



Megaphone Online

July 2024

the voice of Health Sciences' staff and students

Students win Love York awards

Congratulations to two of our second year nursing students who successfully won awards at the recent Love York awards.

The awards are run by the University of York Students' Union and shine a spotlight on the students that have made a huge contribution to the university experience.

May Local, (pictured left on the photo on the right) was nominated in two categories but won the award for Outstanding Contribution to Academic Experience, an award that recognises those individuals who have strived to make improvements to their course or the general academic experience of students studying at York.



Stevie Scott (pictured left) won Fundraiser of the Year, an award which recognises strong student-led campaigns and fundraising undertaken by groups or individuals on campus.

Professor Kate Flemming, Head of Department said: "Congratulations to both May and Stevie on winning these awards. To be nominated for an award is an achievement in itself but to win is truly amazing. Well done."

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End of Life Cafe

Beth Hardy, Senior Lecturer in Nursing, writes: " 1st year student nurses took part in a 'End of life Care cafe' with specialist palliative care nurses from York and Scarborough NHS Foundation Trust."

"Students explored what palliative care is, the role of nurses in supporting patients and families who live with advanced life limiting illnesses and those at the end of life, and reflected on some of the challenges of providing this care."

"Thanks to specialist nurses Kat Chater, Jemma Clancy, Becky Burbridge and department staff Kate Rudd and Sarah O'Reilly for co-facilitating these sessions."



MNursing students celebrate their last day

Our September 20 MNurs students recently got together with staff to celebrate their last taught session in Uni.



NurSoc committee

Meet your NurSoc committee.



From left to right: Anna Beckett (Treasurer), Abigail Booth (Publicity Officer), May Local (Secretary), Becky Nisbet (President) & Ciara Ellis (Events Officer).

NurSoc can be contacted at nursoc@yusu.org or on Instagram at [@nursoc_york](https://www.instagram.com/nursoc_york).

PG students take part in Pint of Science festival

Postgrad students recently took part in the Pint of Science festival. Pint of Science aims to provide a space for researchers and members of the public alike to come together, be curious, and chat about research in a relaxed environment.

PhD student Sarah Veale writes: "Thanks to YUSU's generous funding we were able to give free tickets away to some students, many of whom were from Health Sciences. It was a really fantastic night and the feedback from the audiences was super and we are keen to do more future events like this."

"Lots of new connections were made and new 'buddy systems' made from across different subjects, lots of students walked away with a pocket full of new emails addresses and book recommendations!"



Student News

PhD student forms network group

PhD student Zainab Kidwai recently created The Borderless Alliance of Early Career Researchers in Head and Neck Cancer (BALLANCE) network. The network was launched in May and along with Zainab was created with colleagues from the University of Dundee (Dr Niall McGoldrick) and Glasgow (Dr Grant Greany), who secured a grant from the Scottish charity Let's Talk About Mouth Cancer.

With support from NHS Education for Scotland, the network aims to foster collaboration, knowledge-sharing, and skill development among early career researchers working on head and neck cancer worldwide.

BALLANCE has an international advisory panel comprising renowned experts in the field, including Professor David Conway, Professor Jan Clarkson, and Professor Ravi Mehrotra, who will guide and support the network's initiatives.

The official launch webinar was a resounding success, attracting attendees from various institutions across the globe. The event commenced with a comprehensive overview of the network's objectives and the benefits it offers to early-career researchers in head and neck cancer research.

The keynote presentation was delivered by Professor Conway, who explored cutting-edge developments, challenges, and opportunities in the field, captivating the audience and stimulating thought-provoking discussions.

The launch event generated significant interest, with numerous applications from early career researchers eager to join the BALLANCE network pouring in shortly after. Early career researchers interested in joining this global initiative can sign up at the [BALLANCE website](#).

Joining BALLANCE will provide them with invaluable opportunities for professional growth and development. Through the network's collaborative platform, they will gain access to mentorship from experienced researchers, participate in skill-building workshops, and establish connections with peers worldwide.

Additionally, BALLANCE will facilitate the sharing of research findings, methodologies, and best practices, enabling early career researchers to stay up-to-date with the latest advancements in the field and enhance their expertise.

