

RCPsych Faculty Psychiatry of Intellectual Disability Conference 2025

Tuesday 7th – Wednesday 8th October, Voco Hotel, Leicester (in-person only)

Speaker biographies

Dr Richard Laugharne, Cornwall Partnership NHS Foundation Trust, and CIDER - University of Plymouth



Richard Laugharne is an emeritus consultant psychiatrist in Cornwall and deputy director of CIDER- the Cornwall Intellectual Disability Equitable Research group. He was a general adult psychiatrist for 22 years and has researched trust in psychiatrists, EMDR therapy in people with psychosis, mental health services in Ghana, and constipation in people with intellectual disabilities, amongst other things. He is lead for research at Cornwall Partnership NHS Foundation Trust.

Dr Juliette O'Connell, School of Pharmacy and Pharmaceutical Sciences, Trinity College Dublin



Dr Juliette O'Connell is Assistant Professor in Therapeutics and Pharmacy Practice in the School of Pharmacy and Pharmaceutical Sciences, Trinity College Dublin. She is a registered pharmacist with particular research interest in pharmacoepidemiology. Juliette completed her BSc (Pharm) in Trinity College and MPharm in the Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland and qualified as a pharmacist in 2014. She worked in community pharmacy, with a special focus on providing medication services to people with an intellectual disability, prior to commencing her doctoral research in 2016. Her PhD focused on data from the Intellectual Disability Supplement to the Irish Longitudinal Study on Ageing (IDS-TILDA). Her areas of research interest include medication burden and associations with adverse effects, physical function and frailty in older adults with intellectual disability. Juliette also co-ordinates modules and teaches across pharmacy practice and pharmacology modules within the School of Pharmacy

Ms Alexis Quinn, Restraint Reduction Network



Alexis Quinn is a former schoolteacher, professional athlete and author of two books: her ground-breaking memoir, *Unbroken*, and *Autistic & Expecting*, a guide for autistic parents to be. Alexis speaks on neurodivergence, trauma, restraint, solitary confinement and mental well-being. She is a psychotherapist and works as Manager of the Restraint Reduction Network.

Mrs Viv Weisner



Seeing your daughter live on her own with no interaction with other service users is a difficult reality.

Vivien Weisner is one of thousands of parents who has spent decades advocating for their adult child with profound needs. Her daughter Karen, 45, has Smith-Magenis Syndrome and a moderate learning disability. Since age 11, Karen has lived in over 20 placements, often sectioned under the Mental Health Act due to behaviours including self-harm, aggression, absconding, and fixation on emergency services. The only times Karen has shown sustained stability have been in structured environments with consistent, professional staffing. Viv recalls the heartbreak of endless meetings, always believing that with the right support, Karen could thrive.

Today, in a bespoke single setting at Lexden Hospital, Karen is calmer, more focused, and genuinely happy. She enjoys cooking, art, and community outings, supported by a skilled female team.

Viv supports Karen's long-term segregation not as confinement, but as a compassionate, tailored solution.

Professor Sujeet Jaydeokar, Centre for Autism Neurodevelopmental Disorders and Intellectual Disability (CANDDID), and University of Chester



Prof Sujeet Jaydeokar is a Consultant Psychiatrist and Director of Research for Cheshire and Wirral Partnership NHS Foundation Trust. He is also the academic director the Centre for Autism, Neurodevelopmental Disorders and Intellectual Disabilities (CANDDID). Prof Jaydeokar is a parent carer of a boy with multiple neurodevelopmental issues. His lived experience and clinical work drive his interests in research and education.

He is a programme lead for the post-graduate qualifications in Neurodevelopmental Conditions at the University of Chester. He is a Fellow of the Royal College of Psychiatrists. His areas of research interest are in health inequalities, models of care and implementation, and the phenomenology of neurodevelopmental conditions.

Dr Karen Dodd, Karen Dodd Consultancy



Karen is a consultant clinical psychologist who has worked with people with intellectual disabilities for over 40 years. Her major interest has been people who have Down's syndrome, who are at risk of and develop dementia. She established a gold standard service within Surrey involving baseline assessments at age 30, preventative advice on brain and physical health, comprehensive assessments of cognitive and adaptive functioning leading to appropriate differential diagnosis, training for care staff and families; development of an outcome measure (QOMID) that is now used across services in the UK and abroad, and ongoing support and intervention for the person and their supporters through their dementia journey. She developed a variety of published resource packs, leaflets; worked with the Down's Syndrome Association and other Trusts on the development of their dementia services for people with intellectual disabilities. She has chaired the revision of the BPS/RCPSych guidance on dementia and people with intellectual disabilities.

