**NIHR Maudsley BRC: Introductory Clinical Research Training Fellowships**

**Project Details**

**BRC-ICRT-001:** REFUEL-MS – a healthcare professional (HCP)-guided, cognitive behavioral therapy based, digital treatment for fatigue in multiple sclerosis (MS)

**Supervisors**

**Professor Rona Moss-Morris**

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**Dr Sophie Fawson**

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**Summary of the placement opportunity:** This placement offers an exciting opportunity to join the multidisciplinary REFUEL-MS team, based within the Health Psychology Section at King’s College London. REFUEL-MS is a 5.5-year research programme, jointly funded by the MS Society and NIHR, aiming to develop and evaluate a healthcare professional (HCP)-guided, digital app-based self-management intervention for MS-related fatigue. The programme involves collaboration with researchers, clinicians, diversity consultants, and a Patient Advisory Group across the UK.

Now 2.5 years into the programme, we have co-developed and tested the first version of the REFUEL-MS app in an acceptability study. The development of REFUEL-MS involved reviewing existing behavioural and exercise-based interventions, conducting qualitative interviews with people living with MS (pwMS), caregivers, and HCPs, and working with key stakeholders to refine a personalised, HCP-supported treatment.

In April, we will be starting a two-arm randomised controlled trial evaluating the app’s clinical- and cost-effectiveness as well as determining its safety as a regulated medical device. Alongside this, we will conduct an NHS-based mixed-methods case-series study to assess the real-world effectiveness of the app and ensure it is implementable.

The fellow will join the project team during these key phases of the research, supporting the delivery of the intervention and gaining hands-on experience in applied clinical research. This placement will provide valuable exposure to digital health intervention studies and multidisciplinary collaboration, supporting the fellow’s development in clinical research.

**The role of the fellow within the project team:** The fellow will play a key role in the delivery of the REFUEL-MS research programme, contributing to both its clinical and research activities. They will join a multidisciplinary team, gaining hands-on experience in supporting people living with MS-related fatigue through an app-based intervention while developing essential research skills.

As part of a team of healthcare professionals (HCPs), the fellow will provide structured therapeutic support to people living with MS-related fatigue using the REFUEL-MS app, offering MS fatigue education and self-management strategies, using a cognitive behavioural approach alongside exercise and balance training. They will receive training and supervision in the intervention including how to conduct a complex intervention in the context of a trial and measure treatment fidelity.

The fellow will have the opportunity to develop key skills in study design, data collection, and analysis, contributing to preparing research materials such as interview schedules and questionnaire items, and engage in research procedures such as recruitment.

The fellow will be encouraged to contribute to publications and presentations, gaining experience in academic writing and dissemination of research findings. Throughout the placement, they will receive mentorship from experienced researchers and clinicians, supporting their development as a clinical academic. This role offers an excellent opportunity for the fellow to build a foundation in clinical research, equipping them with the skills and experience needed to progress towards future research-active roles within their profession.

**Estimated timelines for the placement**

**Work Package 4 (WP4): Clinical and Cost Effectiveness RCT**

**Phase 1: Induction & Training**

* **Induction & Training** (May – June 2025 – please note dates are given as an indication depending on the scheme start date)
  + Familiarise with the REFUEL-MS programme, meet research team, other healthcare professionals (HCPs) and key stakeholders.
  + Complete mandatory research training (e.g., Good Clinical Practice, Data Protection and Information Security)
  + Complete the REFUEL-MS HCP training package

**Phase 2: Assist with set up and support the Clinical- and Cost-Effectiveness RCT**

* + Support recruitment of participants from diverse backgrounds from community groups and our NHS partner trust (GSST) (May – Nov 2025)
  + Support WP4 REFUEL-MS intervention delivery (May 2025 – Jan 2026)

**Phase 3: Data Collection, Analysis & Study Dissemination – assist with relevant tasks related to the following.**

* + RCT follow-up period (6-month: Dec 2025; 12-month: May 2026)
  + Quantitative and qualitative data analysis (June- December 2026)
  + Contribute to publications of WP4 findings (Sep 2026 – April 2027)
  + Dissemination of WP4 findings (Sep 2026 – April 2027)

**Phase 4: Prepare Application**

* **Pre-doctoral Career Development Award Application**
  + Begin Award application preparation (~6 months before placement ends) (Oct 2026)
  + Share draft Award application and obtain feedback – revise as needed (Nov 2026 – Feb 2027)
  + Submit final Award application (~March 2027)

**Areas of the NIHR Maudsley BRC infrastructure where the fellow will have the opportunity to work**

With REFUEL-MS, the fellow will work within the Digital Therapies BRC research theme, which focuses on developing and implementing evidence-based digital treatments for mental health and long-term conditions. This BRC theme is led by Professor Rona Moss-Morris who is also the primary investigator for REFUEL MS. This project provides the fellow with valuable experience in digital health research, including collaboration with a large internationally renowned multidisciplinary team including psychologists, a physiotherapist, implementation scientists, exercise physiologists, statisticians, and health economists. We also work closely with our charity partner, the MS society, people with lived experience of MS and Avegen, our industry partner responsible for building and hosting the REFUEL-MS app and clinician interface.

As part of the randomised controlled trial (RCT), we will work closely with the King’s Clinical Trials Unit (KCTU), who will conduct participant randomisation and support data management to ensure high research standards. There may be opportunities for the fellow to attend training and drop-ins with the KCTU to learn more about these processes, thereby increasing their confidence to conduct clinical trials safely and effectively.

Additionally, the fellow will contribute to NIHR Maudsley BRC priorities including Patient and Public Involvement (PPI) (see below for more information) and Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) by continuing engagement with people living with MS from underserved communities, throughout the project, with the aim to make the REFUEL-MS intervention inclusive and accessible.

