

# Research conference 2019 webcast abstracts

**17 & 18 May 2019**

## Dr Ciaran Mulholland

### Friday Keynote

**Professional Role:** Senior Lecturer and Clinical Director

**Institution/Affiliation:** Queen's University Belfast and Northern Ireland Regional Trauma Network

#### **The Northern Ireland Regional Trauma Network: treating the aftermath of psychological trauma with evidence-based therapies**

The 2014 Stormont House Agreement made a commitment to establish a comprehensive psychological trauma service with the aim of improving access to high quality mental health trauma care for victims and survivors. In 2015 the Health Minister announced the establishment of the new 'Regional Mental Health Trauma Network'.

The Aims of the Regional Trauma Network are to: -

1. Comprehensively address the mental health legacy of the "Troubles"
2. Comprehensively address the mental health impact of all other forms of trauma
3. Improve individual, family and community experience of mental health trauma care
4. Improve the psychological and social outcomes for individuals, their families and communities who have been traumatised as a result of the "conflict" and all other forms of trauma.
5. Improve governance and public accountability of trauma services.

Work has now begun to develop the new service, drawing on world-leading clinical expertise for guidance. The intention is to establish five clinical teams, one in each Health Trust, which will be brought together through a regional structure. The proposed model recognises the need for a collaborative partnership across the community, voluntary and statutory sectors. Each clinical team will work with services provided by the community and voluntary Sector, commissioned, and funded by the European Union through the Victim and Survivors Services. Dr Mulholland will explain the work which is underway to ensure that the commitment made in the Stormont House Agreement is met.

## Dr Kim de Jong

### Saturday Keynote

**Professional Role:** Assistant Professor

**Institution/Affiliation:** Leiden University, the Netherlands

**Using routine outcome monitoring as a feedback intervention to enhance outcomes in routine practice**

**Aim/Purpose:** While routine outcome measurement (ROM) has become a standard in psychotherapy and counselling in many countries (including the UK), the information from these measurements is not automatically used by clinicians in treatment. In ROM, clients' functioning in symptoms and/or wellbeing is typically measured on a session-by-session basis. In the more complex systems, the clients' progress is then compared with a so-called expected treatment trajectory, based on the treatment gains made by former clients.

**Design/Methodology:** ROM can be used as a feedback intervention when clinicians use the information on their patients' progress to adapt their treatment strategy when they are not progressing well. Research suggests that this use of progress feedback has the potential to improve clinical outcomes, make treatments more efficient, and reduce dropout rates. However, feedback interventions are not equally effective in all cases and the effectiveness seems to be moderated by client characteristics (e.g., initial severity, complexity), clinician characteristics (e.g., openness to use of progress feedback, self-efficacy) and implementation strategies (e.g., training, continued supervision). In this keynote address, Dr. De Jong will discuss why we need progress feedback to obtain good outcomes for our clients, as well as explain the different ways in which progress feedback can be used in routine practice. She will synthesize the scientific knowledge on this topic through the discussion of recent systematic reviews and meta-analyses, which suggest that progress feedback tends to be mostly effective for cases in which the client is not progressing well.

Dr. De Jong will address the theoretical basis of feedback interventions, as well as the potential mechanisms of action. Finally, the way in which progress feedback links to the broader literature of therapist effects and process and outcome prediction will be discussed.

## Professor Sue Wheeler, Professor John McLeod, Dr Andrew Reeves and Dr Caryl Sibbett

### Opening Discussion

The founders of the BACP Research Conference, Professor Sue Wheeler (University of Leicester) and Professor John McLeod (University of Oslo), will reflect on 25 years of research achievement in our field.

They will consider the most significant achievements and discuss the challenges that have been overcome in this period.

They will go on to look at how far the research landscape has changed in this period and debate the extent to which changes in the profession and in public policy have impacted our field.

They will evaluate how far we have come and discuss what they will be looking for at this year's conference.

## Emma Broglia

### Paper

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**Distress and barriers to help-seeking for UK students: a survey of five UK Higher Education Institutions using the Counseling Center Assessment of Psychological Symptoms (CCAPS-34)**

**Keywords:** Student mental health, university counselling, clinical measures, help-seeking behaviour, mixed methods.

**Aim/Purpose:** The need for campus-based prevention programmes alongside wider investment in student counselling services is substantial, however research on large representative UK student samples is needed to characterise the mental health profile of students and to inform future policy. This study aimed to characterise the mental health profile of UK university students by comparing students who approach counselling services with students who avoid counselling services and with peers in the general student population. This study also aimed to identify barriers to help-seeking for university students with mental health concerns.

**Design/Methodology:** The study used a cross-sectional survey design in five UK universities. Survey questions included the CCAPS-34 alongside questions on demographics, degree topic, mental health concerns, and willingness to seek help. The CCAPS-34 is a student-specific clinical outcome measure used widely in the US and recently validated for UK use. Survey data were compared to anonymised data from two UK student counselling services as well as data from the CCAPS US normative dataset.

**Ethical Approval:** The study received ethical approval from the University of Sheffield Research Ethics Committee.

**Results/Findings:** The total dataset comprised 3,108 students (survey = 2,814; service data = 294) from five UK universities. A series of mixed factorial ANOVAs with post-hoc simple effect analyses were used to explore differences in symptom profiles at the university level, faculty level, and self-identified help-seeking level. Thematic analysis was used on 1,011 comments (878 students) to identify barriers to help-seeking. Findings will be discussed across the different student groups, relating to distinct mental health profiles and reasons for help-avoidant behaviour.

**Research limitations:** This is the first UK study to capture CCAPS data on the general student population. Further research should compare a larger representative sample of service data with the general student population and match for a range of demographics.

**Conclusions/Implications:** Student sub-groups demonstrate different mental health profiles and experience unique barriers to help-seeking, which can be remedied with campus-based initiatives. The UK HE sector needs to support the collection of large datasets on student mental health symptoms to inform policy and foster student mental health initiatives.

## Zoe Chouliara

### Paper

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**Trust as a therapeutic goal in working with complex trauma: a trust-based clinical framework**

**Keywords:** Trust, complex trauma, qualitative, framework, therapeutic alliance.

**Aims/Purpose:** Compromised ability to trust is a key feature in relational/complex trauma. Restoring trust is an important condition for recovering. We know very little about how and why therapeutic trust develops, is maintained, and is occasionally disrupted, especially so in complex trauma. Also, complex trauma does not respond to standard treatment approaches. This study aimed at developing a trust based clinical framework for working with complex trauma.

**Design/Methods:** Qualitative semi-structured individual interviews were utilised. Transcripts were analysed using Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) to identify recurrent themes. A total of 13 participants, working in the field of relational complex trauma, were interviewed. Themes were modelled to identify their situated nature, whereas links between were identified to inform the development of a clinical framework.

**Ethical Approval:** Obtained from a higher institution in Scotland.

**Results/Findings:** Recurrent themes, which constitute an original theory of therapeutic trust, included: 1. The Nature, 2. The Function, 3. The Components, 4. The Process, and 5. Challenges of trust. A comprehensive definition of trust as a relational mechanism of regulating psychological threat and managing vulnerability, by reducing anxieties, promoting safety and inducing growth based therapeutic experiences is put forward. The first clinical framework of therapeutic trust is proposed, including four cornerstones of trust: 1. Consistency & Gradual Change, 2. Safety & Flexible Stability, 3. Benevolent Presence & Mutual Connection, 4. Transparent Humanity & Balanced Power.

**Research Limitations.** This is a qualitative study within a Scottish context.

**Conclusions/implications:** Our findings highlight trust as a key therapeutic goal in complex trauma. As per our findings, trust appears able to address the three key features of complex trauma, i.e. poor sense of self/shame, poor emotional regulation, and relational sensitivity. Findings have implications for the development of trust-based interventions for increasing engagement and managing drop outs, when working clinically with severe and/or complex clients. In an increasingly traumatogenic world, more clinicians will be called to work with complex trauma, where disengagement, drop outs and alliance ruptures are highly prevalent. Managing trust and its ruptures is key for service delivery, training and supervision, if we are to provide safe, effective, and responsive mental health services for complex trauma and beyond.

## Annalisa Cortese

### Paper

**Professional Role:** Integrative Counsellor, Psychological Therapist  
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**Idiosyncratic psychological processes and social invisibility experienced by intersex people: a multiple case study**

**Keywords:** Invisibility, intersex, gender X.

**Aim/Purpose:** Although researchers have analysed intersexuality from a medical, legal and social perspective, these lack consideration of its social-psychological features. Therefore, the following research aims to add to the existing queries, an exploration of intersex participants' inner processes, highlighting the effect that social invisibility has on the creation of their gender identity and coming out experience. Also, this study explores whether introducing a new gender and/or sex marker X could break through the veil of secrecy and invisibility around intersexuality, eventually impacting positively on the participants' inner/outer selves.

**Design/Methodology:** The employment of a qualitative methodology provided an in-depth analysis of the phenomenon. The methodology follows a multiple case study protocol integrated to grounded theory for the data analysis, thus to guarantee an in-depth insight of each unit of analysis, but also reliability and integrity to the interpretative process. The sample was composed of six adult participants, born intersex, with experience of medicalization. The data were collected through semi-structured interviews, and audio-recorded. The identification-definition-interpretation of coding informed the analytical process. Interrelation between themes was grasped throughout a constant comparative method.

