- Student nominated for two awards
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Student News

Graduation January 2023



Graduation January 2023



Student News

York Futures Scholarships

Thanks to the generous support of the University's alumni, the York Futures Scholarship programme is designed to enable all students to take full advantage of the many personal and professional development opportunities available to them.

Work experience, study abroad, placements and extracurricular learning; activities that build your readiness to find, compete for and secure the career options you want are all eligible for support. Apply for financial and practical support to suit your ambitions at the different stages of your time at York.

You will be able to apply for the next round of applications from 9am on Monday 20th March. The closing date is 5pm on 24th April 2023. Visit the [York Futures Scholarships webpage](#) for more information.

Congratulations Claudia

Congratulations to Claudia Collins, UG Departmental Representative who has been nominated for two awards.

The first nomination is Student Nursing Times Awards 2023, Outstanding Contribution to Student Affairs.

The second nomination is for 'National Student Nurse Congress Award'. The National Student Nurse Congress Award was introduced in 2019 to recognise the achievements of exceptional student nurses.

Both award ceremonies are being held on 28th April. Good luck Claudia.



Kathleen's Legacy

Congratulations to second year student Amy Mann, who recently featured in the York Press. When Amy's Nan passed away, Amy started knitting and crocheting blankets and hearts for people with families at the end of life. The project has really taken off. Recently Amy took part in the Innocent Smoothie Big Knit event, helping to knit the largest knitted bobble hat ever to be made.

Read more about this in the [York Press](#). Well done Amy.

PhD student accepted on to Female Science Talent Programme

Congratulations Dr Zainab Kidwai one of our PhD students who has been accepted into the [Falling Walls Berlin Female Science Talent Programme](#). This prestigious programme provides an opportunity for early-career women researchers to increase their visibility and achieve their career breakthroughs by providing networking, mentoring and intensive training along with a platform to present their research projects or initiatives in front of an international audience.

Student midwife attends Student Midwife Forum (SMF)

Rosie Bakewell second year student midwife recently attended her first SMF meeting. Rosie writes: “On 17th January, I attended the first SMF meeting of 2023 in London on behalf of North England’s student midwives. This was the first SMF meeting I’ve attended, so it was great to meet the other SMF members and various members of the RCM. Everyone was very friendly and welcoming and so excited about the opportunity we have to represent UK student midwives on a national forum. In all honesty, navigating the Tube on my own for the first time was an adventure in itself, never mind the rest of it!” *(Rosie is pictured on the last on the left of the pic).*



“Firstly, as SMF members, we are encouraged by the RCM to host approximately four webinars every year. These webinars are free to all RCM members and can focus on anything related to studying midwifery or maternity care and can often feature speakers from various organisations and charities. Some of the suggestions that were put forward in the meeting were: ‘interview skills for both aspiring student midwives and newly-qualified midwives’, ‘providing support for refugees and asylum seekers’, ‘the use of inclusive language in maternity care’ and ‘alternative career pathways for those studying midwifery’. It would be great to know what you think of these topics and whether you would be interested in attending them, but any other suggestions are absolutely welcome and will be passed on to the SMF for consideration!”

“Secondly, RCM’s Race Matters and Diversity programme outlined their approach in 2023, with the hope of forming an inclusive, diverse and equitable front against systemic racism and discrimination against BAME groups in both maternity care and maternity education. To read more about their pledge for 2023, click here: RCM’s Race Matters programme enters next phase, Race matters (rcm.org.uk). Just to highlight how important the voices of student midwives are, last year’s webinar series were the starting gun for ‘Decolonising Midwifery Education’, which has now led to Turning the Tide Maternity Report - 2020.pdf (northeastlondonhcp.nhs.uk) - a research project focused on the lived experiences of BAME groups in practice - and the formation of online mentorship programmes specifically aimed at supporting those from BAME groups in midwifery education. It was also featured at last year’s RCM conference, and a toolkit on how to support and be a true ally to BAME groups in midwifery education, is due to be released at the RCM Education and Research Conference in March. The webinar is available on the RCM website, here: Nurturing and supporting student midwives (rcm.org.uk).”

