# CLINPSYD
# RESEARCH CONFERENCE 2025
## DIVISION OF PSYCHOLOGY & MENTAL HEALTH



## FRIDAY 6 JUNE 2025
## BOOTH STREET EAST

# CLINPSYD RESEARCH CONFERENCE 2025 KEY NOTE SPEAKER

**Using attachment theory to inform psychological therapy and mental health services**

Attachment theory was developed by John Bowlby to explain the importance of human relationships to psychological well-being across the lifespan.

Insecure attachment styles are conceptualised as vulnerability factors for the development of mental health difficulties and a growing body of research has explored attachment difficulties and mental health problems. A related body of research has also explored the protective role of secure attachments.

The session will begin by exploring the relevance of attachment theory for adulthood relationships and adult mental health followed by an overview of empirical studies past and present. This will include an overview of research exploring both client and therapist attachment patterns and the impact of these on the quality of therapeutic relationships and outcomes.

The session will then provide an overview of how attachment theory can inform psychological assessments, formulations and therapies. The focus will be on how ideas can be integrated into existing therapies, such as cognitive behavioural therapy, as well as the design and delivery of mental health services.

The session will conclude by summarising future research implications.

**Katherine Berry**
**Professor of Clinical Psychology**
**Division of Psychology and Mental Health**

# CLINPSYD RESEARCH CONFERENCE 2025 SCHEDULE

## THEME 1

| CLINPSYD STUDENT | TITLE |
|---|---|
| **Hannah Bodycote** | A systematic review and meta-analysis of the prevalence and associated variables of suicidal behaviours in bisexual young people. |
| **Zach Dunn** | "Allah doesn't burden any soul with more than it can bear." Exploring the Role of the Islamic Faith in the Post-Stroke Journey using Reflexive Thematic Analysis. |
| **Ailish Draper** | "I am someone": an Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis of Relationships for Black Women Living with HIV in the UK. |
| **Saffron Francis** | Social identification with ethnic and sexual identity and its relationship with Non-Suicidal Self-Injury (NSSI) and perceived discrimination in bisexuals. |
| **Louis Mills** | A Qualitative Study of the Lived Experience of Social Support and Psychological Wellbeing in Black Gay Men in the UK: An Intersectional Perspective. |
| **Nina Rabbit** | "The pendulum doesn't go from one side of the ceiling to the other side no more…the pendulum just moves slightly": An exploration of lesbian and gay older adults' experiences of bipolar disorder. |

# CLINPSYD RESEARCH CONFERENCE 2025 SCHEDULE

## THEME 2

| CLINPSYD STUDENT | TITLE |
| --- | --- |
| **Cieva Boyle** | Exploring individual experiences of the impact of using psilocybin for mental health and wellbeing. |
| **Clair Davison** | Applying the Metacognitive Model to Post-Stroke Emotionalism: A Case Series piloting the Attention Training Technique |
| **Sarmini Indramohan** | "A different section of the chemical soup" – Experiences of using Voice Dialogue to explore the self-critic. |
| **Lewis Miller** | Exploring how those with Chronic Lower Back Pain self-manage their mental health. |
| **Elana Moore** | Self-Harm and Eating Disorders: Findings from the Manchester Self Harm Project |
| **Jade Street** | Managing Disordered Eating During the Transition to University: Young People's Experiences |

# CLINPSYD RESEARCH CONFERENCE 2025 SCHEDULE

## THEME 3

| CLINPSYD STUDENT | TITLE |
|---|---|
| **Leanne Cook** | Parental psychological distress in the early years period: do measures match experiences? A systematic review and meta-synthesis |
| **Rachael Corcoran** | Longer-ago baby loss: A qualitative study to explore the experiences of older women |
| **Daisy A. Gibson** | "I didn't understand what was going on" – An interpretive phenomenological analysis of children's experiences following parental stroke |
| **Abigail Hall** | The Feasibility and Acceptability of Dialectical Behaviour Therapy Groups for Perinatal Women with Complex Post-traumatic Stress Disorder |
| **Rebecca Statham** | An exploration of how staff working with children reporting sexual abuse cope with the impacts of this work. |