**Training and development opportunities that will be offered as part of the placement by both the project team and host department**

The fellow would receive a comprehensive training package including core CBT skills, and guidance on using the web-based clinician interface to support trial participants through the intervention, diversity and cultural competency in delivering clinical interventions, conducting eligibility and risk assessments in mental health trials, mixed methods data collection within a clinical trial including recording adverse events and assessing treatment fidelity, and writing for publication. The fellow would receive monthly supervision from senior academic staff and other HCPs, including psychologists and an occupational therapist as well as join weekly team meeting with the King’s research team including the Chief investigator, and the REFUEL programme manager, postdoctoral researchers, and research assistants.

The fellow would be expected to complete mandatory training courses such as Good Clinical Practice and Data Protection and Information Security (GDPR) which would support their clinical research conduct.

There may be opportunities for the fellow to join wider departmental training courses, including those focusing on grant writing and funding applications. This would help the fellow understand how to secure NIHR and other research funding in future.

Similarly, there will be opportunities within the team for the fellow to learn about designing research studies and developing study protocols.

The team can provide training on how to conduct qualitative and quantitative data analysis, including thematic analysis and statistical methods using software like NVivo and SPSS.

The fellow will be signposted to relevant training modules on the NIHR Virtual Hub website, including the Implementation Science Training package and the recorded session on ‘Using Normalisation Process Theory (NPT) in Complex Interventions Research’. This should support the fellow to translate research findings into real-world clinical practice.

There will also be opportunities to join wider academic activities such as a monthly lab group meeting, project meetings (including weekly team meetings and the bi-annual Programme Steering Committee meetings), departmental seminars, and other initiatives such as ‘Methods Monday’ where research methods are shared and discussed.

**Opportunities for patient and public involvement during the proposed placement**

Patient and public involvement (PPI) is central to REFUEL-MS, and strong partnerships have been developed with key stakeholders in the MS community and where possible, we strive to co-produce the research. Our Patient Advisory Group (PAG) has been involved since the inception of the programme and will continue to play a crucial role over its 5.5-year span, from design to dissemination.

We also facilitated co-production workshops with MS HCPs to discuss ways to integrate REFUEL-MS into MS services and requirements for the HCP training package.

The fellow will have the opportunity to get involved with PPI activities during their placement by joining quarterly PAG meetings to share updates and discuss ideas/feedback; meeting with clinical collaborators or HCP PPI contacts to gather feedback in preparation for and/or during the implementation phase of the project.

Additionally, we work closely with MS organisations and charities including the MS Society UK (MSUK), MS Trust, and Therapists in MS (TiMS) and have joined community events, webinars, podcasts, and contributed to various charities’ newsletters and magazines throughout the programme. The fellow may be able to get involved with such engagement to recruit participants and disseminate trial findings, should they wish.

**Expected Placement Outcomes**

**Expected outcomes at 12 months:**

* Completed comprehensive clinical and research training.
* Assisted with participant recruitment from community groups including risk assessment where needed.
* Completed facilitation of the REFUEL-MS intervention with around 18-20 patients during the WP4 clinical trial.
* Assisted with data collection relevant to the delivery of the intervention including recording protocol breaches and adverse events.
* Assisting with treatment fidelity assessments.

**Expected outcomes at 24 months:**

* Contributed to at least one publication.
* Contributed to the dissemination of trial findings at an MS event/conference/webinar/departmental meeting.
* Supported training of healthcare professionals (HCPs) for the next implementation phase of the programme.
* Planned and submitted Pre-doctoral Career Development Award Application.

**Essential and desirable experience including clinical or academic background required for the placement**

**Essential criteria**

* Qualified Allied Health Professional (e.g., Physiotherapist, Occupational Therapist) or nurse with profession-specific recognised registration (e.g. NMC or HCPC registration).
* Keeping up to date with professional registration requirements including engaging in continuous professional development, keeping knowledge and skills up to date and in line with new developments within the profession
* Understand the legal responsibilities of the profession and the requirements to comply with scope and standards of practice related to their profession
* Evidence of being self-motivated
* Evidence of managing a complex caseload
* Competent IT skills, including basic Excel spreadsheets and Outlook
* Be able to speak and write English as necessary to undertake the role

**Desirable criteria**

* Experience of providing treatment to people living with MS or to people in a closely related specialty
* Evidence of previous experience working with behavioural interventions
* Knowledge, understanding and application of working within community or outpatient settings, or providing virtual support to patients
* Experience working in a multidisciplinary team
* Experience in using eCRFs or other databases

**BRC-ICRT-002:** Eating disorders - Nutrition, Medication and VR

**Supervisor**

**Dr Hubertus Himmerich**

*Department of Psychological Medicine, Institute of Psychiatry, Psychology & Neuroscience.*

**Research Group:** [Centre for Research in Eating And Weight Disorders (CREW) | King's College London](https://www.kcl.ac.uk/research/centre-for-research-in-eating-and-weight-disorders-crew)

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**Summary of the placement opportunity:**

This placement will be supporting clinical dietitians interested in research gain a range of research skills within ongoing research projects in the Center for Research in Eating and Weight Disorders (CREW). During the placement, the researcher will have access to two research projects:

1. The “kEtamin for DEpression and aNorexia nervosa” (EDEN) project - an RCT on the feasibility of using ketamine as a treatment modality in the dual diagnoses of anorexia nervosa and major depressive disorder.
2. The “Artificial intelligence-based, virtual reality application to provide data­ driven, patient-centred treatment for people with eating disorders” (OASIS project) which is a feasibility study of the use of extended reality (virtual reality) in supporting service users with eating disorders challenge themselves with varied foods.

The placement will take place in the IoPPN and the eating disorders service at the South London and Maudsley NHS Trust.