Dr Peter Beazley, University of East Anglia



Peter is a Clinical Associate Professor at the University of East Anglia, and is the Deputy Programme Director for the Doctorate in Clinical Psychology. Peter has a clinical background of working in inpatient forensic settings. At UEA he conducts teaching and research concerning complex mental health conditions, mental health law, safeguarding, and risk assessment. He has been involved in setting up the PG Cert in Mental Health Law, which provides training for clinicians seeking registration as an Approved Clinician via the portfolio route.

Professor Satheesh Gangadharan, Leicestershire Partnership NHS Trust



Dr Satheesh Gangadharan is a Consultant Psychiatrist specialised in Intellectual Disabilities in Leicestershire Partnership NHS Trust, and one of the editors of the latest edition of the Firth Prescribing Guidelines for People with Intellectual Disability.

Professor Thomas Jun, School of Design and Creative Arts, Loughborough University



Dr Thomas Jun is a Professor of Sociotechnical System Design at the School of Design and Creative Arts, Loughborough University and a Chartered Ergonomist and Human Factors Specialist.

Dr Gangadharan and Professor Jun are joint PIs for an NIHR-funded research project, DECODE (<https://decode-project.org/>). DECODE is an interdisciplinary research project comprising 8 institutions aiming to use AI to improve the health and wellbeing of people with learning disabilities and multiple long-term conditions.

Dr Lance Watkins, Swansea Bay University Health Board, and CIDER Group, University of Plymouth



Consultant Psychiatrist with the Epilepsy Specialist Service, a Tertiary service for people with Intellectual Disabilities and complex epilepsy. Epilepsy Pathway Lead, Mental Health and LD Service Group, Swansea Bay UHB. Visiting Professor, UDIDD, University of South Wales. Associate (hon) Professor, University of Plymouth. Clinical Lead for LD research, National Centre for Mental Health, Cardiff.

Professor Raja Mukherjee, Surrey and Borders Partnership NHS Foundation Trust, and School of Medicine, University of Surrey



Professor Raja Mukherjee is an Adult Learning Disability Consultant Psychiatrist for Surrey and Border's Partnership NHS Foundation Trust, with interest in the management of developmental disorders across the lifespan. In September 2009 he started the first NHS based specialist Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders behavioural clinic and since then has seen over 250 cases for specialist second opinion as a national referral service. He has given invited testimony/ Advice to the DOH, WHO, UK APPG on FASD and NICEQS.

He was awarded an MBE in the Kings Birthday Hours List for his work with FASD in 2023.

Prof Mukherjee was appointed as Professor of Psychiatry and Lead for Psychiatry at the University of Surrey Medical School in February 2024 where he leads the development of the psychiatric curriculum.

In wider work, he is currently Clinical Lead for Adult neurodevelopmental services provided by Surrey and Borders including Adult ASD and ADHD services across Surrey. He is an executive committee member of the RCPsych SIG on neurodevelopmental disorders, and an Executive member of the ID Faculty.

Mrs Christine Hutchinson, Edge Hill University



Christine worked for almost 40 years in the NHS in community and inpatient settings also working in independent practice (now full time) with a portfolio of contracts including OPG Special Visitor and Professional Health and Welfare Deputy. She has academic positions at University of Northumbria and Edge Hill University Christine is founding member and officer of the UK Learning Disability Consultant Nurse Network (UKLDCNN) which celebrates its 25th anniversary in 2025 and of the Learning and Intellectual Disability Nursing International Alliance (LIDNIA).

Christine has particular interests in the application of law in practice and held leadership positions for MCA DoLS and MHA implementation. She has undertaken focussed developments including resources for restricted and conditionally discharged patients.

Christine is project lead for an NHSE funded project around rehabilitation and habilitation in intellectual disability. This project aims to support a better understanding of rehabilitation and habilitation in this population across service settings.