## POSTERS

| CLINPSYD STUDENT | TITLE |
|---|---|
| **Regan Bailey** | Navigating Menopause: The experience and meanings of menopause for postmenopausal women with a history of mental health difficulties. |
| **Hope Brennan** | Families' Experiences of Disorders of Consciousness Decision-Making: A Systematic Review and Thematic Synthesis of Qualitative Research. |
| **Robert Nirsimloo** | The factors that facilitate and hinder the therapeutic relationship when therapy is delivered online: A qualitative study. |

# CLINPSYD RESEARCH CONFERENCE 2025
## THEME 1

## HANNAH BODYCOTE

**A systematic review and meta-analysis of the prevalence and associated variables of suicidal behaviours in bisexual young people.**

### Background
The risk of suicidal behaviours is elevated in bisexual people, compared to heterosexual, gay and lesbian people. Young people are also at increased risk of these behaviours. This review aimed to update the estimated risk of suicidal behaviours for young bisexual people compared to other sexualities and assess potential variables associated with these behaviours in this population.

### Methods
The protocol for this review was pre-registered (CRD42024592963). Literature searches of databases PsycINFO, CINAHL Plus, MEDLINE and Web of Science were performed from the earliest data available to October 2024. Twenty-seven papers were identified as eligible. Separate meta-analyses were run for suicidal ideation, planning, and attempts. Further meta-analyses were conducted comparing young females and males separately to their heterosexual and lesbian/gay peers. A narrative synthesis was undertaken to examine potential associated variables.

### Results
Young bisexual people were at increased odds of the suicidal behaviours examined than their heterosexual and lesbian/gay counterparts. This disparity was particularly large for young bisexual males compared with young heterosexual males. Several variables were found to be associated with suicidal behaviours in this population, including school factors, family connectedness and mental health symptoms.

### Conclusion
Results suggest increasing understanding and support within school and family environments may reduce suicidal behaviours in young bisexual people. These results are clinically relevant as they indicate the importance of the specific needs of young bisexual people, separately from their sexual minority peers.

# ZACH DUNN

**"Allah doesn't burden any soul with more than it can bear"**
**Exploring the Role of the Islamic Faith in the Post-Stroke Journey using**
**Reflexive Thematic Analysis.**

### Introduction
Spiritual dimensions are often overlooked in UK stroke care despite their potential to improve quality of life. This study uniquely examines how British Muslims integrate their Islamic faith into their post-stroke experiences.

### Methods
Ten stroke patients (five women and five men, ages 32-73) who had been discharged from an acute hospital for at least six months participated in semi-structured interviews. The discussions focused on their faith, both pre- and post-stroke. Interviews were analysed using reflexive thematic analysis. Results: Four central themes were developed: 1) Meaning Making of Stroke: Participants viewed their strokes as divine tests, catalysing self-evaluation, acceptance, and resilience. 2) Weight of Spiritual Obligations: Participants adapted their religious practices, prioritising intent over strict adherence. 3) Navigating Community Expectations and Support: The Islamic community provided necessary support to alleviate feelings of isolation, but their implicit and/or explicit expectations sometimes led to additional distress. 4) Faith and Medicine: Participants combined Islamic care with conventional treatments and sought greater incorporation of their faith into medical care by clinicians.

### Conclusion
Participants described the Islamic faith as a vital resource. It soothed distress, motivated healthy lifestyle changes, and reframed stroke as an expression of divine compassion rather than a chance misfortune. Findings suggest the importance of incorporating culturally sensitive care into stroke services and its possibility in enhancing engagement and overall well-being for British Muslims. Future longitudinal research should examine how religious coping evolves and evaluate the efficacy of spiritually integrated rehabilitation programs

# AILISH DRAPER

**"I am someone": an Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis of Relationships for Black Women Living with HIV in the UK.**

## Background
A leading factor in determining people's psychosocial experiences of living with Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) is HIV-related stigma. Black women living with HIV experience layers of intersectional marginalisation and stigmatisation relating to their multifaceted identities. Such experiences exist reciprocally between others and the self, and within the self.

## Objective
The current study aimed to explore the experiences of Black women living with HIV in the United Kingdom (UK), and their experiences of relationships with the self, others and healthcare.