“The RCM also introduced their themes for focus in 2023, namely: to reduce inequities in maternity care, support professional development and alternative career pathways and placing greater focus on being visible and valued as a midwife to improve newly qualified midwife retention and student cohort numbers across the UK. RCM also voiced their intention to raise the profile of midwifery lecturers, due to a national shortage, through work with different trade unions and organisations.”

“Regarding student midwives, the RCM and NMC are currently engaging in conversations surrounding: improving Personal Supervisor continuity in practice so that student midwives can get the most out of their clinical experiences, supporting more cohesive communication between trusts and universities and expanding student midwives’ clinical allocations to other areas of the multidisciplinary team, e.g. health visitors, specialist midwives, scanning department, etc.”

“The next SMF meeting is 14th March, but if you become aware of something that you would like to be discussed on a national level, please just drop me an email!”

People with Long Covid face barriers in accessing healthcare services, study finds

People living with Long Covid (LC) say they face significant barriers in accessing healthcare services, leaving many with a feeling of hopelessness and neglect, a new study has revealed. An estimated 2.2 million people in the United Kingdom have self-reported LC, but researchers say many are not getting the help they feel they need. The study, led by the University of York and published in the journal *Health Expectations*, found that here were five main ways in which people experienced access to healthcare for their LC symptoms:

- Some people with LC were not able to get through to primary care and were not able to secure a GP appointment
- Many were able to access primary care but did not receive (perceived) adequate support from either their GP or secondary care
- Some people self-managed symptoms rather than accessing mainstream health care services
- A few people had to be extremely persistent to get through to the right healthcare professional and receive support.
- A small number of people had positive experiences

Additionally, it was found that some ethnic minority participants expressed ‘medical mistrust’ in services and there was a severe lack of access to specialist clinics - only 1/40 participants had access to a LC clinic. Long Covid is a rapidly emerging medical condition that first drew headlines nationally and internationally in 2020.

In the early stages of the pandemic, many medical professionals and patients reported being neglected or disbelieved about their persisting COVID-19 symptoms. Symptoms of LC include breathlessness, fatigue, cough, fever, neurological symptoms, such as loss of taste and smell and brain fog, skin rash and chest pain. Yet researchers say there is dwindling public attention towards the condition as the national focus moves away from Covid.

As part of the study, between November 2021 to March 2022, 40 interviews were conducted with people living with LC in Bradford alongside 12 interviews with healthcare professionals (HCPs) providing LC support in Bradford healthcare settings. Participants were drawn from the Born in Bradford (BiB) cohort, which tracks the health and wellbeing of over 13,500 children and their parents over time, and more widely from the Bradford community.

Of the people with LC, 75% were from ethnic minority backgrounds and largely drawn from deprived areas. The researchers used in-depth, semi structured interviews which allowed people to share the lived experiences and challenges of having LC.

Dr Sarah Baz, a Research Fellow in the Department of Health Sciences at the University of York, said: “We hope our study will help amplify the voices of the estimated 2.2 million people suffering from Long Covid and bring further public attention to the barriers people face to accessing healthcare support for the condition. We need more investment in LC healthcare support, improved access to services and greater recognition for the condition. We must also address mistrust in healthcare services amongst ethnic minorities to provide them better support.”

Dr Laura Sheard, Associate Professor in the Department of Health Sciences at the University of York, said: “Healthcare staff are doing the best they can but are overloaded and working in an inherently broken system. There is no doubt that NHS wide systemic issues are impacting on the ability of healthcare professionals to provide support for people living with LC.”

Aged 95 plus, but don't wrap us in cotton wool

People aged 95 and over still want to be part of society and enjoy a level of independence, despite having a more limited interaction with the world, a new study shows. The research, by a team at the University of York and Newcastle University, looked at the lives of 23 people from Newcastle, UK, as part of a 10-year follow-up study to the Newcastle 85+ study - an observational study spanning decades, following the experiences of people born in 1921.

The study found that there were five key elements to sustaining a positive attitude to life post 95, the most important being a sense of independence, even if that meant reframing what independence is to them. Other areas included being able to reflect on past successes; being in control of when they need help from family; being outwardly presentable; and normalising the impact of ill health.

