



# Department of Public Health, Policy and Systems

Newsletter Issue 3. December 2021

## News

### President's Medal comes to Liverpool



Director of Public Health for Liverpool and Honorary Professor Matthew Ashton has been awarded the Faculty of Health's 'President's Medal' for his response to the pandemic.

Each year the Faculty of Public Health (FHP) recognises individuals who have provided outstanding service to the field of Public Health – and Matthew said he was both proud and humbled to receive the award.

FPH President, Professor Maggie Rae made the special journey to the city as part of Liverpool's Covid Journey Civic Thank You which took place at the Town Hall last month.

Matthew believes that it takes a community to manage a pandemic and the response from city wide partners and most importantly our communities has been phenomenal. He says:

*"Right from the start we agreed we would try to be brave, bold and proactive wherever possible, doing things with and for people – but never to people."*

*I have many lasting memories of the last 20 months, and the most significant of all have come when the power of partnerships have demonstrated themselves - whether that was with mass testing, pilot events or through support for the vaccination programme.*

*It really does take a community to manage a pandemic – and that's real public health in practice!"*



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## Doctoral student Davara Bennett nominated for NIHR Infrastructure Doctoral Research

LiLac based doctoral student Davara Bennett was one of sixty doctoral students from across the NIHR Infrastructure who gathered in Leamington Spa for a three-day residential camp centred around the theme of “Applying for further funding” Davara documented her reflections and experiences from the event including how *“I know that if I decide to pursue a career in academia, I’m in a much better position now than I was before. I know how much support is built into the NIHR infrastructure”*. To read Davara’s full blog, which includes overview of the challenges and highs (including unlimited coffee pick-n-mix bar) please see the NIHR website: [SPHR Doctoral students attend Twelfth NIHR Infrastructure Doctoral Research Training Camp - NIHR School for Public Health Research NIHR SPHR](#)



## Dr Pallavi Patel and Dr Kate Mason’s research highlights policy recommendations for creating a child friendly Liverpool

In March 2019, Liverpool City Council began working towards becoming a [UNICEF Child Friendly City](#). To celebrate World Children’s Day 2021, researchers have produced a series of briefings



that summarise some of the child-focussed research being done. The link below includes research showcased by Liverpool Health Partners on Liverpool’s aim to become a Unicef Child Friendly City.

Two of our PHPS staff have work featured including [How to build a child-friendly city: lessons for Liverpool](#) from Dr Pallavi Patel, University of Liverpool – Pallavi completed her MPH this year and she did this research for her MPH dissertation. congratulations to Pallavi on a great research project!

Dr Kate Mason and the HIP-R team’s work on [Childhood obesity and the impact of cuts to local government spending on sure start children’s centres](#) highlights the need for the reinvestment in Sure Start centres to address some of the root causes of causes of obesity and inequality in obesity. For full details see: <https://liverpoolhealthpartners.org.uk/liverpool-on-a-journey-to-become-a-child-friendly-city/>







## SSM Annual Conference Liverpool 15-17 Sept 2021

Last year's Annual Conference was great. This year's Liverpool-based virtual conference turned out to be even bigger, better and more interactive.

Working in a powerful partnership, our stellar Liverpool team (Photo) and Kate Hunt's national SSM committee agreed two simple objectives:

1. *Showcase great population health research, and*
2. *Support the networking and development of every participant, – especially Early Career Researchers (ECRs) and Mid-Career Researchers (MCRs).*



**Some 400 participants** enjoyed interacting with over 200 researchers, young and old, presenting their most recent work as talks and posters in themed sessions showcasing the best population science. Each paper was discussed in moderated Q&A sessions designed to maximise participant interaction and networking. The best sessions were expertly chaired by Liverpool colleagues including: Anna Head, Seun Esan, Ellen Schwaller, Paul Atkinson, Vincy Huang, Sophie Wickham, Rhiannon Corcoran, Louise Roper, Suzie Rotherham, Andy Pennington, David TR, Michael Robinson & Kate Fleming. (Photo). My huge thanks to them all. The conference launched with a brilliant **ECR Day**, planned and hosted by Anna, Seun & Ellen. Led and hosted by ECRs for ECRs, interactive sessions powerfully and sensitively addressed *Networking, Mutual Support, Mentoring & Improving the Research Culture for ECRs*. Later that day, almost 100 participants demonstrated their stamina by then enjoying the high-quality learning opportunities provided by three Expert-led Workshops, on *Developing and evaluating complex interventions; Lessons from Smoke-free homes research; and Using Agent-Based Models for Health Improvement*. *Feedback was uniformly excellent.*

Our Liverpool-focused social activities included an ECR's Welcome Social, a **Liverpool Public Health Walk video** by Robin Ireland, and was made even healthier by a series of brief physical activity videos from Nanette Mutrie. Conference participants enjoyed many different opportunities to connect, interact and network with old and new friends, prestigious speakers, senior researchers and peers. The poster sessions were all on Zoom, and all the sessions were followed by opportunities to meet informally in the Gather Town space (with lots of positive comments from users). All sessions were then available on a conference website to view again.