## Methods
Using an Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) methodology, semi-structured interviews were conducted with nine Black women living with HIV in the UK.

## Results
Four main themes, each with subthemes, were generated: (1) Policing; (2) Silenced and distanced from society; (3) Keeping two worlds apart; and (4) HIV: The uninvited teacher.

## Conclusion
Findings highlight that Black women living with HIV feel policed, silenced and distanced from society, and captures their attempts to manage such experiences. The findings also highlight the importance and power of HIV education and safe spaces for empowering Black women living with HIV. Considering these findings, clinical implications and future research are discussed.

# SAFFRON FRANCIS

**Social identification with ethnic and sexual identity and its relationship with Non-Suicidal Self-Injury (NSSI) and perceived discrimination in bisexuals.**

### Purpose
Bisexuals are at a higher risk of Non-Suicidal Self-Injury (NSSI). Social Identity Theory (SIT) suggests that stronger identification with a marginalized group may help protect against NSSI when faced with adversity. This study aimed to assess if bisexuals' identification with their ethnic and sexual identities is related to NSSI urges over time, and if perceived discrimination moderated the relationship between identification and NSSI.

### Method
A micro-longitudinal single-group design was used to investigate five hundred and thirty-five UK-based bisexuals aged 18-65. Online questionnaires were answered once a week for four weeks. Analyses examined how identification with bisexual and ethnic identities, along with perceptions of discrimination, related to NSSI urges over time. NSSI acts in the past month were examined retrospectively from baseline self-reports.

### Results
A multi-linear level regression found that, at baseline, bisexual identification was not significantly associated with NSSI urges, whereas ethnic identification demonstrated a significant negative association. Neither bisexual nor ethnic identification predicted NSSI urges over the follow-up period. Perceived discrimination did not moderate the relationship between ethnic or bisexual identification and NSSI urges. Logistic regression analyses revealed that depression, but not ethnic and bisexual identification, was associated with past-month NSSI acts.

### Conclusion
Identification with sexual and ethnic identities appears to have a poor protective effect on NSSI in bisexuals. However, perceived discrimination was highlighted as a relevant risk factor. Further research studying ethnic identification and NSSI across diverse ethnic groups is required. Interventions that target depression and experiences of discrimination may help to reduce NSSI in bisexuals.

# LOUIS MILLS

**A Qualitative Study of the Lived Experience of Social Support and Psychological Wellbeing in Black Gay Men in the UK: An Intersectional Perspective.**

### Introduction
This study aimed to explore how black gay men in the UK experience social support and how it influences their psychological well-being.

### Method
Nine interview transcripts were analysed using Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis.

### Results
Four superordinate themes were developed: Navigating Social Support: Resources and Limitations for BGM; The Complexity of Seeking Support: Marginalisation and a Heightened Sense of Mistrust; Reimagining Support: Aspirations and Strategies for Change; Social Support as a Catalyst for Growth: Self-Awareness and Self-Efficacy.

### Conclusion
The findings of a rich insight into how social support shapes behaviours that enhance psychological well-being and point to important clinical implications for working with Black gay men.

# NINA RABBITT

**"The pendulum doesn't go from one side of the ceiling to the other side no more...the pendulum just moves slightly": An exploration of lesbian and gay older adults' experiences of bipolar disorder.**

## Objectives

Older adults with bipolar disorder (BD) can often experience complex difficulties and a different clinical presentation compared to younger people with BD. It is important to consider intersectionality in research as it allows for the exploration of the unique experiences of some populations. This study aimed to explore lesbian and gay older adults' (aged ³ 50) experiences of BD and whether these changed over time.

## Methods

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with 13 participants. The interviews were analysed using Reflexive Thematic Analysis.

## Results

Five themes were identified, along with subthemes. The themes were: 1) Hiding my true self, 2) Reaching acceptance, 3) Gaining some control, 4) Riding the waves and 5) Silver linings.

## Conclusion

The results provide initial evidence that the intersection of older age and sexuality may impact the experiences of living with BD. Services should consider providing interventions focused on harnessing social safety, developing support networks and fostering acceptance of self. Lesbian and gay older adults may also benefit from the opportunity to share their wealth of experience with a younger generation of lesbian and gay individuals. Future research is needed to explore LGBT+ older adults' experiences of BD since this is the first study to explore these concepts.