Professor Joy Adamson, from the Department, said: "People in the UK are living longer than ever before and as such it is important that we understand the experiences of older age so that society can support them, but also afford them the dignity that comes with independence. We found that participants in the study saw themselves as content with their lives, despite their world becoming smaller, and in poor health and other challenges, they were able to find pleasure in the smaller things of their daily routines and events".

"Being independent came through strongly as a way of explaining their continued passion for life, and was strongly equated to feelings of dignity and youth. A bit of risk-taking, particularly with their health, was also important in order to keep their autonomy, particularly with family, where children had now become the carer."

When a sense of loss was reported, such as not being able to enjoy activities they once did, like sports for example, participants explained how they found workarounds, such as going to watch a local club play the sport they once enjoyed.

Family relationships, however, were the most complex issue and those that felt most content were those that had made decisions about their own care – when to ask for help and when to ignore advice from their children or grandchildren.

Professor Adamson said: "Striving for independence sometimes meant risk-taking, even in ill health, where some participants resisted care, such as wearing emergency buzzers, because they considered the risk of a potential injury or becoming unwell in the home to be preferable to not having authority over their own lives.

"This was an important finding because it makes us rethink how the oldest in society view safety and risk. These can be at odds with those who provide informal or formal care. Although devices such as emergency buzzers, have their benefits, the question is: at what cost to the older person in terms of anxiety and upset about a loss of autonomy? Should we be looking to achieve a greater balance between surviving and 'thriving'?"

Participants also reported that even in serious ill-health, accepting it as 'normal' helped in minimising the impact of it on their lives. The study aims to give voices to an age-range that is rarely heard and provide insight into their experiences that needs to be considered as the population continues to live longer. The researchers argue that more research into older people needs to focus on the 90+ years and not just focus on the younger age-range of 65 to 80.

The research is published in the journal PLOS One.

GPs faced pressure of workload, personal risk and public scrutiny during Covid-19, study reveals

GPs felt under-resourced, under-valued and worried about widening health inequalities during the pandemic, new research shows.

The study - by the University of York and funded by the National Institute for Health and Care Research - examined nearly 100,000 social media posts by NHS GPs to identify matters that were important to them during the first year of the pandemic. This enabled trends in the social commentaries of GPs to be analysed, showing pressures varied over the course of the pandemic.

Online discussions at the start of the pandemic centred around lack of personal protective equipment (PPE) and testing, leading to anxiety about their own safety and the safety of their families. Some GPs felt that they were viewed as lower priority compared with hospital staff.

GPs described a 'tsunami' in workload and lack of resources, leaving many feeling 'fatigued' or 'exhausted.' GPs were fearful about patients' unmet health care needs and 'heartbroken' by patient deaths and social isolation during the pandemic.

Sentiments moved on to expressions of low morale and feeling undervalued later (September – October 2020), exacerbated by a perceived lack of support from the government, media and the general public – referred to by many as 'GP bashing'. Perceptions that GP practices were 'closed' and some cases of abuse from patients caused sadness amongst GPs who described working harder than ever.

GPs felt positive about some changes that were necessitated by the pandemic – particularly the investment in IT infrastructure. And they commented on the overwhelming sense of satisfaction and hope brought about through the vaccination programme, although it also increased their workload further.

Dr Su Golder from the Department of Health Sciences said: "GPs were concerned about some aspects of remote consultations – particularly about possible missed diagnoses, widening health inequalities and the increased time and staff fatigue associated with remote consultations.

Dr Laura Jefferson, also from the Department of Health Sciences, added: "They felt job satisfaction, team working and access to much-needed emotional support, were all reduced by remote working.

"Problems contacting patients were common and working from home brought about additional challenges, especially for those with children."

Social media analysis provides a useful way of exploring experiences and perceptions in real time, without needing to burden busy health professionals with surveys or interviews.

The study concluded that perceived workload pressures, unsafe working practices, lack of support and unfavourable media commentaries during this time were detrimental to GPs' wellbeing and this could affect GP retention and future patient care.

New research reveals role faith institutions play in promoting good health

Faith institutions, such as churches and mosques, can support people to maintain healthy blood pressure and avoid hypertension through education and awareness, the results of a new study have revealed.