Professor Dheeraj Rai, University of Bristol



Dheeraj Rai is a Professor of Neurodevelopmental Psychiatry at the University of Bristol Medical School and an honorary consultant psychiatrist at the Avon and Wiltshire Partnership NHS Mental Health Trust.

His research focuses on large epidemiological and interventional studies for mental health problems in autistic people. He is interested in improving methods of carrying out effective research with neurodivergent populations.

He leads a group of interdisciplinary researchers, with a focus on carrying out research which has the potential to help improve the health and lives of autistic people and people with other developmental conditions. He passionately believes in involving autistic people and other stakeholders in research.

Mr Stephen Unwin



Stephen Unwin is a leading theatre and opera director. He is also the father of a learning-disabled young man and a campaigner for the rights and dignities of people with learning disabilities.

He has written two plays on the subject: All Our Children (2017) and Laughing Boy (2024).

In June 2025 his philosophical, cultural and historical study Beautiful Lives: How We Got Learning Disabilities So Wrong was published by Wildfire (Headline Books)

Dr Alexandra Gabrielsson, Hertfordshire Partnership University NHS Foundation Trust



Alex is a ST6 trainee in Intellectual Disability Psychiatry with the Hertfordshire Partnership University NHS Foundation Trust. Throughout her higher training, Alex has been active in clinical research projects focusing on psychiatric illness and physical health challenges faced by individuals with neurodevelopmental disorders, and the improvement of service delivery in these areas through evidence-based practice.

Mrs Sarah Rabbitte, Leicestershire Partnership NHS Trust



Sarah is a learning disability nurse currently working as a research nurse in the DECODE project which aims to improve health outcomes for people with learning disabilities.

Sarah is passionate about improving access to research for under-served groups and believes that research should be designed in a way that is accessible for all.

Ms Amy Wilkins, Leicestershire Partnership NHS Trust



Amy is a Speech and Language Therapist and co-lead of the Patient and Public Involvement and Engagement (PPIE) groups within the DECODE project, a National Institute for Health and Care Research (NIHR)-funded initiative led by Loughborough University and Leicestershire Partnership NHS Trust. The project focuses on improving health outcomes for people with learning disabilities and multiple long term health conditions.

In her role, Amy facilitates PPI groups with individuals with learning disabilities and carers, ensuring the research is meaningful to this population. Amy includes people by making information accessible and communication personalised.

Ms Heidi Neville, Person with Lived Experience



Heidi is a person with lived experience who is passionate about sharing her experiences to help people with learning disabilities have better health and care.

Heidi has been part of the DECODE project since 2022, using her skills and experiences to help researchers to make research accessible and offer her guidance about the reasonable adjustments needed for people to join. Heidi has co-authored academic publications about DECODE's work and has been part of forums to disseminate research outcomes.

Heidi is part of other forums and groups which actively support people with learning disabilities to have a voice in service development.

Mr Russell Lacey, Person with Lived Experience



Russell is a person with lived experience who has extensive experience of participating in health and social groups which aim to improve the health and care of people with learning disabilities.

Russell has been part of the DECODE project since 2022, using his skills and knowledge to support researchers to enable their research to reach wider populations. In his role in DECODE, Russell has shared his own experiences about the barriers people face to being included in research and how research teams can practically overcome these.

Russell is part of various forums in health and social care and has recently been involved in the local LeDeR initiative.

Ms Sonal Kuchadia, Person with Lived Experience



Sonal is the sibling of a learning disabled and autistic 21-year-old with various physical and mental health difficulties.

She is currently working as a co-applicant in a NIHR funded research project which aims to improve the health of people with learning disabilities, and she is part of several forums which ensure that carers have a voice.

Professor Regi Alexander, Hertfordshire Partnership University NHS Foundation Trust, and University of Hertfordshire



- A practising psychiatrist for over 30 years
- President, ID Section, Royal Society of Medicine
- Founder, RADiANT network
- Course Director, National Autism Training Programme for Psychiatrists, RCPsych
- Editor:
 - Oxford Textbook of Psychiatry of ID (2020)
 - Forensic Aspects of NDD (2023)
 - Psychiatry of ID Across Cultures (2024)
 - The Frith Prescribing Guidelines, 4th edition (2024).
- RCPsych President's medal (2018).