# CLINPSYD RESEARCH CONFERENCE 2025
## THEME 2

# CIEVA BOYLE

**Exploring individual experiences of the impact of using psilocybin for mental health and wellbeing.**

### Background
Mystical experiences have been shown to influence therapeutic outcomes and facilitate psychological change. However, the term was coined in the 1960's based on religious and historical documentation. The assumptions created at this time for the mechanisms of mystical experiences in relation to psychological change has not yet been explored through qualitative research. Therefore, the primary aim of this study was to explore the lived experiences of individuals who have used psilocybin for mental health and wellbeing purposes, focusing on what they identify as impactful from their experience, through how people explain their perceived changes.

### Design
Qualitative reflexive thematic analysis study.

### Methods
A sample of individuals were recruited who self-reported an impactful experience with psilocybin for their mental health and wellbeing (n = 16), through global purposive sampling. Semi-structured interviews were conducted and interviews were analysed using reflexive thematic analysis.

### Results
The analysis generated 4 themes and 6 subthemes: (1) Having realisations; (2) Processing past negative experiences; (3) Changed ways of being, and (4) External connection. Subthemes are: (1) Occurrence of personally relevant experiences, (2) Unblocking and releasing emotions, (3) Shown new perspectives, (4) Becoming whole and connecting to the self, (5) Comparisons between perspectives, (6) Continual meaning making.

### Conclusion
These findings demonstrated how psilocybin facilitated impactful changes to a variety of mental health issues and wellbeing across settings. However, mystical experiences did not play a key role in each impactful psilocybin experience. Other mechanisms and explanations are discussed.

## CLAIR DAVISON

**Applying the Metacognitive Model to Post-Stroke Emotionalism: A Case Series piloting the Attention Training Technique.**

**Background**
Post-Stroke Emotionalism (PSE) is characterised by frequent unpredictable and uncontrollable crying that adversely impacts recovery, mental health, and quality of life. Currently, there is limited evidence for theory-derived psychological PSE interventions. The metacognitive model (MCM) may inform the development of PSE interventions since biases in the metacognitive control system are considered to cause a cognitive attentional syndrome that impairs the return of processing to a more stable and unemotional state. The aim of this study was to pilot the Attention Training Technique (ATT), an intervention grounded in the MCM when applied to symptoms of PSE.

**Method**
A non-concurrent A-B case-series design was used across five stroke survivors who completed between 5 and 12 weeks of baseline symptom monitoring (A) and between 3 and 10 weekly intervention sessions (B). The primary outcome was PSE frequency and a range of secondary outcomes were also measured pre-and post-intervention.

**Results**
Stable baselines were observed in most cases. Across all patients, ATT was associated with reductions in PSE symptom frequency. This was also apparent as a statistically significant reduction in slope after 3-9 ATT sessions plus home practice and low levels of overlap between baseline and treatment. The effect was large ($d = 2.1$) with reliable change demonstrated across four participants. The majority of secondary outcomes also showed improvement.

**Conclusion**
This pilot case series provides preliminary evidence that ATT is associated with improvements in PSE. Replication and extension is required to confirm an intervention effect and explore potential mechanisms.

## SARMINI INDRAMOHAN

**"A different section of the chemical soup" – Experiences of using Voice Dialogue to explore the self-critic.**

**Background**
Voice Dialogue is a method used to explore and understand different parts of the self. It involves direct communication between a facilitator and aspects of the self to enhance awareness, understanding, and differentiation from inner voices. This study aims to understand how people with low self-esteem (LSE) experience a voice-dialogue session focusing on self-criticism (or the "self-critic").

**Method**
Nine individuals from a university setting underwent a single voice-dialogue session that involved direct dialogue with their self-critic and were subsequently interviewed about their experiences. The interview data were analysed using interpretive phenomenological analysis (IPA).

**Findings**
Three group experiential themes (GET) were generated: theme 1, "transitioning between selves", highlights the importance of moving between chairs and embodying the self-critic; theme 2, "what makes the critic", explores insights into the self-critic's origins and function; and theme 3, "a change in relationships", describes adaptations in participant's self-to-self relating.