**Ethical Approval:** This study gained ethical approval from Newham University College Ethics Committee.

**Results/Findings:** Eight phenomena have been individualised: awareness of own diversity, awareness of the incongruence between inner-self and outer-self, social invalidation, secrecy, absence of social recognition, coming out experience and gender X.

**Research Limitation:** Due to the complexity of the study, a second interview would have skimmed data further, contributing to a more generalisable theoretical saturation.

**Conclusion/Implications:** The findings reveal the idiosyncratic character of each participant's experience. These show how social invisibility impacts on the participants' process of self-integration. Besides, how social stigma/marginalisation obstructs self-expression of true-self and influences the coming out experience. Introducing a new gender marker seems to respond to the individual need for social recognition. Therefore, this could facilitate the process of self-recognition and self-identification. This investigation may increase further practitioner's awareness of intersexuality and the impacts of social constructions on individual well-being.

## Beverley Costa and Jean-Marc Dewaele

### Paper

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**The talking cure - building the core skills and the confidence of counsellors and psychotherapists to work effectively with multilingual patients through training and supervision**

**Keywords:** Multilingual, training, supervision, linguistic empathy, agency.

**Aim/Purpose:** Increasing numbers of multilingual people seek counselling and psychotherapy in a system that is rooted in a monolingual ideology. Despite these numbers, there is very little training for therapists and counsellors equipping them to treat multilingual patients. This is strange given that therapeutic treatment is known as the “talking cure”. Research with therapists and counsellors about their beliefs and behaviour with multilingual patients (Stevens & Holland, 2008; Costa & Dewaele, 2012) revealed that therapists were anxious about their ability to work with multilingual patients. Mothertongue multi-ethnic counselling service, a small NGO based in the UK, developed and delivered training for counsellors and therapists and culturally and linguistically sensitive supervision groups for counsellors and therapists working in their local NHS Improving Access to Psychological Therapies Service. They also developed and deliver a module on culturally and linguistically sensitive supervision for IAPT supervision courses. An evaluation of these initiatives was conducted, to explore whether they would improve therapists’ core skills in working with multilingual clients.

**Design/Methodology:** An informal evaluation and a formal mixed-methods evaluation were conducted with 88 trainees and supervisees who had participated in these training and supervision initiatives. They completed a questionnaire including closed and open questions related to the impact of the training. Seven of the participants agreed to follow-up interviews which were analysed using NVivo software and Thematic Analysis.

**Ethical Approval:** Received from Birkbeck, University of London.

**Research Limitations:** Relatively small numbers of participants and range of training organisations were involved. This initiative could be replicated and tested.

**Results/Findings:** After the training and supervision, the confidence and multilingual awareness of counsellors and therapists improved, and they felt able to use multilingualism as a therapeutic asset in the treatment of trauma and other presenting issues. They began to think of multilingualism as a process/relational issue and not purely a technical issue.

**Conclusions/Implications:** This type of training and supervision has the potential to change thinking and behaviour of counsellors and therapists, enhance their core skills and impact directly on mental health practice and the reduction of health inequalities.

## Geraldine Dufour and Afra Turner

### Paper

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**Counselling in Universities and Colleges: gathering outcome measures for the sector, a feasibility study.**

**Five Keywords:** Mental health, students, university, outcome measures.

**Aim/Purpose:** In the context of growing concern over high levels of mental health issues in college and university students, the SCoRE consortium was set up with the aim of pooling data from university, FE and 6th form College Counselling Services in order to systematically examine sector-wide student counselling outcomes. The aim of this feasibility project was to establish the suitability of required processes and procedures for this objective. This involves pooling data utilising a variety of outcome measures (CORE, CCAPS, PHQ-9 and GAD-7) as well as non-standardised demographic and session variables. Through this process the intent is to develop data protocols that facilitate pooling data from different services to allow group analysis. A corresponding aim is to clarify the logistics and data sharing agreements for a shared and secure data hub. The overall aim is that the feasibility project will establish a viable template for the next stage pilot project, which will focus on pooling further data from a larger/more diverse group of student counselling services to examine student counselling outcomes.

**Design/Methodology:** This is a retrospective analysis of data collected routinely as part of participating organizations' student counselling service routine outcome data collections.

**Ethical Approval:** Existing service data was sourced for the purpose of audit and evaluation, therefore all involved university ethics boards determined that ethical approval was not required.

**Results/Findings:** The results of this feasibility study will hopefully be ready to be presented at the research conference. The intent is to report on both the methodological issues uncovered and the initial findings in terms of student counselling outcomes across the participating institutions.

**Conclusions/Implications:** In the current funding context it is critical that services work to evidence their efficacy. This project provides an example of how to go about doing this, providing a practice example to other services.

## Charlie Duncan

### Paper

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#### **Analysing Goals and Expectations in Counselling with Young people (AGENCY)**

**Keywords:** Young people, school counselling, goals, mixed methods, cluster RCT.

**Aim/Purpose:** School-based humanistic counselling (SBHC) has been found to be effective in reducing levels of psychological distress and enhancing progression towards personal goals. Despite this, there has been no research undertaken which has looked at the associations between monitoring goal progress at every session and outcomes in SBHC, compared to not. The present study aims to address this gap in the literature.

**Design/Methodology:** A pilot cluster randomised controlled trial (RCT) was undertaken whereby ten counsellors were randomised to an experimental or control condition. Counsellors were able to provide clients with up to 10 weekly sessions of SBHC and collected the Outcomes Rating Scale (ORS; Miller & Duncan, 2000) at every session and the Young Person's Clinical Outcomes in Routine Evaluation (YP-CORE, Twigg et al., 2009) at the beginning and end of counselling. Those in the experimental group also collected the Goal Based Outcome (GBO) tool (Law, 2011) at every session. Multi-level modelling will be used to explore how goal progress may contribute to changes in psychological well-being in data with a nested structure. Semi-structured interviews were undertaken with young people at the end of SBHC to explore how SBHC may help young people to work towards their goals and how the process of setting and monitoring goals may facilitate improved outcomes in SBHC; these will be analysed using thematic or narrative analysis.

**Ethical Approval:** Ethical approval was granted by the University of Roehampton (PSYC 17/262).

**Results/Findings:** Data analysis is currently underway and preliminary results will be available by May.

**Research Limitations:** Due to the pilot nature of the study it may not be statistically powered to detect differences between groups, increasing the likelihood of making a type II error (falsely concluding that there is no difference between the groups).

**Conclusions/Implications:** If rating goal progress at every session improves outcomes then it could be argued that such practice be adopted in SBHC. There is also little known about how SBHC helps young people to achieve their goals and what counsellors working in this environment can do to facilitate goal progress. It is hoped that this research will provide some preliminary understandings of these mechanisms of change.

# Charlie Duncan and Victoria Heydon-Hatchett

## Paper

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**Engaging private practitioners in research: what we've learnt and why it's relevant**

**Keywords:** Outcome measures, private practice, client management, evaluation, pilot study.

**Aim/Purpose:** The benefits of regular tracking and feedback on client progress has been well documented and has been shown to improve outcomes and reduce the number of cases deteriorating and/or dropping out of therapy. However, implementing this as part of routine practice poses a range of challenges, including therapist resistance and beliefs that measures may be used as contra-evidence for their efficacy as a practitioner. Hence, this research aims to evaluate the acceptability of an online client management system to practitioners.

**Design/Methodology:** Since December 2017 recruitment has been underway to secure a cohort of 30 private practitioners to pilot an online client management system which also has the capacity to collect routine outcome measures. Quantitative data on the number of practitioners who express an interest in participating, the number who go on to participate and the number who drop out will be collected. Descriptive statistics and cross-tabulation analyses will be undertaken on quantitative data. Qualitative analyses, such as thematic analysis, will be undertaken on written feedback and semi-structured interviews to explore facilitators and barriers to participation.

**Ethical Approval:** In line with recommendations in the Ethical Guidelines for Research in the Counselling Professions, this research followed the principles outlined in the independent ethical review procedure. In particular, legal guidance was sought with regards to GDPR and the client consent process.

**Results/Findings:** Up to November 2018, 75 practitioners expressed an initial interest in participating and 36 completed the eligibility questionnaire, of which 24 were eligible to participate. Recruitment is on-going. Currently, four practitioners are participating and a further one has subsequently dropped out due to incongruence with their practice and the client consent process. Preliminary anecdotal evidence suggests that it is crucial to fully embed the system into everyday practice to make it acceptable to practitioners and clients alike.

**Research Limitations:** The low recruitment rate to date makes it difficult to draw any firm conclusions about the acceptability of the system to practitioners.

**Conclusions/Implications:** Understanding how to engage practitioners in collecting routine outcome measures has important implications for the pooling of data from independent sources, which has the ability to contribute to the evidence-base for the effectiveness of counselling.

## Robert Elliott

### Paper

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**Inferring causality in process-outcome research on counsellor empathy**

**Keywords:** Counsellor empathy, outcome, process-outcome research, causal inference, meta-analysis

**Aim/Purpose:** Empathy refers to understanding what another person is experiencing or trying to express. Therapist empathy has a long history as a hypothesized key change process in counselling. We present the latest iteration of an ongoing meta-analysis project linking therapist empathy to client outcomes, using it as a case illustration of an integrative model of causal inference in counselling process-outcome research, consisting of six conditions: Precedence, Plausibility, Statistical Conclusion Validity, Internal Validity, Construct Validity, and External Validity.