The trainee can be expected to be involved in activities such as the following:

* OASIS project – recruitment of participants, evaluation of data related to food, mood and anxiety in the extended reality programme and data on follow-through in actual reality.
* EDEN project – recruitment of participants, data collection, and analysis of data such as anthropometry, biochemistry, the EDEQ subscales, the Yale Brown Cornell eating disorders scale and the exercise addition index and supporting the research team in other aspects of the study as required.

Further opportunities will be:

* PPIE as guided by the research team including
* Supporting other research projects as seen fit by the supervisory team.
* Training as recommended by the Good Clinical Practice guide

Participation in academic activities such as attending seminars, research group activities, ethics committee meetings, becoming familiar with the C4C process and gaining experience in the Clinical Research Facility.

**The role of the fellow within the project team:**

Role specifications:

* To take active part in research projects as guided by supervisory team
* To take responsibility for tasks assigned and actively and promptly seek support if needed
* To provide clinical dietetic expertise in eating disorders as required
* To acknowledge training needs and seek guidance from the team and available resources
* To attend research methodological training as appropriate
* To attend meetings, seminars and other training activities as specified by the supervisory team
* To reflect on progress made and plan on advancing skills
* To attend regular supervision
* To engage in PPIE, including the service user advisory group
* To champion research in their clinical role
* To actively engage in developing an externally funded research fellowship proposal such as the predoctoral or doctoral award through the NIHR.

**Estimated timelines for the placement**

* Months 1-3: induction, research related training, time spent in CRF
* Months 1-9: research project work (EDEN and OASIS) and PPIE for predoctoral or doctoral proposal
* Months 6-12: predoctoral or doctoral proposal development
* Months 10-15: scientific write up, manuscript preparation and submission.

**Areas of the NIHR Maudsley BRC infrastructure where the fellow will have the opportunity to work**

* The fellow will, as part of the research projects being undertaken, work within the Clinical Research Facility at the Maudsley BRC.
* They will also collaborate with partner NHS trusts and their research facilities.
* They will have the opportunity to learn from technicians and technological experts based within the BRC
* They will have the opportunity to explore a variety of research related areas as available within the BRC to support development of their own research area of interest and a strong predoctoral or doctoral fellowship proposal.
* The successful placement research will get an honorary contract for King’s College London to get access to training and KCL’s library services.

**Training and development opportunities that will be offered as part of the placement by both the project team and host department:**

The training will involve clinical and research development opportunities:

* Clinical experience in the inpatient, daycare and outpatient branch of SLaM’s Eating Disorders Service.
* Research skills including literature review, statistical analysis, recruitment, application for approvals (ethics, sponsor approval).
* Clinical and research risk assessment.
* Poster presentation
* Presentation at an international conference
* Academic writing

**Opportunities for patient and public involvement during the proposed placement**

* The fellow will collaborate with the service user advisory group based at the BRC and the lived experience researchers.
* As guided by the supervisory team, the fellow, with the primary research team, will undertake PPIE specifically related to current research projects.
* The fellow will be introduced to professional PPIE representatives, research professionals with lived experience of eating disorders.
* The fellow will also be introduced into PPIE-based research approaches including co-design, focus groups, and qualitative methods.

**Expected placement outcomes**

**Expected outcomes at 12 months:**

* Attendance of basic research skill workshops (co-design, qualitative and quantitative research approaches, statistics)
* Completion of VR paradigm (selection of foods, VR exposure, VR relaxation)
* Recruitment for OASIS completed.
* Draft of (pre-)PhD project written.

**Expected outcomes at 24 months:**

* Recruitment for EDEN completed.
* Data evaluation and publication of the main results of the OASIS study.
* (pre)PhD project submitted to funder.

**Essential and desirable experience, including clinical or academic background required for the placement**

**Essential:**

* A strong interest and some experience in research, for example conducted and published literature reviews.
* Substantial clinical experience as a dietitian in eating disorders.
* Commitment towards clinical research
* Ability to manage clinical work with research effectively

**Desirable:**

* >=3 years of experience in clinical practice, research or academia
* Some experience in a research trials setting, for e.g. as a research assistant

**BRC-ICRT-003:** Perinatal mental health impacts of music groups for ethnic minority women in Lewisham

**Supervisor**

Doctor Roxanne Keynejad

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**Summary of the placement opportunity**

Location: Split between Lewisham Perinatal Mental Health Team and King’s Women’s Mental Health (KWMH), where the trainee will meet clinical academic nurses, midwives, psychiatrists, and psychologists, and benefit from training and events.

Project: The trainee will work with their supervisor to plan and deliver a qualitative research study responding directly to perinatal mental healthcare practice.

Background: Locally and internationally, clinical trials are investigating group singing for post-natal depression ([Estevao et al.](https://bmjopen.bmj.com/content/11/11/e052133.abstract) 2021, [Sanfilippo et al](https://link.springer.com/article/10.1186/s40814-019-0515-5). 2019). Lewisham Integrated Care Board funds projects supporting the perinatal mental health of ethnically minoritised women ([South East London Mind](https://selmind.org.uk/mindful-mums/diversity-matters-mindful-mums/), 2025), including a pilot of Gambia’s [CHIME](https://www.chimeproject.com/developingchime) (Community Health Intervention through Musical Engagement) study (n=18). 57% of recipients reported clinically significant improvements in quality of life (ReQol10) after five sessions (Stewart et al., in preparation). Local prioritisation and the need to strengthen evidence for perinatal interventions for ethnically diverse women offer an opportunity to develop a research project.