**Conclusion**
The findings suggest the Voice Dialogue method, as a stand-alone intervention, has therapeutic utility in developing better understandings of the self-critic and addressing self-criticism. The findings are contextualised within broader theory and literature, and clinical implications are discussed.

# LEWIS MILLER

**Exploring how those with Chronic Lower Back Pain self-manage their mental health.**

**Background**
Chronic lower back pain (CLBP) affects around one in ten adults in the UK. While it causes physical discomfort, it can also seriously affect a person's mental health and overall quality of life. Although UK health guidelines recommend talking therapies like Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT) to support people's mental health, long NHS waiting times often leave people with CLBP to manage their mental wellbeing on their own.

**Method**
This study looked at how people with CLBP manage their mental health without professional support. Researchers spoke in depth with seven adults who had both CLBP and mental health challenges. They used a method called Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis to understand the participants' personal experiences.

**Findings**
Three main themes emerged from the interviews. The first, Reframing and Reshaping One's Identity, described how people adapted their lifestyles and goals to match their new limitations while still pursuing meaningful lives. The second theme, Reigniting Interconnectivity, highlighted the importance of reconnecting with others. Building social connections helped participants feel supported and less isolated. The third theme, The Power of Adaptability, showed that those who were flexible and open to trying new ways of living experienced better emotional wellbeing.

**Conclusion**
The findings show that some people can make positive changes to support their mental health, even without formal therapy. However, others struggled to adapt, possibly due to being less psychologically flexible. The study suggests more research is needed to understand what helps people with CLBP become more adaptable. This could lead to better treatment approaches and self-help tools in the future.

# ELANA MOORE

**Self-Harm and Eating Disorders: Findings from the Manchester Self Harm**

### Background

Self-harm is common in people who experience eating disorders. Little is known about the characteristics, reasons and repetition of self-harm in those with a co-occurring eating disorder. The present research aimed to compare key factors between those who self-harm with and without evidence of an eating disorder.

### Methods

Data were from the Manchester Self-Harm Project. The ongoing project records self-harm presentations to emergency departments in Manchester, UK. Information was extracted about people who were seen by psychiatric clinicians following an emergency department presentation for self-harm, between 2011 and 2017. A total of 312 cases, where evidence of an eating disorder was identified, were matched 1:5 with 1560 controls (self-harm presentations without evidence of an eating disorder).

### Results

Being a student (Odds Ratio [OR]= 2.3, 95% Confidence Interval [CI]= 1.6-3.2), living in affluent areas (OR= 1.1, 95% CI= 1.1-1.2), work/study problems (OR= 1.4, 95% CI= 1.1-1.9), physical health problems (OR= 2.0, 95% CI= 1.5-2.8) and previous psychiatric support (OR=2.2, 95% CI-1.6-3.0) were associated with higher odds of a co-occurring eating disorder alongside self-harm. No differences were observed in self-harm repetition, suicide or mortality between groups.

### Conclusion

Results suggest people who self-harm with evidence of an eating disorder had clinical (e.g., different perceived problems and previous psychiatric support) and demographic differences (e.g., student status and affluency) to those who self-harm without a co-occurring eating disorder. This group have distinct clinical needs and may benefit from targeted self-harm and eating disorder interventions, particularly in student populations.

# JADE STREET

**Managing Disordered Eating During the Transition to University: Young People's Experiences**

### Background
The transition to university is a significant development milestone that can have significant implications for mental health and well-being. For young people with disordered eating, the university transition may represent a change in many areas of life, including daily routine, independence, support systems, and identity. Existing research suggests university is a vulnerable time for disordered eating, however there is little understanding of how young people with existing disordered eating experience this transition.

### Methods
A qualitative design was undertaken to explore the experiences of young people with disordered eating about navigating the transition to university. Twenty-one participants (aged 18-21) who had moved to a large Northern University in the UK, and self-identified as having disordered eating, were recruited via posters around the University and social media. Semi-structured interviews were conducted, and data was analysed following reflexive thematic analysis.