Teaching News

Midwifery lecturer presents at CPD event

Dr Catriona Jones, Lecturer in Midwifery writes: "I am a member of the LGBTQ+ network for nursing and midwifery academics. This group has been formed out of some Burdett for Nursing Trust funding which was awarded to researchers and academics at Queen's University Belfast."

"In May I presented at a CPD event hosted by the LGBTQ+ Health network for nursing and midwifery academics. I was talking about asexual self identity and the findings from my PhD."

You can listen to Catriona's presentation on [YouTube](#).

Teaching News

New Clinical Pocket Reference launched

Senior Lecturer in Mental Health Nursing Rose Havelock has recently had a new publication launched.

The Clinical Pocket Reference resource 'Fundamentals of Acute Mental Health Nursing' provides a point-of-care tool to support evidence-based, ethical nursing practice.

It includes chapters on mental health law, common conditions, how nurses can help, commonly used medications, physical health and a final chapter on sustaining professional practice. A QR code in the resource links to an extensive further reading list.

Rose said “The Clinical Pocket Reference focuses primarily on the fundamentals of mental health nursing care and provides a reference resource to orientate ethical and effective mental health nursing practice in the acute setting. This resource aims to consider how we as nurses can respond to people’s lived experiences when in acute inpatient settings, providing compassionate and effective care”.

The book is aimed at both student and registered mental health nurses and nursing associates. It is also a useful resource for community nurses and paramedics and is a useful resource for lecturers, clinical educators, and preceptors.

For more information visit the [Clinical Pocket Reference website](#).



York Students' Union Excellence Awards

Congratulations to Dr Sue Faulds, who won the "Supporting Student Voice Activities and Partnerships" award at the recent [YUSU Excellence Awards](#). Each year, University of York Students' Union run Excellence Awards that give students the opportunity to nominate staff members who have had a positive impact on them in the previous 12 months.

The Department is really well represented across the categories and congratulations go to the following staff who were also nominated:

- Dr Mike Parker - Most Inspiring
- Dr Catriona Jones - Teacher of the Year
- Laura Scott-Weatherby - Supervisor of the Year
- Jackie Skinner - Unsung Hero

Jackie also won "Highly Commended" in her category.

Report reveals barriers to providing nutritious food in early years childcare settings

A new report has revealed the £25 billion burden placed on stretched services for children in care in the NoSome nurseries are struggling to source healthy local food due to lack of funding and a workforce crisis, with some resorting to going to the local corner shop to buy lunches for children, according to the authors of a new report.

The authors of the report are calling for more resources and support for nurseries and childminders so they can provide nutritious and locally produced food.

The report, by researchers at the University of York, food policy consultancy Bremner and Co and the charity The Food Foundation, looked at the provision of food in 16 early years childcare settings across Yorkshire.

Based on interviews with childcare workers and public authority employees, the findings paint a mixed picture, with many settings struggling to procure local nutritious food and employ staff to prepare it. One childcare setting reported relying on food donations from a charity to be able to provide healthy meals.

The settings provided fruit and vegetables, but in several there was also evidence of sugary desserts, chocolates and heavy puddings. For example, one setting offered sugary mousse, chocolate cupcakes and rocky roads as desserts for three days across a two-week cycle.

The researchers found that larger settings affiliated with schools tended to be able to provide healthier meals and be more aligned with School Food Standards.

The report also highlights that Yorkshire has the second highest number of children under 16 living in absolute poverty (21.5%), yet only 5% of early years Yorkshire children were registered as eligible for free school meals (FSM) in childcare settings, compared with a national figure of 8%.

Participants interviewed for the report outlined how many settings feed children who are in obvious need, despite not falling within the eligibility criteria. One headteacher at a state-maintained nursery said: "For our FSM children, we'll make a jacket potato or a healthy sandwich. And then with those families who are struggling, we will make the food for them".

Children aged four years-old and under can get up to 90% of their total daily calories from their childcare setting and tooth decay and obesity rates show a pressing need to address diets in preschool aged children, the researchers say.