**Design/Methodology:** A team of four judges reviewed identified and analysed 24 new studies (out of 2,222 sources) not included in our previous meta-analyses, for a total of 82 independent samples and 6,138 clients.

**Results/Findings:** Empathy was again a moderately strong predictor of therapy outcome: for study level effects, mean weighted  $r = .28$  ( $p < .001$ ; equivalent to  $d = .58$ ). In general, the empathy-outcome relation held for different theoretical orientations and client presenting problems, although there was considerable heterogeneity in the effects. Client, observer, and therapist perception measures predicted client outcome better than empathic accuracy measures. Applying our model of causal inference, we found support for four of the six causal inference conditions: Precedence, Plausibility, Statistical Conclusion Validity, and External Validity. On the other hand, our data set did not have enough causal modelling studies to rule out two important Internal Validity threats: reverse and third variable causation. However, the weakest condition was Construct Validity: We conceded any claim that therapist empathy uniquely predicts client outcome in the absence of other therapist conditions.

**Research/Limitations:** (a) Questionable validity of some outcome measures (e.g. client-rated satisfaction); (b) exclusion of unpublished doctoral dissertations, making it difficult to evaluate the possibility of publication bias.

**Conclusions/Implications:** Therapist empathy is a widely-supported, moderately-strong predictor of client outcome and meets most but not all the conditions for making valid causal inferences. Better designs and more sophisticated causal modelling research is needed to rule out reverse and third variable causation. However, there is no evidence at all that therapist empathy uniquely contributes to client outcome, independent of other therapist conditions such as warmth and genuineness.

## Brett Kyle Gleason, Dr. Heather Dahl and Dr. Wendy Hoskins

### Paper

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**I really wish our faculty could practice what they're preaching: perspectives from students on wellness promotion in counsellor education**

**Keywords:** Wellness, counsellor education, doctoral students, modelling, self-care.

**Aim/Purpose:** Counsellors experience multiple stressors, which is linked to a decrease in wellness and has a significant association with counsellor burnout (Lawson, 2007; Puig et al., 2012). Wellness/self-care practices work as protective factors for mental health professionals to help safeguard and minimize stress/burnout (Kramen-Kahn & Hansen, 1998; Stevanovic & Rupert, 2004). However, wellness promotion tends to be glossed over in counsellor education programs.

**Design/Methodology:** This study sought to explore the lived experiences of doctoral-level counsellor trainees regarding their conceptualization of wellness and related self-care practices and to solicit their recommendations for wellness promotion. A phenomenological approach was used to explore three research questions: (1) what are doctoral-level counsellor trainees' lived wellness experiences; (2) what do participants identify as strengths and barriers to wellness and wellness promotion; and (3) what recommendations, if any, do the individuals describe for wellness promotion? Potential participants were recruited utilizing criterion and maximum variation methods. The 12 participants were individually interviewed for 55:36 minutes on average. To address trustworthiness (i.e., credibility, coherence, sampling adequacy, ethical validation, and substantive validation), researchers employed member checking, triangulation, thick description, reflexive journaling, as well as an audit trail (Hays & Singh, 2012).

**Ethical Approval:** The IRB committee at a South-eastern University in the United States gave approval for this study.

**Results/Findings:** Three structural themes (i.e., components of wellness, program culture, and recommendations) were identified by the research team. Participants that perceived more faculty support tended to express utilization of self-care practices; however, some viewed faculty support as conditional or negligent. Participants recommended: a) *relationships* that facilitate individualized wellness/self-care needs of trainees, b) structured *opportunities* for self-care activity integrated into training, and c) counsellor trainers/supervisors *modelling* appropriate self-care practice.

**Conclusion/Implications:** The British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy (BACP) Ethical Framework for the Counselling Professions (BACP, 2018) posits self-care as essential to ethical practice (see Commitment to Clients, 2.d. and Good Practice, 91.a., b., c., and d.). However, BACP doesn't address wellness expectations in the Trainees sections (See 74-83). By taking student recommendations into account, counsellor educators can help promote wellness in their training programs.

## Christopher Keech

### Paper

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**Male survivors' experiences of psychological support following domestic violence: client insights from NHS and Third Sector provision**

**Keywords:** Domestic violence, counselling client needs, male victims, counselling service provision.

**Aim/Purpose:** To investigate the experiences of male survivors of domestic violence when accessing counselling services.

**Design/Methodology:** A social media campaign was used to recruit 9 men from England, Wales and Northern Ireland who had accessed counselling after surviving domestic violence. Participants confirmed they had completed counselling at least 3 months prior and had access to psychological support services post-interview if required. Two researchers, one male and one female, conducted the interviews with interviewers allocated based on any participant expressed gender preference. Semi-structured interviews lasting no more than 90 minutes were recorded and transcribed. All data was held in a password protected area on the University network. The transcribed data was coded separately by the two researchers, who then then systematically compared and discussed the transcripts, agreeing a coding for each item to produce a final coded transcript for each participant. This reduced the chances of interviewer bias in coding. The resultant data was analysed using thematic analysis, producing themes representative of the participants' experiences as described in the transcript. These findings were shared with participants who wished to review and discuss the results with the interviewers to confirm they reflected participant experiences.

**Ethical Approval:** Ethical approval was given by the University of Sunderland.

**Results/Findings:** The findings showed that men generally had trouble identifying support that met their needs. They often tried several sources of psychological support and more than one counsellor or agency before finding a counsellor with whom they could form a therapeutic relationship. Men's experience of the counselling received through the third sector organisations was mostly positive, in contrast to their experiences of NHS services. Several organisational and structural issues were identified, providing an understanding of which aspects of service provision were helpful or unhelpful.

**Research Limitations:** The small number of participants means the research does not provide a fully generalizable evaluation of the types of provision mentioned.

**Conclusions/Implications:** This study highlights aspects of service provision such as physical environment, appointment pattern and ethos that could be improved to meet the needs of male survivors of domestic violence.

## Sally Lumsdaine and Zoe Powell Martin

### Paper

**Other Authors:** Zoe Powell-Martin, Julia McLeod, Jennifer Scally and Kate Smith

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**Institute/Affiliation:** Abertay University

**Analysis of counselling student employment destinations: using action research to enhance the counselling curriculum and improve employability**

**Keywords:** Counselling trajectories, employability, training, action research.

**Aims/Purpose:** This study tracked student employment destinations and explored perceptions around employability and the benefits offered by the existing counselling curriculum. The aim of the study was to enhance the Abertay University postgraduate counselling programme; maintain links with former students who work within the target industry and develop CPD aimed at this group.

**Design/Methodology:** Information was gathered from student registry and 401 graduates, for whom current emails were known, were contacted and invited to complete an on-line questionnaire about their career trajectory and the relevance and benefit of aspects of the post-graduate curriculum. Participant response rate was high with just under 50% of those contacted responding. Responses (192) were analysed and Student trajectories were tracked. The links between course content and benefits to employability were explored.

**Ethical Approval:** Ethical approval was granted by Abertay Research Ethics Committee.

**Results/Findings:** The results demonstrated the breadth and depth of employment undertaken following graduation. Just over 90% of respondents continued to use the skills and knowledge gained either by working as a counsellor or by using embedded counselling skills within their work. The majority of those working as counsellors did this voluntarily with only a small number (23.37%) being paid for the counselling they do. Despite this, however a high percentage of respondents (77.78%) believed that the course(s) studied enhanced employability with an even higher number (91.62%) feeling that studying counselling helped them in their working life in general. Interestingly nearly 92% of respondents indicated that the skills and knowledge gained also helped them in their day-to-day life.

**Research Limitations:** The questionnaire was disseminated by a senior and well-respected member of staff. The personal nature of this initial contact may have impacted willingness to respond in a negative way, equally only those that had a positive experience on the course may have responded thereby potentially skewing the findings of this research project.

**Conclusion/Implications:** The findings of this project suggest that the current course does prepare students for employment however further investigation is needed to understand where and how the skills and knowledge gained at university have transferred into the workplace and beyond.

## Julie May

### Paper

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**What factors influence a client's choice of counsellor/psychotherapist in a private practice setting and the implications for the profession's regulatory status**

**Keywords:** Private practice, choice factors, statutory regulation, counselling, psychotherapy.

**Aim/Purpose:** This study considered how a client chooses a psychotherapist/counsellor working in private practice. It emerged from a desire to know whether clients made informed choices, which factors influenced their selection and the extent to which they were aware of the regulatory status of the profession.

**Design/Methodology:** 22 participants consisting of ten psychotherapist/counsellors, ten clients and two other professionals were interviewed using semi-structured interviews. This qualitative study was underpinned by pragmatism, and data was analysed using thematic analysis.