The COVID Pandemic has stimulated much scientific analysis and learning, as exemplified by our two stellar keynote speakers. The virtual conference opened with Professor Clare Bambra (ex Liverpool) delivering the prestigious **Pemberton Lecture entitled "Unequal Pandemic: Covid-19 and Health Inequalities"**. *It was an erudite and scholarly tour-de-force.* On the Friday, in the equally prestigious **Cochrane Lecture "Applying behavioural science to managing Covid-19"** Professor **Susan Michie** considered the interactions between evidence-based scientific advice, politics and policy. She kindly packaged the lecture into three "snackable portions", interspersed with audience questions and far ranging discussion facilitated by Paul and myself. Prof Susan Michie demonstrated characteristic modesty combined with complete mastery of her topic. It was a great conference, delivered by a great team. **My thanks to all who contributed.**



## PHPS in the spotlight

### CLEAN-Air Africa in the spotlight as an NIHR Case study: tackling the hidden killer of household air pollution

Around the world, smoke from domestic fuel causes more premature deaths and illness than malaria and HIV combined. The NIHR-funded CLEAN-Air Africa project, a partnership between UK researchers and health authorities and institutions in Kenya, Cameroon, and Ghana, is working to address the threat of household air pollution, improving health and reducing the harmful impact on the environment. The work of CLEAN Air Africa Global Health Research group led by Professor Dan Pope was highlighted by NIHR as a case study in November 2021. As Professor Pope described:

*"We have demonstrated that rapid transition to clean cooking with LPG in sub-Saharan Africa meets an immediate public health priority with climate, gender and environmental co-benefits".* See the full case study at: [Case study: How CLEAN-Air Africa is tackling the hidden killer of household air pollution | NIHR](#)



## Grant success

Rebecca Harris (CI). Oral and Dental Research Trust. Targeted screening for atrial fibrillation in general dental practices using a portable ECG device, £4,977

Dimitrios Charalampopoulos (CI). Halton Borough Council. LCR SMART Quantitative evaluation report, £36,157

Bridget Young (Co-I). Liverpool University Hospitals Foundation Trust. The development of the CoV-Sym questionnaire: a psychometrically validated patient reported outcome measure for the use in COVID-19 intervention trials Cov-Sym, £4215

Munir Pirmohamed (CI) & Iain Buchan (Co-I). Department of Health and Social Care (UK). Understanding Mechanisms of Thrombosis and Thrombocytopenia in COVID-19 and with SARS-CoV-2 Vaccines, £1,975,065

Sarah Rodgers (CI). Medical Research Council. GroundsWell: Community-engaged and Data-informed Systems Transformation of Urban Green and Blue Space for Population Health, £9,380,112

Daniel Perry (CI), Bridget Young & Fran Sherratt (Co-Is). Department of Health and Social Care (UK). BASIS: Bracing Adolescent Idiopathic Scoliosis (BASIS) Study – night-time versus full-time bracing in adolescent idiopathic scoliosis, £2,788,974

Sophie Wickham (CI) Department of Health and Social Care (UK). Evaluation of the Health Impacts of Universal Credit: a mixed methods study, £1,574,835

David Taylor-Robinson (CI). Swedish Research Council. Drivers of inequalities among families with involvement in child welfare services, £397,315

Kerry Woolfall (Co-I). Department of Health and Social Care (UK). TOAST: Treating Oesophageal Atresia to prevent Stricture, £2,017,357



## Introducing our new PHPS colleagues

### Lauren Murrell

I joined the department in September as a Postgraduate Researcher. I am currently working on 'Investigating the Spatio-temporal drivers of inequalities in gastro intestinal infection'. My background lies in veterinary and human epidemiology, one health, and neglected tropical disease. My past research includes investigating the drivers of Lymphatic Filariasis in different ecozones of Ghana and mapping areas of high and low risk. I have a keen interest in health inequalities, disease surveillance and policy, public engagement and outreach.



### Helen Piotrowski

I joined the PHPS Department in October 2021. I am a PhD student funded by the HPRU in Emerging and Zoonotic infections. My supervisors are Prof Sally Sheard, Dr Paul Atkinson and Dr Roberto Vivancos. My PhD will explore the development of UK policy for emerging and zoonotic infections. Prior to starting at the University of Liverpool I was a Social Science Research Assistant at the Liverpool School of Tropical Medicine, working with partners in Nigeria, Liberia and Cameroon to address equity challenges for Neglected Tropical Disease programmes; using Participatory Health Research methods. I have a background in nursing, clinical research, qualitative research and social anthropology.