In England, 21% of children are living with obesity by the time they start school, and in Yorkshire, this rises to 23%. Yorkshire also has the second highest incidence of dental caries in the UK and there is a considerable increase in tooth decay between three and five years of age. In Sheffield, dental caries rise from 0.9% at age three years to 41% at age five years.

The researchers say there is an urgent need for increased investment and to review the nutrition guidance in early years settings.

Research News

Co-author of the report, Professor Maria Bryant from the FixOurFood research group and the Hull York Medical School and Department of Health Sciences at the University of York, said: “Poor diets in preschoolers can contribute to obesity, which affects one in five children before school age, and dental issues, which are the leading cause of hospitalisation for children under five.

“Early years childcare offers a powerful opportunity to instil healthy eating habits and develop a life-long positive relationship with food as a shared social experience. Our report calls for a united cross-party action to provide better support and resources for early years childcare and align food standards with those in schools, and for more research and resources to ensure proper nutrition at this critical age for children’s growth and development.”

Hannah Brinsden, Head of Policy at The Food Foundation said: “Good nutrition in the early years of life is essential for the healthy development and long-term well-being of our children. It is imperative that all political parties commit to taking strong action to ensure our youngest children have access to nutritious foods including through supporting childcare settings to provide healthy food and through regulating the high volume of salt and sugar currently found in foods marketed for babies and toddlers”

Dayna Brackley, Partner, Bremner & Co added: “The early years sector is already grappling with a workforce and funding crisis, facing significant challenges in providing adequate nutrition to children under five. We need more political focus on early years nutrition, especially in light of childcare reform and a reported 33% rise in the number of hours a 2 year old will spend in childcare by 2028.

“Early years settings provide an ideal environment for encouraging healthy eating habits in young children. We should be supporting the sector to achieve this. This research highlights many of the barriers - funding, training, procurement and a lack of monitoring.”

Collaborative health research to help aid men's sexual health

A Professor to lead team of researchers that will lead to better sexual health support for men who live with Inflammatory Bowel Disease.

Professor Paul Galdas, one of the world's leading experts in the field of men's health, from the Department of Health Sciences is leading a team of researchers who will be undertaking research that will lead to better sexual health support for men who live with Inflammatory Bowel Disease (IBD).

IBD is a long-term digestive condition that is often diagnosed between the ages of 15 and 30 years. One in 123 people in the UK have the condition, which causes painful ulcers in the bowels that can lead to symptoms such as bloody diarrhoea, abdominal pain, incontinence, and fatigue.

IBD can negatively affect sexual health and impact on patients' relationships and quality of life but there is little information or support currently available for men, especially those who identify as bisexual or gay.

Paul will be co-leading the study with Sara Ma, a nursing lecturer at York St John University, who were successful in securing the grant from the National Institute for Health and Care Research (NIHR) to undertake this research.

The project involves various stakeholders from across the city of York. Paul will work with nurses from Yorkshire and Scarborough Teaching Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust and York St John University.

Professor Galdas said: "We know that many men who live with a long-term condition have specific needs and preferences when it comes to the delivery of healthcare and support services. Our study will provide nurses with an improved understanding of the sexual health needs of men with IBD that has great potential for improving the quality of life of men and their partners."



Paul is pictured with Cate Laven (left), Lead Research Nurse at York and Scarborough Teaching Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust and Sara Ma (middle), Lecturer in Nursing at York St John

New drive to put parents and carers at heart of child poverty debate in Scotland

The University of York and Child Poverty Action Group (CPAG) are launching a drive to engage parents and carers from across Scotland to share their everyday experiences of living on a low income.

Academics, campaigners and existing participants will support the hard-up parents to identify and push for the policy changes needed to protect their children from poverty. Parents will have the opportunity to share their everyday experiences in online diaries, take part in discussion groups and speak directly to policy makers and the media.

Funded by the Robertson Trust, the Changing Realities project builds on a track record of working with parents and carers across the UK. The collaboration will now put the voices of families experiencing poverty at the heart of public debate and political decision-making in Scotland.