Planned activities:

1. Training: Good Clinical Practice, Research Methods, Qualitative interviews and analysis.
2. Ethical approval application to King’s College London Research Ethics Committee.
3. Qualitative interviews with women and staff who participated in ‘Music for Motherhood’ in Lewisham.
4. Reflexive thematic analysis.
5. Present findings to stakeholders in Lewisham and Roehampton University (leading Music for Motherhood evaluation).
6. Refine Theory of Change.
7. Write up findings for peer-reviewed publication e.g. *BMC Pregnancy and Childbirth*.
8. Develop a PCAF proposal to develop ideas for a doctoral training fellowship.

**The role of the fellow within the project team**

This project is intended for a member of existing perinatal mental health staff or a clinician with prior perinatal experience, to apply and develop their knowledge and expertise.

Their role in the project will be to work with the supervisor and colleagues from Roehampton University who led the Music for Motherhood pilot, to conduct a research study expanding the literature in this emerging field. Their role will also be to get to know the borough context and strengthen relationships between research partners, clinicians, voluntary sector partners and women with lived experience.

**Estimated timelines for the placement**

Autumn 25: Introductory training, ethical approval application.

Winter 25: Qualitative methods training, commence qualitative interviews.

Spring 26: Complete interviews, careful checking of electronic transcripts, initial reflexive thematic analysis.

Summer 26: Complete analysis, draft peer-reviewed publication for submission.

Autumn 26: Share findings with stakeholders, present poster at international conference (International Marce Society conference, September 2026).

Winter 26: Draft application for NIHR Pre-doctoral Clinical and Practitioner Academic Fellowship (PCAF).

Spring 27: Lightning talk at UK and Ireland Marce Society (UKIMS) annual conference. Complete PCAF application, submit mid-March.

Summer 27: Refine Music for Mums Theory of Change, plan for PCAF studies if funded e.g. feasibility trial protocol. Plan alternative strategy if PCAF not funded.

**Areas of the NIHR Maudsley BRC infrastructure where the fellow will have the opportunity to work**

King’s Women’s Mental Health, including the supervisor, has a range of active projects, including in partnership with the Maudsley BRC. These include use of the Clinical Record Interactive Search (CRIS) and the King’s Clinical Trials Unit. During this placement the trainee will therefore learn about both and other BRC facilities and have opportunities to become involved in studies requiring support.

**Training and development opportunities that will be offered as part of the placement by both the project team and host department**

The trainee will be supervised by Clinical Senior Lecturer and Consultant Psychiatrist Roxanne Keynejad, who has personal experience of fully integrated clinical academic training and is committed in her role to expanding opportunities for non-medical clinicians to develop research careers. They will have close contact with Professor of Psychology Lauren Stewart at Roehampton University and Belinda Graham, South East London Mind (SEL Mind) Service Manager – both directly involved with the Diversity Matters Music for Motherhood group.

They will benefit from training, events and networking with colleagues at KWMH and our UKRI-funded Violence, Abuse and Mental Health Network. They will attend monthly KWMH research team meetings and departmental seminars on research methods and findings.

The trainee will be welcomed by the large network of clinical academic trainee psychiatrists at the IoPPN, as well as established clinical academic nurses, midwives and psychologists at KWMH and the Women and Children’s Health Department.

The trainee will attend training for the project, offered both in person and online at King’s (Good Clinical Practice, Introductory Research Methods, Qualitative Interviews, Qualitative Analysis, Writing for Publication). They will also have access to a range of self-directed and voluntary training via Skills Forge and KEATS, such as leadership, self-management and presentation skills.

SLAM and new Chief Medical Officer Derek Tracy are committed to advancing the progression of non-medical clinical academics. The trainee will benefit from senior support from Head of Nursing for Research and Quality Carrie-Ann Black and opportunities for mentorship from experienced nurses including the Trust Parental Mental Health Lead.

The trainee will be encouraged to attend and present their findings at national and international conferences such as those of the International Marce Society, with which KWMH is closely linked. Such meetings will develop their presentation and networking skills and enhance opportunities to consider their findings in global context.

**Opportunities for patient and public involvement during the proposed placement**

The trainee will access a range of PPI opportunities based in SLAM and KWMH, to present on the study design, materials, findings and PCAF proposal.

* The SLAM ‘Women Like Us’ group brings perinatal service users across four boroughs together, with opportunities to consult them on their perspectives on research.
* Lewisham Maternity Voices Partnership is directly engaged with Music for Motherhood and its members will be key stakeholders for consultation during this project.
* South East London Mind is also directly involved and has expressed its explicit support for this project.
* At KWMH, our VAMHN lived experience advisory group offers opportunities to consult women with lived experience of violence and abuse (common risk factors for perinatal mental health conditions) on their perspectives.

**Expected placement outcomes**

**Expected outcomes at 12 months:**

* Complete training
* Obtain ethical approval
* Complete qualitative interviews
* Careful review of electronic transcripts
* Complete analysis
* Draft publication

**Expected outcomes at 24 months:**

* Stakeholder presentation
* International conference poster presentation
* Draft and submit PCAF application
* Lightning talk at national conference
* Prepare for PCAF if funded or next step if PCAF not funded
* Publish paper

**Essential and desirable experience, including clinical or academic background required for the placement:**

**Essential**

* Previous research experience e.g. undergraduate project.
* Demonstrable interest in clinical academic practice.
* Perinatal experience e.g. midwifery, perinatal mental health care role or placement.
* Appreciative of the impact of intersectional adversity on women’s health and outcomes.

**Desirable**

* Previous leadership of a research study.
* Previous research training, course or placement (e.g. elective block during degree).
* Academic publication.
* Previous completed project e.g. quality improvement/audit.
* Previous presentations e.g. poster or oral at a local, national or international meeting.