**Ethical Approval:** Faculty of Health and Social Science Research Governance Committee.

**Results/Findings:** The primary selection factor was recommendation, and where this option was either absent or undesired, selection was made based on internet searching using location, experience of the presenting issues and the perceived ability to relate to the client. Clients assessed these factors using the photograph and rhetoric on the therapist's website or directory entry, as well as during the first face-to-face meeting, largely relying upon unconscious projection and 'gut instinct'. Factors of limited importance in the selection process included qualifications, professional standing and modality. There was an assumption that the profession was already statutorily regulated and that these factors would be obligatorily in situ, before a therapist could practise privately.

**Research Limitations:** This was a small-scale study and the results cannot be generalised across the profession, or the opinions of participants said to represent the public. The qualitative research process cannot be considered impartial and is influenced by author bias.

**Conclusions/Implications:** Factors affecting client choice did not include validation of the counsellor/psychotherapist's professional standing or credibility. Together with a lack of information for both clients and recommenders, unprotected titles and an absence of minimum education standards for the profession, the study highlighted an increased risk for exploitation affecting private practice clients. Recommendations included an increase in public education, urgent debate within the profession of the issues highlighted and support for statutory regulation.

## Naomi Moller

### Paper

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**Perceptions of mental health and individuals with mental health issues in a work context**

**Keywords:** Work-place, mental health, qualitative.

**Aim/Purpose:** Increasing numbers of people struggle with mental health issues in western industrial nations. Both in the UK and Germany, about a quarter of the population will experience mental health problems, with anxiety and depression being the most prevalent. In neoliberal cultures, individuals are often positioned as responsible for their health, including their psychological wellbeing. This is evidenced - in part - by the proliferation of resilience, stress management, mindfulness, etc. courses offered by health centres as well as employers, which focus on teaching individuals how to cope with mental health issues, disregarding potential social, cultural and environmental causes for psychological distress.

**Design/Methodology:** Considering this, we explored how this individualising of mental health plays out in the context of the work place, in particular in the discourses drawn on in narratives about colleagues who experience psychological illness or distress. We are collecting data using the method of story completion tasks (Braun, Clarke, Hayfield, Moller & Tischner, 2018), asking participants to complete the following story stem, with half of participants receiving the stem with a female and half with a male protagonist: 'Michael/a returns to work after 3 weeks off. In the meantime, word has got around that s/he hasn't been on annual leave but signed off sick with mental health issues. Please continue Michael/a's story.' Participants were individuals working in either Germany or the UK, who completed the task online, via an online survey platform.

**Ethical Approval:** Ethical approval for the project was granted by both the universities of the researchers.

**Results/Findings:** The data collection is ongoing. Results will be analysed using thematic analysis in time for presentation at conference.

**Research Limitations:** The nature of story completion data is debated and while the method has a number of advantages - in particular for research on sensitive topics such as mental health - it is still a newer way to collect data for qualitative analysis.

**Conclusions/Implications:** The findings will shed light on social perceptions about individuals with mental health issues in the workplace.

## Jeannette Roddy

### Paper

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**Working with survivors of domestic violence: addressing the needs of male and female counselling clients in the UK**

**Keywords:** Domestic violence, counselling client needs, male victims, counselling service provision.

**Aim/Purpose:** The purpose of the research was to determine, from a client perspective, what was helpful or unhelpful when accessing counselling after experiencing domestic violence and whether there were any gender differences in participant experiences.

**Design/Methodology:** This paper brings together two different research studies. The first study was part of the first author's PhD and recruited 14 female participants via three domestic violence agencies in the north east of England. The second study was a post-doctoral project and recruited 9 male participants via a social media campaign from England, Wales and Northern Ireland. Participants confirmed that they had access to therapeutic services should they be required prior to participating. Both studies used the same semi-structured qualitative interview schedule. The first study used an adapted grounded theory analysis. The second study was analysed using thematic analysis as, due to funding limitations, as there was insufficient time to conduct the analysis and reflection between interviews required for grounded theory. The findings were reviewed with participants who volunteered to provide further feedback.

**Ethical Approval:** Ethical approval was given by York St John University for the first study and the University of Sunderland for the second.

**Results/Findings:** In line with other research on the therapeutic process, both men and women valued the therapeutic relationship, in particular the acceptance, warmth and understanding of the therapist. Women found accessing therapy through their local DV agency relatively easy, whereas men struggled to access to counselling, with financial and cultural barriers identified. Whilst women seemed to value the opportunity to explore their lives more widely, the men suggested a preference for a more focused approach and valued signposted resources for work between sessions. Identified differences relating to counselling context and gender are discussed.

**Research Limitations:** As these are two small, qualitative research studies, they provide insight into the experiences of this client group but are not generalizable.

**Conclusions/Implications:** Men and women appear to have slightly different expectations and needs when accessing counselling following domestic violence. Service providers and practitioners offering counselling to both male and female victims may find it useful to consider whether their counselling provision meets the needs of both.

## Davina Sacks

### Paper

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**Exploring the countertransferential impact of my primary attachment and developmental experiences on my psychotherapeutic work with clients. From emotionally unavailable relationships to an emotionally receptive profession**

**Keywords:** Autoethnography, countertransference, attachment experiences, relational, personal enquiry.

**Aim/Purpose:** This grounded theory autoethnography is a process of subjective personal enquiry. It investigates the impact of the researcher's primary attachments and developmental experiences on her psychotherapeutic work with clients, through understanding specific countertransference interactions.

**Design/Methodology:** Data analysis was performed using grounded theory of samples from personal reflective journals, resulting in eight core themes representing the researcher's psychological issues. These themes are compared with specific client interactions which the researcher found most challenging in her psychotherapeutic work. Using an exploration of psychodynamic and Jungian theory, clear patterns emerged and were integrated as findings within a narrative analysis.

**Ethical Approval:** Ethical approval has been given by the School of Healthcare Research Ethics Committee within the researcher's university.

**Results/Findings:** The findings present a theory over why the researcher was unable to remain relational to her clients, and what it was about the researcher specifically that meant she was hooked into these instances of countertransference. This paper explores ways for the researcher to develop from these challenges and remain relational to her clients to revise and improve her professional and ethical capabilities as a practitioner.

**Research Limitations:** Since the autoethnographic nature of the project requires the findings to be specific to the researcher, this research is unable to provide empirical results. The project emphasises a responsibility of the practitioner rather than an exploration of the client's processes. The value of this project is the process of subjective personal enquiry. The transparent methodology contributes to the reliability and validity of the paper.

**Conclusions/Implications:** This study presents a struggle between the authentic self and the academic self of the researcher, reflecting the tension of the psychotherapeutic profession as a whole. The findings illustrate the requirement for the implementation of ongoing self-reflection and exploration in effort to integrate and find harmony, leading to a secure ethical basis for working psychotherapeutically with clients.

## Hope Schuermann

### Paper

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**Post police shooting trauma: breaking down intersecting traumas following the shooting of Michael Brown in Ferguson, MO**

**Keywords:** Trauma, community trauma, qualitative research.

**Aim/Purpose:** This research explored the phenomenon of the community climate in Ferguson, Missouri after the police shooting death of Michael Brown, an unarmed Black man. Following the shooting, many people suffered from intersecting traumas, including historical, racial, and community trauma; and re-traumatization from the 24-hour news cycle.

**Design/Methodology:** A phenomenological approach was used to interview participants across multiple domains, including trauma. Multicultural and Social Justice Competencies were used to build the interview protocol. Participants were 35 participants, including community leaders, protesters, educators, media, police, and pastors. Classic content analysis was used to identify themes.

**Ethical Approval:** This study was approved by the Institutional Review Board at the lead researcher's university.

**Results/Findings:** Several themes related to trauma emerged through the interviews. These included historical trauma, backed by information about how the city is designed to isolate the Black community living in Ferguson; community trauma, the collective experience of seeing Mr. Brown's body laying uncovered for hours and the fear that this event could happen to anyone in the community; racial trauma, developed through decades of the community targeted by government and police entities due to the color of their skin, and media-related trauma, due to the 24 hour news cycle. These themes will be discussed and examples from interviews given.

**Research Limitations:** As this was a quantitative study, it captures the experience of some of the community after a traumatic event. Findings cannot be generalized to other communities, even under similar circumstances. The results do, however, give counselors an idea of what types of trauma to consider when treating community members affected by a violent incident. In addition, future research can focus in on treatment intervention to use with clients dealing with intersecting types of trauma.

**Conclusions/Implications:** This paper will provide an overview of research on intersecting traumas following a violent shooting death, community unrest, and a city's reconciliation process. Researchers and clinicians will learn the importance of building relationship in communities they research, applying a multicultural lens to qualitative research, and learning to apply research findings to fill the research-practitioner gap.

# POSTERS

## Dr Asiye Busra Sirin Ayva

### Poster

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**Enhancing creative counseling skills of counseling students by adventure therapy**

**Keywords:** Creative counselling, adventure therapy, nature.

**Aim/Purpose:** Adventure therapy is a therapeutic combination of adventure activities and experiential learning principles conducted by mental health professionals (Rotko & Gillespie, 2013) conducted mostly in the natural environment and in a certain form and pattern (Gass, Gillis & Russel, 2012). The purpose of this research is to enhance creative counselling skills of counselling psychologist candidates via adventure therapy approach.

