

KNOWLEDGE EXCHANGE NEWS 28

SPOTLIGHT ON YORKTALKS 2025 RESEARCH

This month, we showcase some of the fascinating and innovative research presented at YorkTalks 2025, highlighting the diverse and groundbreaking work at the University of York.

THE RETURN OF THE HOUSEWIFE: Why women are still cleaning up?

Emma Casey, Department of Sociology, University of York

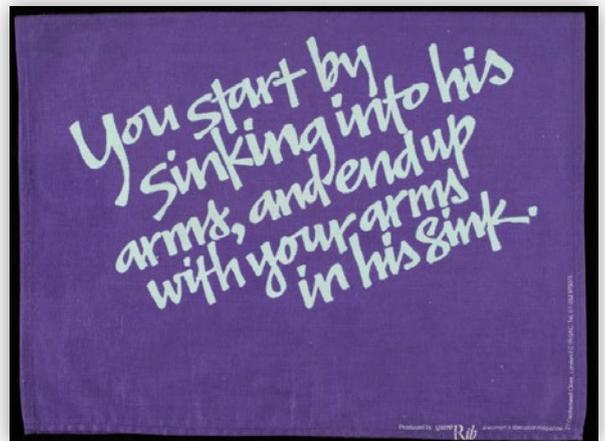
My book *The Return of the Housewife: why women are still cleaning up* (Manchester University Press) is a call to resist the recent retreat to highly conservative and debilitating representations of housework.

The Return of the Housewife offers new insights into the gendered division of labour by examining contemporary digital representations of housework. Housework remains one of the most unequal institutions globally, with women, especially poorer women and women of colour, still performing the majority of unpaid and low paid domestic labour. Recent evidence, following the COVID-19 pandemic, from the Women's Budget Group and the Fawcett Society demonstrates the continued persistence of gendered inequalities around the division of domestic labour.

Despite men being more likely to be located within the home during lockdown, women performed most pre-existing and additional domestic unpaid labour throughout

the pandemic including cleaning, cooking and homeschooling. The Women and Equalities Committee and global data from UN Women warned that this exacerbation of inequalities around domestic labour during the pandemic could set gender equality back twenty five years.

Popular depictions of the white woman housewife are nothing new but today 'cleanfluencers' offer an intensified and heavily commercial form of housewifery. Instagram and TikTok offer up new spaces whereby the impossible – an endlessly effortlessly clean, tidy and sparkling home – seems possible. Gone is the drudgery, the sound, the mess, the sweat, the never-ending mundanity and soul-destroying thanklessness of housework, and in its place is a Disney-fied mirage of domestic labour, one that promises joy, happiness, familial



wellbeing, love and calm to those who capitulate. As a central cog in systems of consumer production, it simultaneously ensures that the adage that housework is women's work remains unchallenged.

Emma's research is informing discussions, policies and individual actions aimed at addressing and challenging these inequalities.

Spare Rib tea-towel designed by Pat Kahn. Image reproduced with kind permission from Marsha Rowe.

[Contact Emma](#)

GREENER PATHWAYS TO MENTAL HEALTH: BENEFITING PEOPLE, COMMUNITIES, AND THE PLANET

Peter Coventry, Professor of Environment and Mental Health, Department of Health Sciences

Nature-based interventions are emerging as an innovative response to the challenge of decarbonising healthcare and moving towards a net zero NHS. Research from the University of York has demonstrated that engaging with natural environments, whether through **green social prescribing**, heritage crafts, or forest schools, can potentially support transition to greener pathways for mental health.

In the **YESI funded CraftWell study**, student volunteers were given opportunities to take part in outdoor heritage crafting, making Mesolithic stone beads or Anglo-Saxon pottery. The pilot study showed promising reductions in loneliness and enhanced nature connection, reinforcing the idea that reconnecting with heritage and nature can improve our mental health and foster environmental awareness.

Similarly, in collaboration with the **HEY Smile Foundation**, researchers at the Department of Health Sciences have led the evaluation of the Humber and North Yorkshire green social prescribing programme. The study found that 67% of participants reported improved life satisfaction, while 70% and 62% experienced significant reductions in anxiety and depression respectively. What's more, the size of these effects are comparable with those associated with conventional psychological treatments such as cognitive behavioural therapy.