**BRC-ICRT-004: Subcortico-cortical functional connectivity and ADHD traits in typically and atypically developing children**

**Supervisor**

**Professor Chiara Nosarti**

*Department of Child & Adolescent Psychiatry, Institute of Psychiatry, Psychology & Neuroscience.*

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**Summary of the placement opportunity**

The placement will be based at the Department of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry, IoPPN in collaboration with Professors Shaw and Sudre.

The successful fellow will receive an unparalleled training combining knowledge about childhood neurodevelopment and mental health with neuroimaging, neuro-informatics and advanced statistics. Training will be provided both (i) directly by the project, and (ii) by wider participation in the research group. Specifically, the fellow will develop skills in pipeline scripting, image processing and machine learning tools. Training will be provided through working with fellow researchers and attending courses on neuroanatomy and neuroimaging data processing and analysis. Ample career and personal development opportunities will be also offered.

**Role of the fellow within the project team**

The fellow will work alongside senior members of the research team in investigating the potential role of subcortico-cortical functional connectivity in emerging ADHD traits (both dimensional and meeting clinical criteria) at different developmental stages from birth to early adolescence. The fellow will be part of a larger research team but will be addressing a completely independent research question. The research topic would be ideal for a clinician interested in elucidating the etiology of ADHD, in view of developing targeted strategies for early intervention. Please see previous section for further details on knowledge and skills that will be acquired as part of this placement.

**Estimated timelines for the placement**

**Year 1**

**Months 1-6:** Training in functional MRI data processing and neuroanatomy.

**Months 7-12:** Probing the potential role of neonatal subcortico-cortical functional connectivity in emerging ADHD traits at 18 months, 4 and 8-13 years of age in existing birth cohorts (ePRIME and Developing Human Connectome Project).

**Year 2**

**Months 1-6:** Validation of models developed in Y1 through regression models predicting ADHD traits in independent samples, including large publicly available datasets (e.g. ABCD study). Investigation of subcortico-cortical functional connectivity alterations in different subgroups (typically developing children, born preterm, with a family history of ADHD).

**Months 7-12**: Employ the models developed in months 1-6 to develop tailored predictions of individual outcomes, within a precision psychiatry framework. Write up time, preparation of externally funded pre-doctoral career development awards to transition into more senior training research roles and progressing career in clinical research.

**Areas of the NIHR Maudsley BRC infrastructure where the fellow will have the opportunity to work**

The fellow will be encouraged to join the NIHR Maudsley BRC Prediction Modelling Group, which focuses on advancing prediction modelling for precision medicine and apply these methods in their project to predict ADHD symptoms using features extracted in early life from functional connectivity data. They will be also encouraged to attend regular seminar series and presentations organized by the Prediction Modelling Group.

The fellow will work in close collaboration with colleagues from the Centre for Neuroimaging Sciences, a joint venture between the [Institute of Psychiatry, Psychology & Neuroscience](http://www.kcl.ac.uk/ioppn/index.aspx) at [King's College London](http://www.kcl.ac.uk/index.aspx) and [South London and Maudsley NHS Foundation Trust](http://www.slam.nhs.uk/).

**Training and development opportunities that will be offered as part of the placement by both the project team and host department**

As detailed in summary of the placement opportunity above, the successful fellow will receive an unparalleled training combining knowledge about childhood neurodevelopment and mental health with neuroimaging, neuro-informatics and advanced statistics. Training will be provided both (i) directly by the project, and (ii) by wider participation in the research group and Department, by attending weekly lab meetings and seminars and monthly journal clubs.

In terms of project-specific skills, the fellow will develop skills in pipeline scripting, image processing and machine learning tools. Training will be provided through working with fellow researchers and attending courses on neuroanatomy and neuroimaging data processing and analysis. In addition, the fellow will receive training in research governance, including Good Clinical Practice and will be encouraged to attend research training provided within KCL Skill Forge.

The host Department will offer opportunities for interdisciplinary collaboration, and the successful fellow will be encouraged to present their work at departmental cross-disciplinary seminars and networking events. Both supervisor and Department are passionate about fostering early career researcher’s career and professional development. The successful fellow will be supported in developing skills such as publishing papers, presenting research, and grant writing; they will be encouraged to attend conferences, join professional associations, and participate in journal clubs to build a network in the research community.

When possible, we will provide some financial support for conference travel.

The supervisor will:

* Guide the research fellow through the process of writing papers, presenting their research and applying for funding.
* Discuss the fellow’s long-term career goals, usually together with clinical academics.

Both supervisor and Department believe in the importance of mental health and work-life balance and encourage open conversations about stress or challenges.

**Opportunities for patient and public involvement during the proposed placement**

We have co-produced this proposal in consultation with parents of children who have taken part in our studies, the Weston Programme for Family Centered Research (WPFCR), which involves parents to define what research is valuable to them, and to allow them to lead it with the support of academics at KCL.

At the end of the fellowship, WPFCR members will contribute to prepare material for dissemination and to disseminate research findings, to ensure the results of the study are not just made available to academics and our participants’ families, but also to schools, child and adolescent mental health services and the wider public. Dissemination of research findings will be also facilitated by our Children’s Research Champions, an advisory board of 5 children aged 8-12 years we are working with to co-produce our research. They will be involved in ensuring child-friendly content and presentation in our social medial channels and preparing interactive science workshops in schools and in our Centre to upskill children in their understanding of neurodevelopment and mental health research. The successful fellow will be encouraged to lead some of these workshops.

Furthermore, he/she/they will attend meetings with WPFCR members twice a year, to ensure the analyses conducted as part of this project address questions that are important to the lived experience community.

**Expected placement outcomes**

**Expected outcomes at 12 months:** Knowledge of preprocessing and analysis of functional MRI data in relation to mental health outcomes

**Expected outcomes at 24 months:** Named contributor to at least two published experimental papers

**Essential and desirable experience, including clinical or academic background required for the placement**

**Essential experience:** previous research involving analysis of quantitative data.

**Desirable experience:** previous analysis of MRI data, research in biological psychiatry, research in neurodevelopmental disorders.