**Design/Methodology:** In this study, phenomenological design is used and qualitative data is collected to get a better understanding about the unique experiences of the participants. Qualitative data is obtained through 'creative counsellor diaries' written by the participants following each session. This data is analysed by using content analysis. Participants consisted of 15 volunteer BS students of Marmara University Guidance and Psychological Counselling Department. Experimental treatment is developed by researchers based on the principles of adventure therapy and implemented in a natural environment.

**Ethical Approval:** This program shows compliance with Turkish Psychological Counseling & Guidance Association Ethical Rules Guide and is approved by Marmara University Ethical Consideration Committee. Furthermore, participants attended the program voluntarily and they gave their written consent to use the creative counselling diaries for academic purposes.

**Results/Findings:** Results show that adventure therapy programme helps the participants improve their creative counselling skills. Based on the content analysis; awareness, cooperation, nature, creativity, multi-way thinking and analogy themes are found from experiences of participants as their gaining from the programme.

**Research Limitations:** The participants are volunteers and this may motivate them to change. On the other hand, since the participants had not started to actual counseling yet, the skills they gained about creative counseling do not cover the practical area.

**Conclusions/Implications:** Based on the findings of this research, it is recommended to develop interventions in which adventure therapy is used as a method in order to develop creative counseling or where both of these methods are used together. In future research, the change in the creative counseling skills of the participants can be evaluated more appropriately through research carried out with people who are actively consulted. For the same purpose, follow-up studies may be required for participants to evaluate the effects of adventure therapy on creative counseling levels.

## Kirsty Bilski

### Poster

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#### The ethical challenges of researching young people using HSCED Methodology

**Keywords:** HSCED, ethics, young people, sand tray, vulnerable participants.

**Aim/Purpose:** This paper explores the ethical challenges encountered during the completion of three Hermeneutic Single Case Efficacy Design studies (HSCED) (Elliot 2001; 2002), with three adolescent clients. These cases contribute to the first stage of a PhD research project exploring the efficacy of sand tray as a psychotherapeutic tool, adolescent autonomy, causality and processes of change. Through a quasi-judicial process, it will be decided whether evidence of therapeutic change is due to therapeutic process or external factors. The challenges explored by this paper include: recruiting participants, consent and assent, honouring a protected counselling experience, maintaining confidentiality and anonymity, whilst fulfilling academic expectations to publish and disseminate results.

**Design/Methodology:** There are few examples of HSCED involving young participants, thus highlighting the importance of this study and the potential learning for researchers. Each participant completed a variety of measures throughout their therapy, along with a change interview. Each therapist also provided a variety of additional information from their perspective. The rich data was collated to form a casebook evidencing the therapeutic experience of each young person. These casebooks were then submitted to a panel of experts for judicial review. This methodology aims to value the 'voice' of each young person by gaining an understanding of their experience of therapy whilst mindfully attending to their vulnerability.

**Ethical Approval:** University of South Wales.

**Results/Findings:** Initial findings indicate that all the young participants experienced therapeutic change and attributed this to their therapy, however the outcome of the panel is currently pending.

**Research Limitations:** The judicial review panel is an independent panel of three experts who will consider all the evidence presented in the casebooks and make an overall 'judgement' of the findings. This process eliminates researcher bias and gives validity to the final outcomes.

**Conclusions/Implications:** Respecting the safety of vulnerable research participants and adhering to ethical requirements is a challenging balance. Although the judicial process may not be complete prior to conference, preliminary data suggests it is possible to work together with young people in research, that they want to be involved and to make a difference to future therapeutic practice.

## Kim Boyle

### Poster

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**Experiences of parents' raising a child / young person with Down syndrome (DS) and evaluation of the impact of Foyle Down Syndrome Trust (FDST) on the quality of life of these parents**

**Keywords:** Down syndrome, parenting, experiences, psychosocial.

**Aim/Purpose:** The purpose of the study was to explore the experiences of parents' raising a child / young person with Down syndrome (DS) and to evaluate the impact of Foyle Down Syndrome Trust (FDST) on the quality of life of these parents.

**Design/Methodology:** A mixed methods approach was adopted with an online survey (n=48), and semi-structured interviews with parents (n=5) and early intervention therapists (n=2). Data from the interviews were analysed together using thematic analysis, and quantitative survey data were analysed using SPSS version 25.

**Ethical Approval:** This study was granted ethical approval from the University.

**Results/Findings:** Parents experience stress as a result of communication with medical staff when discussing prenatal screening and immediately after the birth. Raising their child or young person (YP) with DS creates both challenges and uplifts, however, peer support and a positive mental attitude do contribute significantly to the parents' sense of wellbeing. The parents view FDST as a crucial and valuable support which has impacted on their coping ability and positively enhanced their parenting experience and sense of wellbeing. Parents of YP with Down syndrome share similar concerns for the future and acknowledge the necessity of future planning.

**Research Limitations:** The small sample size for the online survey provided limited power for conducting additional statistical analyses. There is also a risk of selection bias as parents volunteered for the interviews and their views may not be representative of other parents at FDST.

**Conclusions/Implications:** Raising a child with DS is challenging but presents many uplifts. With the right support, parents can reframe and develop a positive outlook for their child's future, which in turn improves their psychosocial functioning and health and wellbeing. FDST is a unique, bespoke organization that invests in expert and compassionate staff focused on early intervention, it can offer the sector an insight into best practice which may be replicated in other parts of Ireland; which needs to be encouraged by professionals including counsellors.

## Rhianna Broadway

### Poster

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**A person-centred retrospective comparison of the effectiveness of counselling in adult clients with different presentations (using Psychlops data).**

**Keywords:** Counselling, effectiveness, person-centred, data analysis, psychlops.

**Aim/Purpose:** The aim of this research is to use historical client data collected routinely through counsellor and client completion of the Psychlops measure to identify and categorise the most common client presentations (as informed by the client). Consolidated Psychlops data for each category will be used to carry out both quantitative and qualitative data analysis. Together this data will allow us to draw conclusions about counselling effectiveness (within identified presentations) and help inform service delivery within the centre so it is better able to meet the needs of future clients.

**Design/Methodology:** Psychlops data for all adult clients that ended therapy in the two years covering 2016/2017 that have a full set of Psychlops scores (to include pre and post therapy scores) was collated (N=100). From this, data will be split into client self-identified categories (no more than 5). We will then use quantitative techniques to draw numerical data results (number of sessions, duration, client start/end Psychlops score) to look for patterns and trends in each category. Qualitative analysis via a thematic analysis of the client feedback and experience (as drawn out in the final session and part of the Psychlops measure) to look at key themes in each category. All data will be triangulated between the research team to ensure accuracy and solidity.

**Ethical Approval:** Ethical Approval was sought from the Centre Board of Trustees. Client consent for the use of Psychlops data was given at intake for counselling. All identifiable data is anonymised to the researchers.

**Results/Findings:** We are still carrying out the analysis and hope to complete by end of 2018.

**Research Limitations:** The data sample is limited to clients that saw therapy through to an agreed ending. We can therefore assume a sample bias as clients that ended unexpectedly may have scored differently altering overall findings. Norfolk is also a rural and homogenous population. Therefore, the population taking part may not be representative of the wider UK population especially in more diverse, urban localities.

**Conclusions/Implications:** As above analysis is still ongoing, but we hope to show relationships between presentations at the start of therapy and therapeutic effectiveness.

## Paula Brogan

### Poster

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**Experience, perspectives and possibilities:** exploring key stakeholder engagement in the process of placement assessment for trainee counsellors

**Keywords:** Placement, assessment, counsellor, supervisor, mentor.

**Aim/Purpose:** Typically, in the UK and Eire counselling training courses require students to undertake clinical practice with clients. Working closely with trainees, tutors, placement mentors and supervisors ensure safe practice, develop knowledge and skills and assess competence (Reeves, 2017). Yet research has focused on the supervisor's role (McNeill and Stoltenberg, 2015) and despite its key importance, the triangulated process of placement assessment involving other stakeholders, remains under-researched.

This study aims to explore the experience and perceptions of key stakeholders in the placement assessment of trainee counsellors, to inform development of a constructively aligned and fully collaborative assessment process. Key objectives are:

- To understand what key stakeholders, expect successful student counsellors to know, be and do in preparation for contemporary counselling roles?
- To understand how key stakeholders experience role and perceive areas for development in assessment of student's practice?
- To explore the nature and process of the relationship between supervisor, student, placement mentor and college as they engage in assessment processes.
- To identify factors facilitating and blocking effective placement assessment.
- To develop and pilot a placement assessment process which is relevant, robust and constructively aligned with stated learning outcomes.

**Design/Methodology:** A purposive sample of tutors (n=12), supervisors (n=50), counselling students (n=12) and placement providers (N=12), was drawn from across Northern Ireland. A sequential mixed method design in 3 stages was used: Stage 1) Nominal group technique and homogenous focus groups. Stage 2) Development of intervention and pilot. Stage 3: Implementation and evaluation using survey and mixed focus groups. Thematic analysis and descriptive statistics supported by NVivo and Qualtrics packages.

**Ethical Approval:** Obtained from Ulster Filter Ethical Committee (28 June 2018).

**Results/Findings:** Preliminary findings indicate: All key stake-holders have consistent expectations of industry requirements, but role in assessment is unclear; Several factors undermine placement assessment: interagency communication, understanding of course content and student stage of development.