The University of York-led study showed that health professionals, working with faith leaders, can deliver effective, low-cost messages on how people can keep their blood pressure on the healthy side.

High blood pressure can lead to a range of health conditions such as heart disease, heart attack, and strokes.

The study, published in PLOS Global Public Health, found that faith institutions play a variety of roles, including:

- Effective messaging around good cardiovascular health
- Promotion of exercise or physical activity as part of a healthy lifestyle
- Advice on diet and nutrition for cardiovascular health
- Teaching, training and encouragement for individuals to take control of their health
- Promotion of regular blood pressure checks.

The study was a review of 24 studies, with 39,540 individuals, the majority from the US.

Dr Abayomi Sanusi, from the Department of Health Sciences at the University of York, said:

“Most of the evidence of how well faith institutions can help communities comes from congregations of Black African and African American Christian adults.”

“Faith institutions offer low-cost, effective and sustainable solution to helping people maintain their blood pressure. Promoting health through faith institutions, holds unrealised potential to support and supplement healthcare systems, particularly in low-income, religious or underserved communities.”

Dr Su Golder, Senior Research Fellow at the Department of Health Sciences, said: “Although cultural and religious influences on human behaviour vary across communities globally, this study provides evidence of the role that faith institutions have and the benefits of cardiovascular public health intervention.”

“These are potentially useful for the construction of community-based, long-term, meaningful, sustainable, and perhaps permanent interventions and solutions.”

Children in the North most vulnerable to cost of living crisis

A new report, co-authored by a University of York academic, has warned that children living in the North of England are among the most vulnerable to rising living costs. The Child Poverty and the Cost of Living Crisis report from the All-Party Parliamentary Group Child of the North, has found that children in the North are some of the least protected from the current cost of living crisis.

New analysis released on the 24 January shows that child poverty, including fuel poverty and food insecurity, is higher in the North than the rest of England. For many families the current economic chaos will deepen an enduring child poverty crisis in the region.

The report found:

- During the pandemic, 34% of children in the North (around 900,000) were living in poverty, compared with 28% in the rest of England. This equates to 160,000 extra children in poverty in the North
- Before the current crisis, around one million households in the North were fuel poor, proportionally more households than in the rest of England – 15% in the North compared to 12%
- In the North, the standing charge for energy prepayment meter customers in Yorkshire and the North East is higher (at around £3.80 per week) than the UK average (of £3.60 per week)
- 23% of children in England who are food insecure miss out on free school meals
- Families in the North are more likely to be living in poor quality, damp homes. Before living costs started to rise, over 98,500 homes in the North already had some form of damp and 1.1 million homes in the North failed 'decent homes' criteria

The report authors have issued a stark warning to government that rising living costs will lead to immediate and lifelong harms for children: worsening physical and mental health outcomes; undermining children's learning, social wellbeing and education; and risking lower lifelong health and productivity.

Kate Pickett, Professor of Epidemiology in the Department of Health Sciences at the University of York, and co-author of the new report, said: "Many areas across the North of England have seen rising child poverty in recent years. "As economic stress is pushing up the price of food, energy and fuel, more and more families are having to make difficult decisions on how to spend their money. We risk seeing more children falling deeper into poverty if measures aren't implemented by government to adequately help those living in areas that are the most vulnerable to rising living costs."

Emma Lewell-Buck, MP and Co-Chair APPG Child of the North, said: "Whilst poverty is, sadly, not a new experience for many children in the North, the scale and severity of deprivation is now unprecedented. As the cost of living crisis worsens, vulnerable children and families, especially in the North, are being pushed to the edge. This report outlines the injustice of deprivation in our country and presents policy measures that, if implemented, could ensure that children in our region are never left hungry, cold or without."

Mary Robinson, MP Co-Chair APPG Child of the North, said: "The findings of the report serve as a stark reminder of the devastating reality of child poverty in the North. It is heartbreaking to hear stories of those living this reality and the uncertainty of what the future holds. What is clear is the need for immediate action to tackle the crisis before long-term harm is caused to the children of the North."

David Taylor Robinson, Professor of Public Health and Policy at the University of Liverpool, and co-author of the report, said: "Poverty is the key driver of inequalities between children in the North and the rest of the country, which we know leads to worse physical and mental health, poorer educational attainment and life chances.