The call for more parents and carers in Scotland to get involved comes as existing participants from across the UK launch their new 'Hope starts here' campaign. The campaign sets out the ways in which children are being failed by the inadequacy of our social security system and wider welfare state, and sets out a clear agenda for change. Parents have written blogs, shared diary entries, and created visual images to make the case why we need to place children at the centre of building a better, more hopeful future, for us all.

Dr Maddy Power from the Department said: "We are delighted to be able to work with more parents and carers in Scotland to ensure their experiences and ideas can inform policy development at Westminster and Holyrood.

"Supported by artists and creatives and experienced campaigners we can share experiences of life on a low income in ways that will engage the public, media and government and drive much-needed change."

Natalie, an existing Changing Realities participant based in Scotland, said: "Being part of Changing Realities for the last few years has given me something to look forward to which is just for me. Being a single parent I don't have that much free time and I look forward to having the monthly catch up's with the other parents, and the team too.

"We share what is going on in our lives in the discussion's and what we feel would make our lives a little easier - what changes are needed. It has massively helped with my anxiety having people who don't know me not judging what I am saying. I would love to see other parents from Scotland get involved, and be part of making change happen."

According to John Dickie, Director the Child Poverty Action Group (CPAG) in Scotland, the new initiative could not be timelier. He said: "While a shocking one in four children are still locked in poverty the new First Minister has clearly said that his number one priority is to eradicate child poverty.

"At the same time a looming Westminster election is already leading to chilling proposals for UK welfare reform utterly at odds with the actual experiences of low-income families trying to make ends meet. There could not be a more critical moment to put more of the voices of those at the sharp end at the heart of the debate about what's needed to end child poverty."

The project will work with participating parents and carers to develop a UK General Election Manifesto as well to co-produce briefings and events aimed at Holyrood politicians and policy makers in the run up to the 2026 Holyrood elections.

UK free school meal allowances not enough to provide healthy lunches

Students from lower-income backgrounds are struggling to buy healthy school lunches with free school meal allowances, a new study by the University of York has found.

For the study, researchers trained 42 pupils aged between 11 and 15 from seven UK schools as “citizen scientists”.

The young citizen scientists were asked to collect information from their own schools over a week, detailing what food was available, what lunch they bought and whether they felt full for the rest of the school day. They were given a lunch budget of between £2.15 and £2.70 per day, depending on the free school meal (FSM) allowance at their school.

The findings of the study, presented at the European Congress of Obesity (ECO), reveal that the allowance often limited pupil’s choices to meal deals, with many, often healthier, non-meal-deal items financially out of reach.

The pupils rarely purchased fresh fruit, salad and vegetables and in four of the schools, no fruit was bought during the study.

The research also found that short lunch breaks led to the citizen scientists feeling under pressure to “grab and go”, making decisions that may not have been the healthiest option.

The citizen scientists highlighted the small portion sizes of meals, and, because in most schools they were not able to access their school meal allowance before lunch, how they were often hungry during the morning break.

Dr Sundus Mahdi from the Department said: “We found that non-meal-deal items were generally healthier, but more expensive. This is very relevant in terms of what we are seeing now with the cost of living and inflation that healthier food just tends to be more expensive.

“Unfortunately, the portion sizes given to some pupils were not enough to sustain them during the school day. There was actually one participant that said that during the week they actually brought a packed lunch with them in addition to their free school meal allowance, because it just wasn’t filling them up.”

In England, around 1.9 million children are eligible for free school meals. To be eligible, a household must earn less than £7,400 after tax and before benefits.

FSM allowance needs to be increased to allow students to buy more filling meals that sustain them through the school day, the researchers say. They are also calling for an amendment to the school food standard so that schools have to include two portions of vegetables with every meal.

Professor of Public Health Nutrition in the department of Health Sciences and chief investigator on the study, Maria Bryant, said: “We know that 30% of daily food intake happens at school, so it’s a substantial part of young people’s diet.

“Unfortunately, poor meal choice is often a result of a wider system failure, where there is a lack of funding in schools and catering that is usually constrained by contracts, profit margins and procurement processes.”

More than a quarter of people with Covid infection develop Long Covid

More than a quarter of people with Covid infection develop Long Covid, new research reveals. The study also reveals that one in four people with Long Covid will experience brain fog and one in three to four will develop anxiety or depression.