**Research Limitations:** Convenient sampling strategy acknowledges bias; Public as a key stakeholder will be engaged in Stage 3.

**Conclusions/Implications:** Initial findings indicate quality and consistency of placement assessment requires clear processes, triangulated communication strategy and training for all participants. Development of intervention and pilot (Stage 2) ongoing.

## Christine Brown

### Poster

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**In clients' experience, does the way in which they relate to their anxiety impact on their ability to cope with it?**

**Keywords:** Anxiety, experience, behaviour, coping.

**Aim/Purpose:** To explore clients' experience of anxiety, how they relate to it and the impact this has on their lives. More specifically when it is harder or easier to manage anxiety and how this affects their daily lives. Our purpose is to have a better understanding, as counsellors, of how to work with this client group.

**Design/Methodology:** Four respondents, who self-identified as having experienced anxiety, were audio-recorded during semi-structured interviews. We analysed the resulting data thematically, informed by phenomenological principals (Smith et al, 2009). Respondents were offered six no-fee counselling sessions, should issues arise specific to their participation in our research. BACP guidelines for ethical research in counselling/psychotherapy (Bond and Griffin, 2004) were followed.

**Ethical Approval:** Prior to the recruitment of respondents we submitted a Research Application to our college Ethics Board and received approval to engage with our research.

**Results/Findings:** There were two overarching themes in our findings. It appears that when participants responded 'poorly' to their anxiety their stress levels increased, this in turn impacts on their ability to manage/maintain their physical and emotional wellbeing. During such periods difficulty was experienced in eating well/healthily, sleeping and socialising. Additionally, personal confidence was greatly reduced. Conversely it appeared that when respondents were more organically accepting of their anxiety they could better focus on their singular coping strategies such as, maintaining a balanced diet, following an exercise routine, and in some cases moderate intake of alcohol 'to relax'. At such times stress in relation to their anxiety was greatly reduced, confidence in/engagement with their day to day lives and socialisation increased. Participants varied greatly as to when they found it harder or easier to organically accept their anxiety however, a general sense of participants wanting 'to get on with it - get on with life' did emerge.

**Research Limitations:** Due to the limited number of respondents it might prove difficult to generalise our findings (McLeod, 2003).

**Conclusions/Implications:** It appears respondents' relationship with/attitude to their anxiety is integral to their ability to manage it and participate more fully in day to day life. It also appears that organic acceptance of anxiety can encourage sufferers to employ singularly affective coping strategies. Therefore, clients might benefit from psychotherapeutic support in accepting their anxiety and in planning personal ways to reduce the stress that anxiety can cause.

## James Costigan

### Poster

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**In clients' experiences what impact does their sexual-addiction/hypersexuality have on their ability to form intimate relationships?**

**Keywords:** Hypersexuality, pornography, masturbation, intimacy.

**Aim/Purpose:** Our aim was to explore any impact sexual-addiction has on clients' ability to form intimate relationships. Our Purpose is to better inform counsellors who may work with this client-group.

**Design/Methodology:** Three respondents self-identifying as sexual-addicts were audio-recorded during semi-structured interviews. Our resulting data was thematically analysed informed by phenomenological principals (McLeod, 2001). Our research was conducted according to BACP guidelines for ethical research in counselling/psychotherapy (Mitchels, 2018).

**Ethical Approval:** Submission was made to and approved by our college Ethics Board before respondent recruitment began. Respondents were offered six no-fee counselling sessions if issues arose due to their research participation.

**Results/Findings:** It appears respondents had struggled to identify as sexual-addicts and ultimate acceptance of their sexual-addiction was singularly expressed. Common to respondents' experiences their hypersexuality seemed related to an emotional void/need and a lack of self-worth appeared to fuel a necessity for external acceptance/validation/worth through perpetual sexual encounters/experiencing orgasm using pornography as a masturbatory aid. Furthermore, there seemed to be an underlying need to experience being desired/wanted by multiple partners regardless of endangerment/potential consequence to health. Respondents found all the above profoundly inhibited their ability to form/sustain intimate relationships with others. However, respondents expressed a desire/longing for intimate connection with a life-partner but conversely obsessively sort this through sexual encounter with multiple others and/or self; which took respondents yet further away from their desired interpersonal goals.

**Research Limitations:** Our small respondent group limits the generalisability of our findings.

**Conclusions/Implications:** Hypersexuality/sexual-addiction is not yet formally recognised as an addiction but taking our respondents experiences into consideration there appears to be profound commonalities in how the NHS describes addiction as "not having control over doing, taking or using something to the point where it could be harmful". It is now known that multiple factors cause addiction and treating such a complex illness is likewise complicated. Counsellors may be advised that psychotherapeutic intervention alone will not help an addict overcome addiction therefore, such intervention may need to be part of a multi-faceted treatment plan including educational relapse prevention, awareness and avoidance of risk-factors when work with this client-group.

## Heather Dahl

### Poster

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**Suicide myopia: seeing suicide through a multicultural lens**

**Keywords:** Suicide, cultural, assessment.

**Aim/Purpose:** The aim/purpose of this study was to attempt to understand the influence that culture has on a counselor's identification of suicide risk, as well as assessment and intervention practices. The research questions for this qualitative study were as follows: (1) How does culture influence, if at all, the clinical decision-making process when working with suicidal clients among counselors and counselor trainees? (2) What impact, if any, does the cultural match between the participant and client have on conceptualization of suicide risk? (3) How does the client's cultural identity influence, if at all, the conceptualization of a suicidal assessment and treatment suggestions?

**Design/Methodology:** Using an instrumental case study tradition with a social constructivist paradigm with a purpose to better understand a specific issue that is not necessarily specific to one case. Twelve participants who were practicing counselors were recruited and given a case vignette after informed consent was reviewed at the beginning of the session and the author conducted semi-structured interviews. The vignette consisted of a case summary and intake form that was developed based as a composite of suicidal clients that the author had worked with in her experience as an outpatient counselor. Each summary and intake form were identical apart from the manipulation of the gender and race of the client. The case summary and intake form depicted client who could be conceived as currently a high suicide risk, with both past and present risk factors. Multiple trustworthiness strategies were utilized, (e.g., triangulation of theoretical perspectives, data sources, research team members).

**Ethical Approval:** Ethical approval was obtained through University.

**Results/Findings:** Thirteen themes were identified and all but one participant specifically mentioned a cultural factor when conceptualizing the client's risk throughout the interview. Among the different themes, the findings indicated that counselors may not fully understand the impact that cultural factors can have on the suicide risk of an individual.

**Research Limitations:** Limitations include the scope the of the vignette, homogenous participants.

**Conclusions/Implications:** Counselor trainees, counselors, and counselor educators interviewed for this study seemed to be unsure of how cultural factors affect the assessment, treatment, and risk of a client.

## Leigh Gardner

### Poster

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**An exploration of the impact and effectiveness of counsellors who counsel in English as an additional language (EAL)**

**Keywords:** Embodied emotion, EAL, mother tongue, somatic, relational depth.

**Aim/Purpose:** To explore the impact and effectiveness of counsellors who counsel in English as an additional language (EAL) and to look at any differences or hindrances that counsellors may have encountered in training and practice that may have been due to working in an additional language.

**Design/Methodology:** A small scale qualitative research project with semi-structured interviews and a review of current and seminal literature. It used three counsellors from different parts of the world -Scandinavia, Greece and Asia. Two counsellors were known to the researcher and the third was a colleague of one of them working in the same young people's counselling service.

**Ethical Approval:** Ethical approval given by University of Salford Health Research ethics panel.

**Results/Findings:** There were six major themes emerging across all the interviews with one other theme featuring in one of the interviews as well as the six. What the research showed was the emotional connection to language and how deep that emotional connection goes, especially when looking at the meaning of language in terms of pre-verbal development and memories.

All interviewees were surprised at the feelings the questions brought up for them and how moving the interviews were. What was found was that language, although highly important, is not the only way of communication and that the somatic sense and bodily instinct and feeling could be portrayed without relying too heavily on the 'correct' words.

**Research Limitations:** As this was a small study it does not represent the vast amount of languages spoken across the UK. All counsellors were female so there is no male perspective. Not all counsellors had learnt English at the same time in their lives. Interviews were conducted in English and not in the first language.

**Conclusion/Implications:** Questions asked were answered in a genuine, congruent fashion by all participants and were given in a spontaneous and authentic manner.

There is far more to communication in therapy than words - there is an instinct, a somatic awareness, synchrony, a felt sense that can transcend words to create deep and meaningful therapeutic and relationships.

## Wendy J Hoskins

### Poster

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#### Internationally relevant approach to grief counselling and wellness

**Keywords:** Grief counselling, wellness.

**Aim/Purpose:** On October 1, 2017, the Las Vegas community was devastated by a mass shooting. As one of the largest tourist destinations in the world, individuals worldwide were impacted and sought mental health services to deal with issues of grief and trauma. Unfortunately, there are mass grief related incidents around the world. Self-harm and suicide with intent to harm self and/or others are on the rise. Thus, counsellors and helping professionals are called on to provide grief support both initially and long term. Unfortunately, many training programs do not provide adequate death education. This presentation will review two relevant models to include into counsellor education programs that help clients handle grief and loss issues as well as a wellness-oriented theory for long term client welfare.