Our team has extensive experience analysing paediatric neuroimaging data and training clinical and non-clinical researchers from diverse backgrounds. No previous experience with neuroimaging and complex data analysis is required, and the project would be suitable for a fellow with a clinical or an academic background.

**BRC -ICRT-005: Weight management for people with serious mental illness: a prospective observational cohort study**

**Supervisor**

**Dr Toby Pillinger**

*Department of Psychosis Studies, Institute of Psychiatry, Psychology & Neuroscience.*

**Research Group:** Cardiometabolic Psychiatry

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**Summary of the placement opportunity**

We are running a **prospective observational cohort study** testing the acceptability, feasibility, clinical effectiveness, and cost-effectiveness of a specialist weight management service designed for people with SMI. The pilot clinic is termed the ‘Treating Unmet NEeds in Psychiatry’ (TUNE-UP) clinic. The Maudsley-based TUNE-UP clinic will act as an assertive outreach service of weight-management services at Guy’s and St Thomas’ Hospital. It will deliver gold-standard weight-loss interventions to SLaM patients with psychosis and obesity, including glucagon-like peptide-1 receptor agonist treatment, via a multidisciplinary team with psychiatric expertise.

To assess the real-world effectiveness of TUNE-UP, we will conduct a prospective observational cohort study. The primary outcome will be change in weight at 1-year in patients enrolled to TUNE-UP compared to a waiting-list control. As secondary analyses, we will examine change in metabolic parameters (HbA1c, lipids) and changes in psychiatric symptoms, functioning, and quality of life measures. All participants will have a short semi-structured exit interview. The topics included in this interview will be developed by the lived-experience steering group and the research team, covering themes such as changes in body image and self-esteem, and perceived barriers/facilitators to the clinic. A rigorous health economic evaluation will ensure the project’s sustainability and define a model of care for national implementation.

**Project location:** Maudsley Hospital outpatients and the Institute of Psychiatry, Psychology and Neuroscience

**Planned activities:** Contribute to ethics application writing and attend ethics committee meeting, study participant recruitment, formal physical health and psychiatric symptom assessments of patients, contribution to lived experience workshops and steering committee meetings, CRIS data analysis, mixed methods analysis, contribute to writing of research papers, attend conference to present data.

**Role of the fellow within the project team**

* Participant recruitment
* Facilitator of patient and carer engagement sessions
* CRIS data collection and analysis
* Interviewing and follow-up of participants
* Following training, mixed methods analysis using NVivo software
* Contribute to writing of research papers and publish
* Present data at national/international conference

**Estimated timelines for the placement**

Months 1-6

* Contribute to ethics application writing and attend ethics committee meeting
* Contribute to CRIS study assessing prevalence of obesity and metabolic disturbance in people with SMI in SLaM, writing of associated research paper.
* Attend formal mixed methods introduction course (October 20th) run by Imperial College London
* Attend GCP training
* Formal training in research integrity via ‘epigeum.com’

Months 7-12

* Facilitate lived experience workshops to support co-production of TUNE-UP clinic
* Contribute to research paper describing the TUNE-UP protocol
* Attend Cambridge University online NVivo (mixed methods analysis software) training

Months 13-18

* Support participant recruitment
* Interviewing and follow-up of participants
* Facilitate steering group meetings (lived experience, endocrinology, psychiatry)
* Develop application for externally funded pre-doctoral career development award

Months 19-24

* Continue participant recruitment and interviews
* Mixed methods analysis of exit interviews
* Write up case-series of patients seen to date and submit for publication
* Attend conference to present case series.

**Areas of the NIHR Maudsley BRC infrastructure where the fellow will have the opportunity to work**

* The Clinical Record Interactive Search (CRIS) database

**Training and development opportunities that will be offered as part of the placement by both the project team and host department**

* Weekly supervision by a senior clinical academic
* GCP training
* Formal training in research integrity via ‘epigeum.com’
* Mixed methods introduction course (October 20th) run by Imperial College London
* Cambridge University online NVivo (mixed methods analysis software) training

**Opportunities for patient and public involvement during the proposed placement**

* Four lived experience workshops in months 7-12 to support co-production of the TUNE-UP clinic
* Quarterly study steering group meetings with 50% lived experience representation, and charitable representation (Bipolar UK and Equally Well UK).

**Expected placement outcomes**

**Expected outcomes at 12 months:**

* Named contributor to 2 papers: 1) CRIS study assessing prevalence of obesity and metabolic disturbance in people with SMI in SLaM; 2) TUNE-UP study protocol
* Completed mixed methods, GCP, and research integrity training

**Expected outcomes at 24 months:**

* Completed NVivo analysis training
* First author of mixed methods paper
* Attended international conference to present data
* Application submitted for externally funded pre-doctoral career development award.

**Essential and desirable experience, including clinical or academic background required for the placement**

**Essential:**

* Clinical background in one of nursing, dietetics, physiotherapy, or pharmacy (either mental health or medical)

**Desirable:**

* If a mental health practitioner, evidence of previous work on physical health projects
* If a medical practitioner, evidence of previous work on mental health projects
* Non-medical prescribing status.

**BRC-ICRT-006: Investigating and characterising cognitive deficits in patients with Schizophrenia, Major Depressive Disorder (MDD), and healthy controls.**

**Supervisors**

**Professors Steve Williams and Sukhi Shergill**

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**Summary of the placement opportunity**

The fellow will be based in the Centre for Neuroimaging Sciences and will work as part of the Boehringer Ingelheim (BI) study team. The placement will be split across two main studies:

1. The Language and Functional Capacity in Depression and Psychosis (CALM) study aims to assess the relationship between language patterns, functional capacity, and cognitive performance in individuals with depression, psychosis, and healthy controls.
2. The Brain Circuits Underlying Cognition (BRIGHT) study aims to identify brain circuit abnormalities underlying cognitive deficits in depression and psychosis, validate brain function biomarkers, and assess how sleep impacts cognitive performance.