### Results
Four interrelated themes were identified from participants experiences: (1) University as a space of dual possibility, reflecting that university was an opportunity for them to either recover or to continue engage with disordered eating behaviours and that moving between university and home often resulted in a return to their past selves; (2) The tightrope of freedom, reflecting that an increase in independence at university either empowered or destabilised participants around their disordered eating; and (3) The unpredictability of support, reflected experiences of social support and the complex discourse around disclosing about disordered eating whilst navigating the university transition.

### Conclusion
The findings revealed new insights into the complexities of university transition for young people with disordered eating. University reflects an opportunity for a fresh start where an increase in independence can have positive or destabilising consequences. The research provides a deeper understanding of how various disordered eating behaviours and attitudes interact with the university transition. The research emphasises the importance of well-communicated, flexible and proactive support from universities for students with disordered eating.

# CLINPSYD RESEARCH CONFERENCE 2025
## THEME 3

# LEANNE COOK

**Parental psychological distress in the early years period: do measures match experiences? A systematic review and meta-synthesis.**

### Background
Researchers are increasingly using the term 'psychological distress' as an alternative to diagnostic terms (e.g., postnatal depression). However, psychological distress is defined inconsistently, and there is no clear picture of what parents experience. This creates confusion about what exactly is being measured by psychometric instruments. This systematic review and meta-synthesis explored parents' experiences of psychological distress in the early years to provide an accurate definition. Additionally, we assessed whether current measures of psychological distress match those experiences.

### Methods
Databases were systematically searched to identify primary studies of parents of children under five who experienced psychological distress. A two-phased analysis approach was used: (i), qualitative data of parental experiences of psychological distress were thematically synthesised; (ii), quantitative outcome measures of psychological distress were coded into themes developed in (i).

### Results
Twenty-four studies were included. Seven key themes of psychological distress were developed from the qualitative data: (1) overwhelm, (2) shock, (3) defeat and failure, (4) worry and anxiety, (5) shame, (6) disconnection, and (7) loss. Analysis of 21 outcome measures revealed that measures largely did not capture key features of psychological distress as described in the qualitative literature.

### Conclusion
Findings highlight a disconnect between parental experiences of psychological distress and measurement of those experiences. There is a lack of adequate measures available to capture parental psychological distress, suggesting professionals and policymakers likely have an incomplete understanding of parents' experiences. This review proposes an updated definition of parental psychological distress in the early years period.

# RACHAEL CORCORAN

**Longer-ago baby loss: A qualitative study to explore the experiences of older women.**

### Objectives
From increased recognition that the death of a baby can have a negative impact on women's wellbeing, baby loss practices in the UK have evolved significantly over the last 40 years. Minimal research exists, however, on the impact of baby loss for women bereaved before or around this time. The present study aimed to explore older women's experiences of longer-ago baby loss.

### Methods
Semi-structured interviews were conducted with eight women aged between 66 and 81 to explore their lived experiences of stillbirth. The data was analysed using Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA).

### Results
Three Group Experiential Themes (GETs) were identified; 'Still screaming after all these years' representing the lifelong impact that stillbirth had and continues to have on the mothers, 'Just trying to be normal when it was anything but' representing the stigma that surrounded baby loss and how the mothers were discouraged from expressing grief, and 'Your whole perspective changes' representing how the stillbirths shaped the lives and views of the mothers thereafter.

### Conclusion
The findings suggest that longer-ago baby loss has a lifelong impact that is linked with inadequate support, stigma and the experience of disenfranchised grief. Clinical and research implications were discussed with a focus on improving care for older women.

# DAISY A. GIBSON

**"I didn't understand what was going on" – An interpretive phenomenological analysis of children's experiences following parental stroke**

**Background and aims**
Stroke is often a life-altering event for both the survivor and their loved ones. This study explored the lived experiences of children of stroke survivors, to understand the impact of their caregiver's stroke on children's lives, wellbeing and relationships.

**Methods**
Semi-structured interviews were conducted with ten participants (aged 13-45yrs) who were aged 8-18 years when one of their substantial caregivers (9 fathers, 1 grandmother) had a stroke. Interviews were audio-recorded, transcribed and analysed using interpretative phenomenological analysis.