**Design/Methodology:** This presentation reviews two models. First, presenters will review Martin and Doka's adaptive grieving styles and how this approach lends itself to an internationally relevant approach to grief counselling. Allowances for one's cultural and grieving styles are included in this multifaceted approach. Additionally, discussion of a wellness lifestyle and "slow counselling" (Astramovich & Hoskins) will be provided as an additional long-term approach to dealing with grief and related mental health challenges. Seven tenets of "slow counselling" approach will be reviewed.

**Ethical Approval:** Ethical approval was exempt at this time. All future studies regarding efficacy will include IRB approval at the University level.

**Research Limitations:** Presenters encourage counsellors and educators to conduct further empirical research to support efficacy on both models presented.

**Conclusions/Implications:** A review of literature substantiates increased grief and trauma related counselling issues, and a lack of death education in counselling programs. Research also suggests the need for wellness as a long-term client goal. By improving counsellor education training, clinicians are better prepared to help clients slow down, attend to grief and trauma in individualized ways, and have a greater chance for long term wellbeing.

## Susan Hunter

### Poster

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**Teachers have a role in supporting the psychological and emotional health among pupils**

**Keywords:** Psychological and emotional health, teachers, pupils, schools.

**Aim/Purpose:** Although counselling is offered in or through schools, the mental health issues among pupils are increasing. Teachers are in a unique position as they are in contact with young people within schools. The aim of this study was to investigate the role of school teachers in psychologically and emotionally supporting pupils (11-18 years).

**Design/Methodology:** The research design was an online survey (mainly quantitative), which the questionnaire was designed from our previous research interviewing teachers (n=19). Following a pilot, principals in all secondary and grammar schools throughout Northern Ireland were invited to ask their teachers to participate in this survey. Data were analysed using SPSS version 25 by frequencies, Mann Whitney and Pearson correlations.

**Ethical Approval:** This study obtained ethical approval from the Ulster University Research Ethics Committee.

**Results/Findings:** In total, 402 teachers completed this online survey, of which 74% were female and 26% were male, aged between 20-60+ years. Majority of teachers (98%) reported that they have a role in psychologically and emotionally supporting pupils but stated they are not adequately trained (86%). They reported that this role should consist of: awareness of psychological and emotional issues (98%), recognise signs and symptoms of pupils' psychological and emotional issues (97%), identify abnormal/uncharacteristic behaviour (97%), provide information on available sources of support (96%), and support pupils in accessing services (89%). Schools access counselling services (92%), which pupils engage with (79%) and have a positive impact (79%), however these services do not meet the current demand (60%). There were numerous significant differences, especially among the Education Boards and years of experience of the teachers ( $P < 0.05$ ).

**Research Limitations:** Teachers self-select to participate in this survey and thus those with an interest in supporting pupils participated.

**Conclusions/Implications:** This research clearly found that teachers have a role in psychologically and emotionally supporting pupils. This role is focused on identifying issues, communicating and providing resources on psychological and emotional health among pupils. However, teachers require training in psychologically and emotionally supporting pupils. There is potential for teachers and counsellors to collaborate further to support each other in order to support their pupils.

## Billy Lansdell

### Poster

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**How do clients view the long-term impact of school counselling?**

**Keywords:** School counselling, long-term outcomes, client perspective, retrospective.

**Aim/Purpose:** To investigate the long-term outcomes of school counselling from the perspective of the client.

**Design/Methodology:** 3 participants aged 17 and above were identified by staff in Place2Be schools. Participants did not know the researcher and were from different schools. Semi-structured interviews explored the impact of participant experiences of school counselling. A thematic analysis was used to analyse the transcripts and the small sample size allowed in-depth exploration of the findings.

**Ethical Approval:** Ethical approval was given by both the university and partner institution which co-delivered the MA this research was submitted for.

**Results/Findings:** Long-term characterological changes were reported by all three participants. These were grouped under the themes 'emotional regulation' and 'self-awareness'. Developing these capacities was seen to have a positive impact on relationships. Participants also gained skills in identifying personal goals and engaging in long-term projects in personal, work and educational settings. The therapeutic interventions of listening, consistency, and client expression were identified as major factors in achieving these changes. Participants also valued therapist facilitation and guidance as this enabled new perspectives and organisation of experience. Participants valued the referral pathways of a school-based counselling service. The ongoing presence of the therapist in school enabled supportive management of therapeutic endings.

**Research Limitations:** Due to the small number of participants the findings of this study cannot be applied beyond the context and participants which produced them.

The sample cannot be considered representative as participants are more likely to have had positive experiences of school counselling.

The results have been interpreted and presented by a school counsellor.

**Conclusions/Implications:** The positive impact of school counselling can continue beyond the end of the intervention and into adult life. Counsellors need to rigorously attend to person centred fundamentals as well as carefully integrating therapist led facilitation and guidance into their practice. The value of a school-based practice goes beyond the counselling sessions. Participants benefitted from the unique referral pathway a school-based service can offer, and the therapist remaining in school after a therapeutic ending.

## Anne Moorhead

### Poster

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**Potential of mental health mobile applications to support face-to-face counselling**

**Keywords:** Maternal mental health, mobile application, counselling.

**Aim/Purpose:** Mothers with postnatal depression attend counselling and also increasingly access online resources for emotional support. This ongoing research programme is to inform, enhance and evaluate the effectiveness of the Moment Health App in order to improve maternal mental health among mothers and their families, and to make maternal mental health mainstream.

**Design/Methodology:** This research is technology development and testing, as this app was designed and developed to screen for prenatal and postnatal depression and associated anxieties and includes additional features such as a helpful guide to practical and accessible coping strategies. The app includes easy-to-use tools including an early intervention symptoms checker, a mood tracker, and a location tool so mother and their families they can access local resources. It consists of four key features: 1. tracker, 2. checker, 3. locater and, 4. community.

**Ethical Approval:** This research programme consists of a number of small projects, and receives approval from Communication Filter (Risk and Ethics) Committee, at the University.

**Results/Findings:** The app has been designed and launched in October 2017, and the premier version in summer 2018. To date there are 6000 users of Moment Health App and growing, with approximately 1000 active users each day. This has created a community support group for mothers, especially the Facebook group. Feedback from users' testimonies of using the Moment Health App, illustrating the positive impact on health and wellbeing are:

"....my own personal checker system.... I now prioritise my mental health and ensure I dedicate a little time every day to check in with myself. (Mother)

"This is the companion you need to help keep your mental health in check from the start of pregnancy all the way into motherhood". (Mother)

**Conclusions/Implications:** This application is fulfilling the gap in the market for mothers to monitor with the aim to improve their mental well-being, contributing to make maternal mental health mainstream. Further research is required to explore the influence of this app on face-to-face counselling. Counsellors could consider the possibility and potential of mental health mobile applications such as Moment Health for clients to support face-to-face counselling.

## Benjamin Nuss

### Poster

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**Capturing a male-focused narrative of mental health and its implications on the counselling/psychotherapy profession**

**Keywords:** Male, narrative, gender-balance, policy.

**Aim/Purpose:** This study aims to explore whether, if men perceive the counselling and psychotherapy professions as being female-dominated, does this lead to males being less likely to seek out and engage in counselling and psychotherapy?

**Design/Methodology:** This research is situated within a qualitative paradigm using narrative inquiry as a methodology. Narrative research seeks to understand and represent experience through stories. By using 3 focus groups consisting of specific age ranges, this project will build an overall narrative from each age group. As this project is focused on capturing a male narrative of mental health, it is imperative to involve boys and men across the age spectrum and capture their perspective across key age milestones. As boys and men from three age groups; 16-18, 35-45, 60+, tell their stories about their perceptions of counselling and psychotherapy, narratives are captured. Narrative inquiry is well placed to provide excellent data because of its ability to elicit the voice of the participants. Therefore, the voice of the male participant and his story of engaging in, or avoiding psychological help, is significant and deserves to be heard.

**Ethical Approval:** This research was approved by Research Ethics Committee, University of Chester.

**Results/Findings:** The research is ongoing, and a final analysis is yet to be undertaken. However, the intention is for dominant narratives to be captured in a web-based resource, including video presentations representing the primary themes, together with good practice recommendations for talking therapies, developed by the boys and men themselves.

**Research Limitations:** While the research aims to be inclusive in terms of cultural difference, it is positioned within a particular gendered frame and, as such, may not capture alternative gendered perspectives of counselling and psychotherapy. Additionally, as a qualitative study, the focus will be on small group experiences and may not be transferable to wider audiences.

**Conclusions/Implications:** The final video resource, which will represent the findings of the study, will be shared with key policy makers and leaders of therapy professional bodies using a Delphi approach to determine the potential for policy and practice development.

## Kanulia Nwandu

### Poster

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**In clients' experience what impact did their selective mutism or periods of mutism in childhood have on their growth into adulthood and their adult experience**

**Keywords:** Selective mutism, adulthood, childhood, communication.

**Aim/Purpose:** To explore the impact selective mutism/periods of mutism during childhood had on clients' development and their adult experience/s. Our purpose is to potentially inform counsellors how to effectively support this client-group.