The studies involve remote clinical screening (e.g. conducting the Mini International Neuropsychiatric Interview), followed by an in-person medical assessment of physical, psychiatric, and neurological functioning. These visits will take place at the King’s College Hospital (KCH) Clinical Research Facility (CRF).

In addition, the fellow will support the study team with recruitment, data collection and analysis, and will be involved in acquiring functional and structural neuroimaging, including MRI and EEG, as well as assisting with the set-up and running of polysomnography.

Recruitment will involve collaboration with clinical teams across South London and Maudsley (SLaM) NHS Trust and other London-based trusts (e.g. depot clinics, Lambeth Early Onset Team). The trainee will also have the opportunity to shadow additional studies run by the department and receive further training and academic development under the supervision of clinical academics. As the role spans SLaM and KCH, the trainee will be able to attend King’s Health Partners training events.

**Role of the fellow within the project team**

The fellow will have the opportunity to assist the current study clinician with:

* Remote psychiatric screening: Mini International Neuropsychiatric Interview (MINI)
* Psychiatric assessments:
  + Positive and Negative Syndrome Scale (PANSS)
  + Brief Negative Symptom Scale (BNSS)
  + Extrapyramidal Symptom Rating Scale (ESRS)
  + Hamilton Anxiety Rating Scale (HAM-A)
  + Montgomery-Asberg Depression Rating Scale (MADRS)
* Fostering collaboration with clinical teams across South London and Maudsley (SLaM), Guy’s and St Thomas’ NHS Foundation Trust, and other London-based NHS trusts to support recruitment
* Engaging with the [Consent for Contact (C4C)](https://www.maudsleybrc.nihr.ac.uk/patients-public/take-part-in-our-research/consent-for-contact/) process, [Clinical Record Interactive Search (CRIS)](https://www.maudsleybrc.nihr.ac.uk/facilities/clinical-record-interactive-search-cris/) system and other Electronic Health Records (EHRs)

In addition, the fellow will be trained on, and assist the wider team with:

* Gold-standard neuropsychological assessments:
  + MATRICS Consensus Cognitive Battery (MCCB)
  + Wechsler Abbreviated Scale of Intelligence – Second Edition (WASI-II)
  + Brief UCSD Performance-based Skills Assessment (UPSA-B)
  + Specific Level of Functioning Scale (SLOF)
* Electrophysiological neuroimaging: EEG
* Functional and structural neuroimaging: MRI/fMRI
* Sleep-based measures: Polysomnography, Actigraphy
* Data tasks: Assisting with collection, quality assurance, and analysis of study data

As the main study is funded by Boehringer Ingelheim and sponsored by King’s College London, the fellow will also attend collaborative meetings with industry partners.

**Estimated timelines for the placement**

**Months 1–3:**

Training in study methods and procedures, and shadowing both remote and in-person study visits. Attendance at internal team meetings and meetings with the industry collaborator.

**Months 3–6:**

Administering clinical and cognitive assessments under the supervision of the study medic(s) and wider study team (CALM study). Assisting with preparations for the BRIGHT study, due to commence in Q3 of 2025. Completing MRI safety training and receiving training in EEG data collection and polysomnography. Continued attendance at team and industry meetings.

**Months 6–12:**

Supporting data collection, clinical assessments, and participant screening (BRIGHT study). Beginning to formulate independent research ideas with a view to applying for a fellowship or development award, with support from study PIs.

**Months 12–24:**

Continued data collection and clinical duties. Ongoing grant development support, with opportunities to engage in further shadowing, training, and academic development offered through the Neuroimaging Department and King’s Health Partners.

**Areas of the NIHR Maudsley BRC infrastructure where the fellow will have the opportunity to work**

* Centre for Neuroimaging Sciences
* The Centre for Innovative Therapeutics
* Clinical Record Interactive Search (CRIS) database
* The NIHR-Wellcome Trust King's Clinical Research Facility

**Training and development opportunities that will be offered as part of the placement by both the project team and host department**

The following training and development opportunities will be offered to the fellow:

* Good Clinical Practice (GCP) certification
* Training in administering clinician-rated psychiatric symptom scales for Major Depressive Disorder and Schizophrenia (e.g. PANSS, BNSS, HAM-A, ESRS, and MINI)
* Administration of functional assessments (e.g. SLOF, Virtual Reality Functional Task)
* Training in administering and scoring gold-standard neuropsychological batteries (e.g. MCCB, WASI-II, UPSA-B)
* Training in the use and administration of innovative remote cognitive assessments
* MRI safety training
* Opportunity to learn statistical and neuroimaging analysis methods from the study team and wider department
* Optional venesection training offered through the department (not directly part of the trainee project)
* Access to career development opportunities offered across King’s College London and King’s Health Partners
* Support from the study team in developing an external funding application (e.g. pre-doctoral fellowship)
* Access to training on Data Protection; Equality, Diversity and Inclusion; Wellbeing; and other related topics through King’s.

**Opportunities for patient and public involvement during the proposed placement**

We are looking to increase patient and public involvement (PPI) within the ongoing study and aim to provide opportunities at King’s to engage with teams involved in obtaining PPI feedback across various levels – such as study design, document review, and discussion of findings. Subject to team agreement, there is also scope for the trainee to contribute to and help facilitate PPI activities.