### Michael Hawkings

I joined the University and the HPRU-GI in October 2021 as a PhD student, supervised by Iain Buchan. My research aims to understand how gastrointestinal health might be affected following COVID-19 infection, using linked public health data systems. Prior to joining the University, I worked for the NHS as a Physician Associate and have also worked in clinical trials.



Also welcome to Katherine Abba who has joined Ben Barr's team





## Research blog

I had never heard of Patient and Public involvement (PPI) until my first postdoc at the Leibniz Institute of Prevention Research and Epidemiology (BIPS), where I led the EDISON (Ethnic and Gender Differences in Metabolic Syndrome in Germany) Project. During the application process of this project, I was asked to have PPI input. I must admit that I had no clue about it. It was more or



less a tick-box exercise. Fast-forward, my postdoc position in Liverpool has been a great eye-opener regarding PPI. The main objective of the ORACLE (Overcoming Adverse Childhood Experiences) project is to understand the lived experiences of children, young people, and family members, and wider structural determinants, of risks and assets around parental mental health problems, substance misuse, intimate partner abuse.

My first research in this project looks at the impact of poverty and family adversity (i.e. parental mental illness, domestic violence and abuse and alcohol use) on adolescent health. The result shows that over 40% of children experienced continuous exposure to either poverty and/or parental mental ill health, and these common exposures are associated with large negative impacts on child physical, mental, cognitive and behavioural outcomes. This study has been published in [The Lancet Regional Health Europe](#). But the most important question is how do we disseminate the findings to the public and other stakeholders? Again, how can we facilitate conversations around these sensitive issues involving children, young people and parents? I had a great opportunity to share the findings with the Family Research Advisory Group (FRAG) and the Young Research Advisors (YRA). Both engagement activities were organised by the National Children's Bureau (NCB). The NCB FRAG and YRA groups are made up of parents, carers and children who meet regularly to advise on research projects. I presented, and got feedback on what they thought was most important from their point of view, how they interpreted the findings, and what surprised them. It was a pleasant experience to engage with both groups to think across their usual silos about the challenges facing families affected by mental illness, poverty and other childhood adversities and how stakeholders can work together to meet this challenge. The research is for the people who are directly affected, so I believe they should have a say in the research. When I was asked to engage with them. I was both reluctant and honoured, if I may put it that way. Honoured, because it is a fantastic opportunity to share my research with the general public and engage them on the issues. Reluctant, because I feel the issues are too sensitive to discuss, especially with children and parents who might have experienced any of these adversities at some stage in their lives. During the engagement, I learnt a lot, and their input was invaluable. Some of the ideas that parents had in relation to looking at the added dimension of work status and income is something we are planning to look at in the ORACLE project.

By Nicolas Kofi Adjei



# University of Liverpool Staff Networks

## **BAME Staff Network**

<https://www.liverpool.ac.uk/intranet/bme/bmestaff@liv.ac.uk>

**Key contact:** Alison.Fernandes@liverpool.ac.uk

## **Disability Network**

<https://www.liverpool.ac.uk/dsn/intranet/equality@liv.ac.uk>

**Jenna Kenyan:** j.kenyani@liverpool.ac.uk

## **Menopause Network**

**Founder - Joy Vogt** PA to Director of External Relations

[joyvogt@liverpool.ac.uk](mailto:joyvogt@liverpool.ac.uk)

## **LGBT+ Network**

<https://www.liverpool.ac.uk/lgbt/intranet/>

[gbt@liverpool.ac.uk](mailto:gbt@liverpool.ac.uk)

## **Cancer Support Group**

[equality@liv.ac.uk](mailto:equality@liv.ac.uk)

## **Trans and non-binary peer support network**

[daryl.hodge@liverpool.ac.uk](mailto:daryl.hodge@liverpool.ac.uk)

## **Carers Network**

[equality@liv.ac.uk](mailto:equality@liv.ac.uk)

## **Female Early Career Researcher Network**

<https://www.liverpool.ac.uk/intranet/hr/diversity-equality/gender/femaleearlycareerresearchers/equality@liv.ac.uk>

[sally.middleton@liv.ac.uk](mailto:sally.middleton@liv.ac.uk)

## **Liverpool Women in Science and Engineering**

<https://www.liverpool.ac.uk/liverpool-women-in-science-and-engineering/about/>

[livwise@liv.ac.uk](mailto:livwise@liv.ac.uk)

## **Parents Network**

<https://www.liverpool.ac.uk/intranet/hr/diversity-equality/gender/workinggroupsnetworks/parentsnetwork/>

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Head of Diversity & Equality

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**Holly Nicholls -**

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## Publications

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