Research News

“All children, no matter where they are born, should be entitled to the same life chances. However, we know this sadly isn’t the case. The pandemic contributed to widening inequalities and now the rising cost of living will place further strain on families with children.

“Parents across the North are having to go without meals to feed their children, and the situation will only get worse unless policies are put in place to ensure families have enough support to keep their children fed and warm.”

Hannah Davies, Health Inequalities lead for the Northern Health Science Alliance and report co-author, said: “It comes as no surprise that areas across the North of England are regarded as being the most vulnerable to the cost of living crisis.

“The combination of increasing inflation, more people living in poverty, in lower paid jobs or unable to work, in receipt of social security support, and already facing high levels of financial stress and debt, makes it extremely difficult for families to absorb new shocks on costs. We urge the government to prioritise the health and wellbeing of children and to consider the clear recommendations put forward in this report.”

Sophie Balmer, End Child Poverty Youth Ambassador, said: “Having grown up living in a family on a low income, I want to use my voice to explain the reality of what it’s like for hundreds of thousands of children across the North. Even now I am at university and relatively financially secure, the worry doesn’t leave. I remember the unbearable anxiety and how it all impacted on my life.

“The greatest impact was on my education. It isn’t just missing a meal or feeling hungry during the day, it’s the worry of how your sister’s school trip will be paid for, or how you haven’t seen your mam eat a proper meal in days - all going through your head in a chemistry lesson. It creates anxiety. And when combined with the stress of school, this explains the impact on educational attainment for children living in poverty.

“The pressure for change is much more intense at the minute. The government needs to help families. It doesn’t feel like an ask anymore. It’s an absolute need.”

The report was prepared by experts from northern organisations and universities for the APPG Child of the North. The APPG brings together policy makers and experts in child outcomes from across the country to find solutions to the disparities suffered by children in the North of England. The group was launched following the publication of The Child of the North report, produced by the Northern Health Science Alliance (NHSA) and N8 Research Partnership.

A suite of recommendations to government have been laid out by the report authors to ensure families with children have enough money and security of income to meet basic needs, such as healthy food to eat and warm homes.

View the [full story](#) to read the recommendations.

Researchers assess value of intervention programme designed to tackle obesity in children

The University of York is leading a national project to assess the value of a community-based intervention programme aimed at reducing obesity rates in preschool children.

One in five children, more commonly those living in more deprived areas of the UK, starts school overweight or with obesity and this figure continues to rise.

Childhood obesity can have severe implications on a child's mental and physical health, including causing prediabetes and high blood pressure, which can continue into adulthood.

HENRY (Health, Exercise, Nutrition for the Really Young) is an intervention programme delivered to parents of preschool children (aged 6 months to 5 years) across the UK, to help families be more healthy.

Around 24,500 families have attended HENRY since 2008, a programme delivered in children's centres across the UK to parents and carers by staff who are trained on the HENRY approach and encouraged to provide a healthy environment during the training.

Early evidence suggests that it may be effective and obesity levels are lower in areas that deliver HENRY, but a more detailed evaluation is needed to understand how successful it is.

Led by the University of York, and funded by National Institute for Health and Care Research (NIHR) Public Health Research (PHR), the project will work with partners at the University of Sheffield and Bradford University to find out if children whose parents attend HENRY are less likely to become overweight or develop obesity than those that do not.

Data collected at intervals over a 12 month period will include height, weight, waist circumference, food intake, physical activity and quality of life to understand if HENRY has benefits to the wider community by improving the health of parents and carers that attend, and the staff that work in children's centres.

Maria Bryant, Professor of Public Health Nutrition at the University of York, said: "This study provides an important opportunity to not only find out about whether the HENRY programme helps families and can prevent childhood obesity, but it will also enable us to understand the role that interventions like this play within the wider system."

"We know that excess weight gain is caused by a multitude of factors (like our environment, our biology, and our psychology) but we don't know whether interventions that aim to impact some of these factors can make a difference."

"This study will begin by painting a picture to show what factors influence obesity in local areas, then go on to describe what happens when local governments deliver obesity prevention programmes like HENRY."