**Findings**
Four themes were formed: 'facing the unexpected: overwhelm and adjustment'; "I didn't understand"; redefined roles and relationships and changed perspectives. The sudden nature of caregiver stroke was a complex and overwhelming emotional experience for children. Limited understanding of their caregiver's stroke, particularly the cognitive and psychological impacts, seemingly contributed to experiences of distress and in some cases, relational tension. Children saw increased vulnerability in their caregivers and often took on additional responsibilities to help their families. As a result, they experienced adjustments across several life domains including their family relationships and described longer term shifts in their own personalities.

**Implications**
This study recommends providing well-timed, family-specific and age-appropriate information to support children following caregiver stroke. Information sharing in relation to the cognitive and psychological impacts of stroke may support children's adaptation to changes in their caregiver's behaviour post-stroke, which may in turn minimise the likelihood of relational tension. As most participants in this study had experienced paternal stroke, future research should explore the impact of maternal stroke on children.

# ABIGAIL HALL

**The Feasibility and Acceptability of Dialectical Behaviour Therapy Groups for Perinatal Women with Complex Post-traumatic Stress Disorder**

## Background

Complex Post-traumatic Stress Disorder (C-PTSD) arises from early life adversity and relational trauma. Women face heightened mental health risks during the perinatal period, and those with C-PTSD often struggle with emotion regulation and relationships. Dialectical Behaviour Therapy (DBT) is evidence-based for such difficulties, yet its feasibility and acceptability in perinatal populations are underexplored. This study aimed to explore 1) the feasibility and acceptability of a DBT intervention, delivered in group format online to perinatal women with C-PTSD, and 2) potential change indicators in key outcome measures, namely, emotion regulation and perceived mother-baby bond.

## Method

A mixed-methods design was used. Routine feasibility and outcome data (relating to mental wellbeing, mother-baby bond and emotion regulation) were analysed using descriptive statistics and the Reliable Change Index. Individual interviews were conducted with group participants and clinicians to explore experiences of the intervention and recovery. Qualitative data were analysed using Reflexive Thematic Analysis.

## Results

Data from 17 participants, including 8 with C-PTSD, were analysed. Six groups were run; the average attendance was 7.7 sessions (adjusting for early dropouts). Attendance rates were 4.26% for full completion, 38% for 75% and 61.9% for 50%. Mean scores improved across all measures, with significant gains in emotion regulation. Three themes, with eight sub-themes, emerged from interviews with six women with C-PTSD and four clinicians: 1) therapeutic foundations amid perinatal complexity, 2) holding the group - relationships and continuity and 3) finding the balance between access and connection.

## Conclusions

Online DBT skills groups were feasible and acceptable for patients and clinicians. Participants showed notable improvements in emotion regulation. Findings support the continued use and further refinement of this intervention for perinatal women with C-PTSD.

# REBECCA STATHAM

**An exploration of how staff working with children reporting sexual abuse cope with the impacts of this work.**

### Introduction

Few studies have explored how staff manage to cope with the specific impacts of child sexual abuse (CSA) work. This study addressed the research question: how are staff who work with children reporting sexual abuse impacted by their work and how do they respond to and cope with these impacts?

### Method

Thirteen members of staff in CSA services participated in semi-structured interviews to share their experiences of coping. Constructivist grounded theory methodology was used to develop a theory of how participants were impacted by CSA work and how they coped.

### Findings

Specific, negative impacts of CSA work were identified. Coping behaviours included working with thoughts and feelings, taking care of themselves and own needs, connecting with values, meaning and purpose, and choosing how to use available relational support. Participants used coping behaviours unconsciously and automatically, or consciously and selectively. Unconscious impacts and coping could become conscious and selected over time. Participants became more selective of coping behaviours as they learned how to cope.

### Discussion

Staff, supervisors, staff wellbeing psychologists/professionals and organisations should acknowledge that CSA work will impact clinicians. In safe and available spaces, such as supervision, CSA staff should be explicitly asked how they are impacted by and cope with the work. This should stimulate the process of learning how to cope and model an organisational culture of recognising and addressing impacts. Further research should explore the impacts and coping of admin staff and staff who have left CSA services and establish CSA staff views about organisational support.