However, the findings of the study, published in the journal *General Hospital Psychiatry*, suggest that full Covid vaccination makes sufferers four times less likely to have brain fog – a term used to describe symptoms including poor concentration, feeling confused and cognitive impairment.

With Long COVID a key factor in the record 2.8 million people off work in the UK due to long-term sickness, the researchers are calling for yearly COVID-19 vaccinations to be rolled out and should include all working-age people.

The study reviewed 17 studies from around the world involving more than 40,000 Long COVID patients. It was carried out in collaboration with the STIMULATE-ICP project, which is a £6.8 million NIHR-funded national research project led by University College London.

Lead author, Professor Christina van der Feltz-Cornelis, Chair of Psychiatry and Epidemiology at the Department of Health Sciences and at the University of York and Hull Medical School (HYMS), said: "I was struck by the figures that emerged from our study because they make it clear just how many people around the world are being affected by this debilitating condition. The discovery of a significant reduction in the risk of brain fog after Covid vaccination is particularly important in this context and provides support for continuation and extension of vaccination programmes, particularly to working-age people."

"There is a societal tendency in the UK to think Covid is over, but Long Covid is having a profound and lasting effect on individuals and society as a whole, with many people leaving the workplace due to the condition. This is placing a heavy burden on the economy."

Long Covid is a chronic condition following a Covid infection which affects an estimated 1.9 million people in the UK. Symptoms can include breathlessness, heart palpitations, joint pain and concentration problems.

The findings of the research also indicate that the mental health symptoms and brain fog experienced by people with Long Covid can actually get worse for many people over time. 24 months after acute infections, people were three to four times more likely to develop brain fog compared to during the peak of their Covid infection. The risk of developing depression or anxiety rose approximately 1.5 times in the same timeframe.

Professor van der Feltz - Cornelis added: "This finding indicating that the condition often gets worse over time is concerning. It could be due to a decline in people's mental health as living with Long Covid and the uncertainty that comes with the condition takes its toll. However, some early evidence suggests that living with Long Covid affects nerve cells in the brain so that might play a role as well.

"With so many people suffering from the severe effects of this condition, our study clearly points to the need for greater support, in addition to sustained vaccination programmes. We are very lucky to be one of the only countries to have dedicated Long Covid centres, but we need more joined-up treatment of the mental and physical symptoms of the condition and greater resources for effective treatments, rehabilitation and occupational therapy so that people are able to recover and avoid losing their careers and livelihoods."

Staff News

Hello

We wish a very warm welcome to new members of staff who have joined the department recently, these include: Natalie Hopkins, Jessica Kawalek and Grace Greenwood.

Goodbye

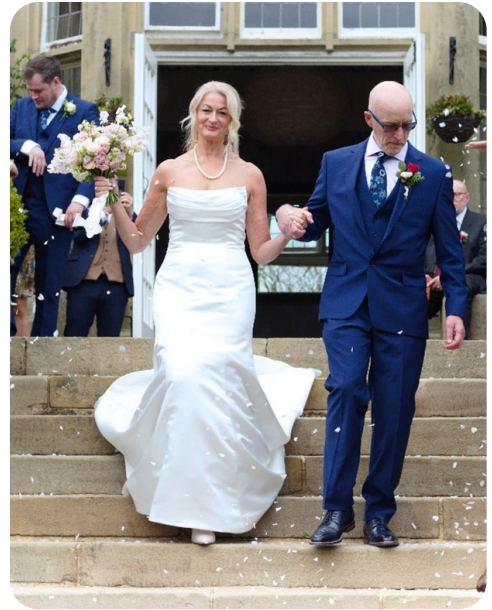
We also wish a very fond farewell to those who have left the department, including: Jobie Kirkwood, Rachel Mann, Farzana Akhtar, Gillian Parkinson, Georgia Irving, Sally Brabyn, Rebecca Beggan and Keith Richmond.

Congratulations

Congratulations to Dr Melissa Owens who recently got married. We're glad you enjoyed your day Melissa.

Next issue

The next issue is out in October.



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