Research raises concerns over relationship between major US alcohol research institution and the alcohol industry

A new study has uncovered extensive interactions between one of the world's leading funders of alcohol research and alcohol industry groups, sparking concern about the industry's influence on science and public health policy.

Professor Jim McCambridge, Chair in Addictive Behaviours and Public Health at the University of York and Dr Gemma Mitchell, from the University of Stirling, analysed close to 5,000 pages of email correspondence, obtained through Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) requests.

The correspondence was sent between 43 staff members of the U.S National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism (NIAAA) and representatives of 15 alcohol industry groups – including producers and trade associations – between 2013 and 2020.

The analysis identifies 12 leaders at the NIAAA, including both current and former staff, and five key contacts in the alcohol industry. The latter include representatives from two alcohol producers (AB InBev and Diageo), two trade associations (the Beer Institute and the Distilled Spirits Council of the United States [DISCUS]), and the International Alliance for Responsible Drinking (IARD).

Professor McCambridge said: “The depth of the relationships between NIAAA senior leaders and key alcohol industry contacts uncovered here is disturbing. The study findings provide examples of alcohol public health science being opposed rather than championed by NIAAA leaders, at least in their direct communications with industry.”

The new study, which is published in the *Journal of Studies on Alcohol and Drugs*, raises the problem of the “revolving door”, with some NIAAA leaders subsequently moving on to work for industry.

The research team used publicly available data whenever possible to confirm any information contained in the emails and say their findings add to other recent studies that identify the long-term effects of industry influence on alcohol science.

Dr Mitchell said: “Ongoing relationships between NIAAA leaders and the alcohol industry meant that industry representatives could access privileged information on a wide range of topics, from the US Dietary Guidelines to alcohol and cancer.”

“Our findings are hugely concerning, and we hope the NIAAA and the National Institute of Health (NIH) will regard this report not as presenting a public relations challenge to be managed, but as posing a set of major scientific challenges to which it must rise.”

Research News

Meet Joanna: An immersive audio experience

Theano Pavlidou, Network Coordinator in the Mental Health and Addiciton Research Group writes:

MEET JOANNA : an immersive audio experience destined to bring about positive change in health and social care for people with severe mental ill health.

‘Warning. You must act now. You must act now. Failure will result in permanent, irreversible damage’.

We have found (SPIDER study) that people with severe mental ill health (SMI) are more likely to lack digital skills than people without SMI (42% compared to 16%). So, people with SMI may struggle to access digital healthcare and social care services; this is likely to deepen the profound health inequalities they already face. We have been collaborating with key stakeholders (people with SMI, healthcare, local authorities, non-profit organisations) to transmit our research message, emphasize the risk of digital exclusion in SMI and how this could be mitigated through policy and practice (SPIDER-ED project).



One of our creative approaches to disseminating these important findings has been our collaboration with Made By Mortals, a UK arts organisation based in Manchester.

Embedding the findings from our SPIDER study and real voices and real experiences of people with severe mental ill health in ‘hidden,’ their theory of change, Made By Mortals have created ‘Joanna’, an immersive audio experience about the digitally excluded people with SMI.

Joanna uses mental health services and lacks digital skills. On Thursday, Feb 9th, 2023, at The Hospitium in York, together with fifteen healthcare professionals, we put on the headphones, wore the blindfold, and followed Joanna’s journey as she tried to navigate a world where services and other aspects of daily life were becoming increasingly digitised. We were challenged to walk in Joanna’s shoes and think how we could help.

The shared, audio experience was transformative. The healthcare professionals left the room with increased awareness about the existing digital divide in SMI, inspiration, and ideas about what they can do to help ‘Joanna’ and every person who uses mental health services and is at risk of digital exclusion or already experiences it. They also took with them copies of the resources we have made to distribute in their trust.

These resources include:

1. Top tips for staff supporting people with SMI.
2. Top tips for service users going online.
3. Carry-on cards (credit card size) for service users to ask for support with digital tasks, if needed.

Research News

The digital divide in SMI is evident and can exacerbate the profound health and social inequalities that people with SMI face. 'Joanna', has made our research message clear.

What would you do to help?