**Expected placement outcomes**

**Expected outcomes at 12 months:**

* Formulation of an independent research question aligned with the remit of the ongoing study.

**Expected outcomes at 24 months:**

* Completion of preliminary or final analysis and initial write-up of their research, with a view to publishing as a standalone paper or presenting findings at a national or international conference.

**Essential and desirable experience, including clinical or academic background required for the placement**

**Essential Skills and Experience**

1. Experience working with individuals with mental health conditions in a clinical, research, or support capacity (e.g. inpatient settings, community services, or academic studies)
2. Strong interest in developing clinical and research skills, particularly within adult psychiatric populations
3. Good understanding of research environments and clinical study procedures
4. Strong interpersonal and communication skills, with the ability to work effectively as part of a multidisciplinary research team

**Desirable Skills and Experience**

1. Background in psychiatry, psychology, or a related field (clinical or academic)
2. Previous experience administering psychometric or clinician-rated scales (e.g. PANSS, HAM-A, MADRS)
3. Familiarity with neuropsychological or functional assessments (e.g. MCCB, UPSA-B, SLOF)

**BRC-ICRT-007: Impact of calories on menus on people with lived experience of eating disorders.**

**Supervisor**

**Dr Tom Jewell**

*Department of Mental Health Nursing, Florence Nightingale Faculty of Nursing, Midwifery and Palliative Care*

**Research Group:** [Mental Health Nursing Research](https://www.kcl.ac.uk/research/mhn)

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**Summary of the placement opportunity**

The placement will be based at the David Goldberg building. The fellow will join the wider mental health nursing research group based at IoPPN and the Florence Nightingale Faculty of Nursing. The fellow will be supervised by Dr Tom Jewell, who is the principal investigator for a NIHR-funded study about the impact of calories on menus on people with eating disorders.

<https://www.kcl.ac.uk/research/the-impact-of-calories-on-menus-in-england-on-people-with-lived-experience-of-eating-disorders>

This project includes an online survey with over 900 participants, as well as 1:1 qualitative interviews with the following three groups: 1) people with lived experience of eating disorders; 2) parents/carers of people with eating disorders; 3) clinicians working in eating disorders. The fellow will have opportunities to take part in analysing qualitative data from this project.

The placement will include:

* Training in reflexive thematic analysis
* Use of NVivo software
* Undertaking qualitative analysis
* Support in developing skills in writing for publication

In addition there will be opportunities to be involved in systematic reviews – developing skills in searching for literature, screening, data extraction, synthesis. There will also be opportunities to be involved in other projects, depending on the fellow’s research interests, such as a study of parent-teen interaction using video, described here:

<https://www.kcl.ac.uk/news/wearable-headcams-provide-insight-complex-teen-emotions>

**Role of the fellow within the project team**

The fellow will be integrated into the team for the calories on menus and eating disorders project, led by Dr Tom Jewell. The fellow will attend weekly research meetings, and take on an analysis role for one specific sub-study within the project (online survey data, or 1:1 interview transcripts). Training will be provided in reflexive thematic analysis. The fellow will be supported with undertaking a reflexive thematic analysis, initially independently, and later working with research colleagues to agree a final thematic structure for the data. The fellow will then be involved in the write-up of the project and be a named author on the paper.

The fellow will also be involved in Public and Patient Involvement activities, for instance working with our Lived Experience panel to develop new resources on navigating calories on menus for people with eating disorders, carers and clinicians.

**Estimated timelines for the placement**

**Year 1:** The main focus will be developing research skills (specifically thematic analysis). By the end of Year 1, the fellow will be a named author on at least one submitted paper related to calories on menus and eating disorders. The fellow will also receive supervision and support to begin developing their own research interests ahead of applying for a pre-doctoral award.

**Year 2:** The fellow will have opportunities to contribute to other projects. This could include calories on menus and eating disorders but could also be other projects, such as the Eating Disorders Clinical Research Network:

<https://www.kcl.ac.uk/research/eating-disorders-clinical-research-network>

The fellow will also develop their own application for pre-doctoral training, supported by Tom Jewell.

**Areas of the NIHR Maudsley BRC infrastructure where the fellow will have the opportunity to work**

The fellow will have access to opportunities to be involved in the NIHR Maudsley BRC eating disorders infrastructure. Tom Jewell is a co-investigator and PPI lead for the Eating Disorders Clinical Research Network:

<https://www.kcl.ac.uk/research/eating-disorders-clinical-research-network>

This project also has close links with the EDGI study:

<https://www.kcl.ac.uk/research/eating-disorders-genetics-initiative-edgi-1>

**Training and development opportunities that will be offered as part of the placement by both the project team and host department**

Opportunities include:

* Attendance at monthly mental health nursing research meetings
* In-house training in thematic analysis and systematic reviews
* KCL training on NVivo and systematic reviews
* Attending research talks and training events at the Nursing Faculty and IoPPN.
* Attending PPI meetings and events
* The fellow will be able to attend the Qualitative Research Summer school at IoPPN:

<https://www.quahrc.co.uk/quahrc-services/introduction-to-qualitative-methods-short-course-watch-this-space-for-2025>

**Opportunities for patient and public involvement during the proposed placement**

The fellow will be involved in Public and Patient Involvement activities, for instance working with our Lived Experience panel to develop new resources on navigating calories on menus for people with eating disorders, carers and clinicians.

**Expected placement outcomes**

**Expected outcomes at 12 months:**

* Co-author to a poster or paper submission for a conference.

**Expected outcomes at 24 months:**

* Submission of application for external funding (e.g. NIHR predoctoral award).

**Essential and desirable experience; clinical or academic background required for the placement**

The fellow can come from any clinical background. No prior research experience is needed.

**Desirable criteria**

1. Knowledge of qualitative research skills;
2. An interest in eating disorders.