Dr Jane McCarthy, Sussex Partnership NHS Foundation Trust



Dr Jane McCarthy is Interim Divisional Clinical Director for Specialist Services & Consultant Psychiatrist for the Intellectual Disability Service at Sussex Partnership NHS Foundation Trust, Visiting Senior Lecturer at the Department of Forensic & Neurodevelopmental Sciences, King's College London, UK and Honorary Associate Professor in Psychological Medicine, University of Auckland, New Zealand. Dr McCarthy has over 29 years of experience as a Consultant Psychiatrist working with people with intellectual disability and/or autism spectrum disorders presenting across inpatient services, forensic services, prisons, courts and community-based services. She has over 100 publications in peer-reviewed journals and books and has been an editor of six textbooks including a textbook with Professor Regi Alexander titled '*Forensic Aspects of Neurodevelopmental Disorders: A Clinician's Guide*'

Professor Julian Barwell, University Hospitals of Leicester, and University of Leicester



Julian is a consultant clinical geneticist who specialises in familial cancer susceptibility and Fragile X Syndrome.

He helped coin the phrase 'the Angelina Jolie effect', launched the cancer arm of the 100,000 genome project on the BBC Breakfast Sofa, writes books and sits on the Ethics, Equity and Law genomic medicine national committee.

His main interests are in co-creation projects with stakeholders, including patient-facing digital and personalised medicine solutions for 21st century healthcare. He advises and supports cancer and special needs charities and has been awarded an honorary professorship in engagement and outreach by the University of Leicester. Alongside patient advocates, Chris and Alex McQuade, and colleagues including Dr Sam Tromans, he is campaigning to establish a national Fragile X Syndrome holistic care hub.



Mr Chris McQuade

Dad of 3 amazing boys, the eldest two have full mutation Fragile X syndrome. With the day job as a Marketing and Operations Manager for one of the UK largest IT companies, now finding himself as the co-founder and parental co-creation lead for a new and exciting project in Leicester to develop the first and only Fragile X specific service within the NHS. Working with Prof. Julian Barwell, to build holistic care, basic prescription services, increased research and individualised care assessments for Fragile X families with clear goals of raising awareness across the UK. With experience and over time, the service will grow to cover all intellectual disability within a specialist hub bringing the best possible support to individuals with intellectual disability and the wider family unit who are all impacted and needs often forgotten.

Dr Paraskevi Triantafyllopoulou, Tizard Centre, University of Kent



Dr Triantafyllopoulou has been working with people with intellectual disabilities and autistic individuals since 2006, with a research focus on health and social care. Since 2015, she has been part of the Tizard consultancy team, conducting autism assessments and providing consultancy for service providers, schools, and Local Authorities in numerous occasions. In 2023, Dr Triantafyllopoulou was awarded the Innovations Award by University of Kent for her pioneering work on online safety with individuals with intellectual disabilities and her work with Kent and Medway Medical School.

She currently serves as the Director of Studies for the postgraduate in Autism Studies and Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities and leads the admissions process for these programmes. She also chaired the Tizard Ethics Committee for five years and led the Researching Altogether Group which brings together individuals with lived experience. Additionally, she is the principal investigator in multiple funded research projects.

Prof. Mahesh Odiyoor

Center for Autism, Neurodevelopmental Disorders, Intellectual Disabilities (CANDDID), Cheshire and Wirral Partnership NHS Foundation Trust and University of Chester



Mahesh is a Consultant Psychiatrist and Strategic Clinical Director at Cheshire and Wirral Partnership NHS Foundation Trust and co-developed the Centre for Autism, Neurodevelopmental Disorders, and Intellectual Disability (CANDDID). Mahesh has a number of leadership roles including being the National Professional Advisor for CQC, Clinical lead of the Northwest Operational Delivery Network (ODN) for Autism and Learning Disabilities and finance Officer of the Faculty of Intellectual Disability at RCPsych.

Mahesh is a Visiting Professor at the University of Chester. His research interests are in the area of population health, stratification of needs, standardised assessments and development of sustainable approaches in various health and social settings.

Dr Rory Sheehan
King's College London, Oxleas NHS Foundation Trust



Dr Rory Sheehan is a Senior Clinical Lecturer at King's College London where his research focuses on health inequalities and how services can be improved for people with neurodevelopmental conditions. He works clinically as a consultant psychiatrist at Oxleas NHS Foundation Trust in a specialist community forensic team for adults with learning disability and who are autistic.