Note:

Huge, special thanks to all the people with lived experience of SMI who have contributed their invaluable insight, knowledge, and spirit.

Huge thanks to all our guests, Paul Hine and Catherine Cowdrey from Made By Mortals and The Hospitium.

THE SPIDER / SPIDER-ED Team members:

Dr Panagiotis Spanakis, (Honorary Research Fellow, MHARG, Department of Health Sciences), Dr Ruth Wadman (MHARG, Department of Health Sciences), Lauren Walker (MHARG, Department of Health Sciences), Olivia Taylor (MHARG, Department of Health Sciences), Prof John Baker (University of Leeds), Dr Al Mathers (The RSA), Dr Emily Peckham (MHARG, Department of Health Sciences), Paul Heron (MHARG, Department of Health Sciences), Theano Pavlidou (MHARG (Department of Health Sciences)

If you want to use some (or all!) of the resources we have made for people with SMI who lack digital skills, please contact Theano Pavlidou at theano.pavlidou@york.ac.uk.

Writing Fortnight Off to a Cheesy Start at YTU!

Researchers at York Trials Unit had two very productive weeks during the cheese-themed Writing Fortnight in January. There was fantastic competition between writing teams, with team members clearly whey-king up bright and early to write up research plans, methodological studies, study results papers and more!

Others carried out screening for swisstematic reviews, while some clearly didn't cheddar tear at the thought of reading journal guidelines and identified target journals for their research. Our team leaders (or head fromagers as they were known) clearly ricotta-nised the importance of team spirit and organised weekly team meetings, and also displayed an impressive talent for cheese-related puns when summarising their team's progress at the closing event.

Everyone made a fantastic effort, but in the end only one team could win, and that was Team Feta (Fraser Wiggins, Gloria Mongelli, Samantha Brady, Gareth Roberts, Laura Doherty, Victoria Exley, Tom Davill and Maisie Martland) led by Head Fromager Rachel Carr! Fraser, Rachel and Gloria are pictured (L-R) representing Team Feta with the official Writing Fortnight Trophy. Our individual winner was Emma Standley from Team Manchego, who showed great self-brielief and wrote an incredible amount. Well done to everyone for the progress they made, you all did grate!

YTU's next Writing Fortnight is due to run from 12th – 23rd June 2023, please do get in touch with Kalpita Baird or Alex Mitchell with any feedback or ideas for training.



Staff News

Hello

We wish a very warm welcome to new members of staff who have joined the department recently, these include: Rachael Wai-Yee Cheung, Samarul Islam, Shaun Bell, Ramsha Hussain, Matthew Faires, Jenny Roche, Edward Atiya, Ewan Hull and Caron Morrison.

Goodbye

We also wish a very fond farewell to those who have left the department over the last few months, including: Cate Cowton, Duncan Watson, Fiona Bond and Janaka Jayawickrama.

We would also like to wish Anita Savage Grainge (pictured right with Paula James) a long and happy retirement.

Anita retired in January after 17 years in the department.

Congratulations to:

Professor Kate Pickett who was awarded an OBE in the New Year's Honours list. Read the [full story](#).

Professor Christina van der Feltz-Cornelis who has been awarded the honorary distinction International Distinguished Fellow by the Board of Trustees of the American Psychiatric Association (APA). Read the [full story](#).

In the News

Dr Jo Rose featured on the ITV Tyne Tees, providing expert comment on the humanitarian crisis facing Turkey and Syria.



Blood Cancer Research Open Day

Gathering researchers, patients, their families, clinicians, and charities together to discuss patient involvement and engagement, ECSG is hosting a Blood Cancer Open Day at the University on Saturday 1st July 2023. Sharing viewpoints and knowledge often provides the impetus for future research, and the day will be a celebration of the many advances that have taken place since the last, very successful open day 10 years ago.

Many of the issues discussed will have relevance to other patient groups, and interested colleagues in Health Sciences and elsewhere in the University are welcome to join us at the STEM learning Centre - more details will follow later. Visit the [website](#) to register your interest for future updates.



If you would like to make a submission to future editions of Megaphone, please contact Jane Milsom (jane.milsom@york.ac.uk or tel 01904 321392).