**Design/Methodology:** Three respondents self-identifying as having experienced periods of mutism in childhood were audio recorded during a semi structured interview. Our data was thematically analysed informed by the principles of phenomenology (Smith et al, 2009). We followed the BACP guidelines for research in counselling and psychotherapy (Bond, 2004).

**Ethical Approval:** Submission was made to and approved by our college Ethics Board before recruiting respondents; who were offered six no-fee counselling sessions should issues arise due to their research participation.

**Results/Findings:** Findings indicate that in certain group configurations (e.g. domineering family dynamics/peer-group bullying) respondents felt so disempowered their only safety/defence lay in mutism. Subsequently respondents struggled educationally as childhood mutism negatively affected their higher educational aims and vocational choices as it became generally difficult/stressful to speak in groups. It appears that as adults, if respondents felt any sense of disempowerment, mutism 'kicked-in'. Findings also indicate that as adults, respondents were highly cautious in selecting their social environment(s) and when or who they verbally communicated with. In adulthood some respondents sought psychotherapeutic intervention because of their communication difficulties and the negative impact this had on their lives. Counselling and psychotherapy appeared to help respondents connect to their early sense of disempowerment and why they chose to become mute. This seemed to assist respondents' recognition of their need to feel safe, aim for greater personal achievement/s and have communication choice and control.

**Research Limitations:** Due to the limited number of respondents it might prove difficult to generalise our findings (McLeod, 2003). Our data is subjective, and our qualitative findings may not be transferable because systematic comparison may be unachievable (Braun and Clarke, 2013).

**Conclusions/Implications:** It appears that psychotherapeutic/counselling intervention is helpful to this client-group. It appears most effective if counsellors assist clients in identifying early feelings of disempowerment and in identifying why they became mute in certain childhood circumstances/configurations. Such intrapersonal-connection appeared to lead our client respondents to aiming for singular personal achievement and a greater sense of control/safety in verbally communicating.

## Michelle Oldale

### Poster

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### Weight-stigma and relational psychotherapy

**Keywords:** Weight-Stigma, relational psychotherapy, clients of size, phenomenological, size-affirmative practice.

**Aim/Purpose:** This PhD study explores experiences of clients of size in relational psychotherapy. Minimal attention is paid to weight stigma (the 'social devaluation and denigration of people perceived to carry excess weight' (Tomiyama, 2014)) in the psychotherapeutic literature. Size is not a protected factor in the 2010 Equality Act. Davis-Coelho et al (2000) discuss quantitative evidence that implicit weight bias impacts negatively on perceptions of client and therapeutic process. Moller (2014) highlights the importance of a critical stance, challenging key assumptions such as responsibility (for size) and taken for granted links between size and ill health. These, left unchecked, have the potential to lead to stigmatising responses to clients of size.

**Design/Methodology:** An online (Qualtrics) questionnaire gained 75 responses including 35 detailed qualitative responses from clients of size in the UK, US, Australia and Canada. Questions related to participants' own and therapist response to size, and usefulness/otherwise of interventions. This was supplemented with detail such as gender, sexuality, social class to allow for exploration of the impact of intersectional factors. (Crenshaw, 1989). Participants responded to questionnaire links on social media platforms. Data was analysed using Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) (Smith, Flowers and Larkin, 2009). Ethical approval was granted by the Open University Human Ethics Committee (HREC/2956/Oldale).

**Results/Findings:** Themes included client negative self-response and heightened sense of self-responsibility, self-restriction of material discussed in relation to anticipated therapist responses/privilege, desire/usefulness of processing weight stigma experienced in society.

**Research Limitations:** The sample of detailed responses was limited in size given the overall response rate. There were limited responses from people of colour and consideration will be given to the development of a more representative sample for stage 2.

**Conclusions/Implications:** The study is ongoing. Findings from this stage will allow refined questions to be devised to allow for gathering of detailed qualitative data via interviews. It is hoped the study overall will support the production of best practice guidelines for therapists working with clients of size.

*References available on request.*

## Nicholas Torry

### Poster

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**Early intervention in primary schools: building children's self-awareness and emotional wellbeing**

**Keywords:** Self-referral, counselling, school, early intervention.

**Aim/Purpose:** To assess how a self-referral counselling service, located on the primary school site, helps schools build children's emotional wellbeing and awareness.

**Design/Methodology:** The research used a mixed methods approach, combining service delivery information from 261 schools in 2016/17 academic year, a thematic analysis of semi-structured interviews with seven Headteachers, and feedback questionnaires with service users.

**Ethical Approval:** Children's parents/carers are fully informed about the service offered in the school and that anonymised data is used for monitoring and analysis. Parents/carers can withhold permission for children to use the service if they wish. The service operates within and adheres to schools' Safeguarding policies. Interview participants gave informed consent.

**Results/Findings:** On average, around 33% of the school population use the service at some point within an academic year. Descriptive analysis of the issues discussed by 37,338 children shows that children bring a range of issues, from everyday friendship issues to personal mental health and family problems. In a survey, the majority said they now knew there was someone they could turn to if they needed to. Headteachers of long-running projects reported that the service helped to destigmatise talking about emotions and encouraged children to seek help. The contribution of this to the school's ethos was recognised in Ofsted assessments of pastoral care.

**Research Limitations:** Currently, there is no routine measure of outcomes for this service and no counter-factual, therefore the effects of the service are not measured in a quantifiable way. However, the mixed-methods data collected can be considered a reliable and valid way to look at how the service is used and give insight into the potential benefits to help explore its effect on emotional wellbeing in the future.

**Conclusions/Implications:** The service is used widely within schools. Children self-refer for a broad range of reasons and both pupils and school staff report the benefits of using the service. This implies that if a school wishes to promote emotional wellbeing and help-seeking in children, then having a self-referral service as part of the universal mental health provision will be utilised, can have positive social and emotional effects and help build a mentally healthy school culture.

## Clare Whitworth

### Poster

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**Male victims of domestic abuse. A hidden problem? How are male victims of domestic abuse presented in academic research?**

**Keywords:** Male victim, domestic abuse, violence.

**Aim/Purpose:** The aim of this MA research project was to review academic literature about male domestic abuse victims. Specifically, the scope and global reach of the issue and forms of abuse recorded.

**Design/Methodology:** A narrative synthesis was conducted with papers from five databases. Broad searches returned 517 papers, and from these, eligibility was established through clear inclusion/exclusion criteria. At abstract stage papers were included if:

- Principally about adult male domestic abuse victims.
- Abuse was between intimate partners.

Papers were excluded if:

- Focus was homicide.
- Not a research paper (e.g. book reviews, letters).
- A scenario exploration.

This left 153 papers, which were reduced further to 29 to allow a manageable project. Full breakdown of these decisions can be seen on the poster. Papers were quality assessed using the CASP tool.

**Ethical Approval:** Ethical approval was not required.

**Results/Findings:** The synthesis of the data produced several findings. Bi-directional abuse was frequently recorded, and mental and physical impacts were seen to be similar to those experienced by women. Services such as the courts and police played a role, and were also used as an additional form of abuse by female partners (legal-administrative abuse). Little appeared in professional journals, and a greater link between academic literature and dissemination through sources such as these would be beneficial for recognition of the issue.

**Research Limitations:** Many papers discussed here have small sample sizes. The quality of the conclusions that can be drawn about male victimisation would be improved if more research could be included with larger sample sizes, with studies replicated to see if similar findings emerged. There is also a dearth of UK studies, and more needs to be learnt about the UK male experience.

**Conclusions/Implications:** This project found several themes forming a jigsaw around the issue of male victims, including 'Usefulness of services', 'Legal and administrative abuse', 'Bi-directional abuse', 'Mental and physical health impacts', and 'Role of stigma'. This dissertation was a first step toward bringing associated literature together, highlighting the scope and range of domestic abuse towards men, and raising awareness of the issue as it may be brought into the room by our therapy clients.

## Mia Zielinska

### Poster

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#### **The talking booth: An invitation to get personal in public**

**Keywords:** Casual chat, mental health, resource awareness, non-professional, interpersonal.

**Aim/Purpose:** Do people find brief, casual chat helpful?

**Design/Methodology:** The project was set up in the University's main library in a public space. Participants were approached by project facilitators who are non-qualified counselling students. Participants were invited to engage in the project for a 15-minute casual chat followed by a questionnaire.

**Ethical Approval:** University of Edinburgh, School of Health and Social Sciences.

**Results/Findings:** 92% of participants felt that brief, casual chat is beneficial to their sense of well-being; over half of the participants found casual talking 'very helpful'; 1 participant found talking with us not helpful at all. No matter how participants felt about casual chat for themselves, all would recommend it for others; 86% of participants found casually talking helpful to them on the day they participated.

**Research Limitations:** Co-facilitators reported experiencing personal biases during recruitment demonstrated in predominantly male participants. Since the project took place on University grounds, the base population was heavily skewed to under 25 years of age. Participants were mostly approached and asked to volunteer once they understood what they were agreeing to participate in, so results may be skewed towards those who were positively predisposed to casual chat. Survey questions did not define 'casual chat' or 'mental health'.

**Conclusions/Implications:** The majority of those who engage in brief, casual chat find it helpful. All participants, including those who don't find it helpful for themselves, would recommend casual chat for others. The project itself bears out that those who engage do benefit and that non-professional, brief, casual chat is a service that, if offered, is likely to improve mental health.