York is involved in related studies for children and young people: the National Institute for Health



Raincliffe Wood Community Enterprise CIC

and Care Research (NIHR) funded Co-production of a Nature-based Intervention For children with ADHD Study (CONIFAS) and Forest school INterventions for Children's Health (FINCH) studies. These studies are exploring how family-based nature interventions and forest schools can help children, including those with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) or special educational needs, develop emotional resilience and a sense of environmental stewardship.

Scaling these interventions presents challenges. Unlike

medications, nature-based interventions cannot be simply prescribed and packaged. They are often place-based and require local expertise, access to green space, and community engagement. However, there are opportunities to develop adaptable models that can be customised to different contexts, ensuring flexibility while maintaining core principles. By shifting care to lower-carbon care models, we can not only address the mental health crisis but also contribute to combatting the challenges of climate change.

BUILDING IMPACTFUL EXTERNAL RELATIONSHIPS: Connecting with Business and External Organisations training



In March, 29 colleagues from across the university attended a two-day course, Connecting with Business and External Organisations, delivered by Skillfluence. The course was for researchers at all career stages, from all three faculties, who hope to collaborate with non-academic organisations or who already hold such relationships.

Attendees considered where they could add value for non-academic organisations, and used tools for identifying and pursuing opportunities. They explored how to communicate in a way that resonates with external partners and how to gain a deeper understanding of their needs. The course also covered how researchers can strengthen their professional presence by positioning their expertise and work for an external audience. Additionally, colleagues from **Research, Innovation and Knowledge Exchange** outlined

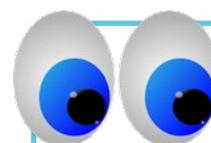
support available from the directorate.

We were also fortunate to have a guest talk from Gavin Kearney, Professor in Audio Engineering in the School of Physics, Engineering and Technology. He has a great deal of experience working with a wide variety of external organisations, from the Mercedes Formula 1 team to Abbey Road Studios. Gavin reflected on cultural differences he has navigated when working with industry partners, and emphasised how important building mutual trust has been. He shared tips for successful relationships, advising researchers to identify common goals with external collaborators early on, prioritise clear communication, and ensure both parties' expectations are aligned.

Gavin also showed a conversation he recorded with one of his collaborators, immersive music

technology company Bonza Music. Their CEO, Fiona Ryder, gave her perspective on how the relationship with Gavin's team has been key to the company's development and led to further joint opportunities, including a Knowledge Transfer Partnership.

The course was a valuable opportunity for attendees to gain tools and approaches to aid external engagement, and hear first-hand insights on successful collaboration.



Look out for further training opportunities and resources about engaging with non-academic organisations in the coming months.

NIHR | Applied Research Collaboration Yorkshire and Humber

Yorkshire and Humber Applied Research Collaboration (YH ARC) researchers at the University of York support practitioners in Hull to deliver a new initiative to improve access to care for families with young children.

Dr Sarah Blower, YH ARC Best Start lead and Assistant Professor of Child Development and Family Wellbeing, and Dr Kate Morton, YH ARC Research Fellow, have recently engaged in a rewarding knowledge exchange project with Dr Joseph Witney (General Practitioner (GP) and Helen Christmas (Public Health Consultant) in Hull.

Sarah and Kate supported a service evaluation and the development of a policy brief about a groundbreaking **new service to improve access to GP appointments and holistic care for families with young children.**

The drop-in service, delivered by Dr Witney, is hosted twice weekly at a Family Hub in Hull. To target the best care where it's most needed, the hub is situated in an area of higher socioeconomic deprivation. Parents can discuss concerns affecting themselves and their family without a time restriction, and can return to see the same GP over time. More than 50 families have used the service, with significant impacts for parents and young children.

To share best practice and encourage adoption of the initiative elsewhere, the **policy brief** has

been shared with MPs, All-Party Parliamentary Groups, policy managers, health committees and Integrated Care Boards, amongst others. This has already generated wide-ranging impacts, including invitations to input into All-Party Parliamentary Groups' (APPGs) inquiries about access to primary care. This is a fantastic example of a successful knowledge exchange project between passionate partners in research and practice. If you're interested in knowing more, please contact **kate.morton@york.ac.uk**

Introduction to Intellectual Property (IP) and Research Commercialisation – online training session (45 minutes)

Have you considered how your research is applicable to industry?

Ever wondered how IP protection can be used to help drive impact from your research?

Interested to learn more about how spin-out companies are formed?

This short online primer (delivered by the University's Commercialisation Team) is the perfect place to start. Sessions run monthly

Next session: 30/04/24 between 13:00 and 13:45.

[Book your place](#)