# CLINPSYD RESEARCH CONFERENCE 2025
# POSTERS

# REGAN BAILEY

**Navigating Menopause: The experience and meanings of menopause for postmenopausal women with a history of mental health difficulties.**

## Objectives

Menopause is a significant life transition that can have profound effects on mental health and wellbeing. For individuals with pre-existing mental health conditions, menopause may present additional psychological complexities, yet their experiences remain underexplored. This study aimed to explore the experiences and meanings of menopause among postmenopausal women with pre-existing mental health conditions.

## Methods

Twenty-five postmenopausal women (aged 51-89 years) accessing mental health services participated in semi-structured interviews. Transcripts were analysed using reflexive thematic analysis.

## Results

Three themes were identified. Theme 1 ('Navigating the Intersection of Mental Health and Menopause') described how past and present mental health-related experiences influenced the interpretation of emotional changes during the menopause. Theme 2 ('Changes in Identity and Self-Perception') described some of the menopause-related shifts in participants' identities, and how these were shaped by their mental health histories. Theme 3 ('Barriers and Pathways to Effective Menopause and Mental Health Care') captured how stigma, healthcare inefficiencies, care pathways, knowledge, and professional attitudes shaped participants' access to appropriate support.

## Conclusion

The findings demonstrate a clear bidirectional relationship between participants' mental health and menopausal experiences. This highlights the need for increased education and integrated care services that effectively address both mental health and menopausal support needs.

# HOPE BRENNAN

**Families' Experiences of Disorders of Consciousness Decision-Making: A Systematic Review and Thematic Synthesis of Qualitative Research.**

## Introduction
Following a severe brain injury, some people develop a disorder of consciousness (DoC). These people may experience acute and life-long issues that require care from others. Family members are often involved in their relatives' care, which can include making significant treatment decisions. This can be particularly complicated for those closest to the person with the DoC given issues such as uncertainty about diagnosis, prognosis, and their relatives' wishes. This systematic review therefore aimed to synthesise and interpret relevant qualitative research to develop a better understanding of how families of relatives with DoC experience care decision-making.

## Methods
The Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Review and Meta-Analysis (PRISMA) guidelines were followed. Five databases were searched for terms associated with DoC, families, decision-making, and qualitative research. Twenty-one studies involving 357 family members of relatives with a DoC met inclusion criteria, and the methodological quality of included studies was appraised using the Critical Appraisal Skills Programme (CASP).

## Results
Thematic synthesis identified four themes: (1) A duty to represent their relative, (2) A wish to feel certain and informed as decision-makers, (3) The ethical challenges of life and death decision-making, and (4) Working through the difficulties of shared decision-making.

## Discussion
The review offers novel insights into how families experience decision-making for relatives with DoC. The findings inform healthcare practice around supporting families in navigating the challenges associated with DoC, and in encouraging clinicians to establish stronger systems with families to share the burden of care.

# ROBERT NIRSIMLOO

**The factors that facilitate and hinder the therapeutic relationship when therapy is delivered online: A qualitative study.**

## Background

In recent years there has been a dramatic increase in the provision of psychological therapies through videoconferencing, primarily due to COVID-19. However, there are no known post-COVID-19 qualitative studies that focus on the development and maintenance of the therapeutic relationship, a key part of psychological therapies.

## Aim

This study aimed to examine the factors that helped or hindered the development and maintenance of the therapeutic relationship in online therapy delivered by videoconferencing.

## Sample & Method

Twelve participants from NHS Talking Therapies services were interviewed. Participants' experiences were investigated through semi-structured interviews, based upon a topic guide. Data were analysed using reflexive thematic analysis.

## Results

The three key themes created from the data were: the need for therapists to emphasise their humanity, for clients to feel psychologically safe, and a requirement for the technology used for online therapy to work well.

## Conclusion

This study has several implications for therapists practicing online. To develop the therapeutic relationship therapists should emphasise their humanness using well established techniques such as appropriate humour and self-disclosure, and small talk. Therapists should also ensure that clients feel psychologically safe by fostering feelings of trust and confidentiality. Finally, therapists must ensure that the technology used for videoconferencing therapy is functional or backup plans are developed.