



Thomas Ashton Institute Newsletter – Summer 2026

Highlights, achievements, and stories from across the Thomas Ashton Institute community

Welcome to the summer 2026 edition of the Thomas Ashton Institute newsletter.

Over the past six months, our community has continued to grow its research, partnerships and impact across workplace health, safety, resilience, security, and regulatory science. From public engagement and funding successes to new collaborations, events and recognition for colleagues, this edition celebrates the people and partnerships helping TAI turn evidence into practical benefit.

Highlights from January–July 2026

Celebrating Professor Clara Cheung's promotion

We are delighted to celebrate Clara Cheung's promotion to Professor. This is a fantastic achievement and recognises her exceptional contributions to research, leadership and interdisciplinary collaboration in digital safety and health.

Professor Cheung's work continues to make an important contribution to the Institute's mission, particularly through research that connects digital innovation, construction, occupational safety, and policy-relevant evidence. Her achievement also builds on recent recognition, including [her Leadership Impact Award](#)



TAI at the International Festival of Public Health



In July, colleagues from TAI, SALIENT and NSEC took part in the International Festival of Public Health, helping to showcase our work and connect with wider public health, research, and policy communities.

This was a valuable opportunity to highlight the breadth of activity across the Institute — from workplace health and wellbeing, to resilience, security, public engagement, and interdisciplinary research.



It also provided a platform to explain how TAI brings together expertise across the University of Manchester, HSE and wider partner networks to address real-world challenges.

Safer Retail Workplaces



Violence and aggression towards retail workers remains a growing challenge. New guidance developed by University of Manchester researchers provides practical, evidence-based recommendations to help organisations create safer workplaces and better support employees affected by abuse.

The guidance is the latest output from the **Violence and Aggression Research Network (VARN)**, which works to improve understanding of workplace violence and identify solutions that support safer, healthier working environments.

👉 **Read more:** [Managing violence and aggression in retail | Retail Trust](#)

📄 **Join VARN:** [Violence and Aggression Network](#)

Launching the TAI Lunch and Learn series

The Thomas Ashton Institute has launched a new Lunch and Learn series designed to share leading research and practical insights with a wider audience.

The series forms part of the Institute's engagement and knowledge exchange activities, providing a valuable opportunity to bring together researchers, practitioners, policymakers and partners around topics where evidence can help inform safer and healthier workplaces.

The first session focused on **retail safety and violence and aggression at work**, demonstrating how TAI-supported research can be translated into practical guidance and discussion with those facing these challenges in real working environments.

Looking ahead, future sessions are being planned on topics including:

- AI and robotics in construction health and safety - Wed 11th November 2026
- [Developing web applications for process safety insights](#) - Wed 9th December 2026
- Safety leadership (date to be confirmed)

👁️ **For further details and registration information, please visit our [Teaching and Learning page](#).**

💡 **Interested in delivering a future Lunch and Learn session?** We are always keen to showcase innovative research, emerging evidence and examples of good practice. If you would like to propose a talk, please email ashton@manchester.ac.uk with a brief description of your proposed session.

🎥 **Watch the first session:** [Why Violence Against Retail Workers Is Rising](#)

Registration Open: Lane Lecture 2026

Registration is now open for the Lane Lecture 2026, taking place on 21 October 2026. We are delighted to welcome Professor Gillian Leng CBE, Chair of the [Industrial Injuries Advisory Council \(IIAC\)](#) and former Chief Executive of the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE), as this year's guest speaker.

Professor Leng will deliver a lecture entitled "The Evolution of Evidence and the Changing Nature of Employment: What this means for the work of the Industrial Injuries Advisory Council"



The annual lecture is one of the highlights of the Thomas Ashton Institute calendar, bringing together researchers, policymakers, regulators, and practitioners for an evening of thought-provoking discussion, networking, and knowledge exchange.

👉 **Book your place today:** [Register via Eventbrite](#)

Understanding Workplace Health Trends

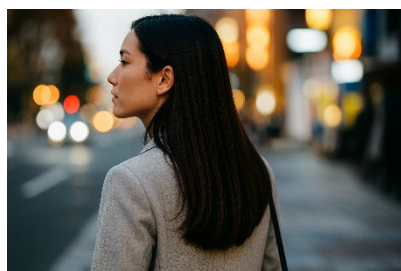
The latest report on The Health and Occupation Research (THOR) network presents trends over time on occupational and work-related diseases in the UK. The results are used by the Health and Safety Executive to update their annual statistics on [Work-related ill health and occupational disease in Great Britain - HSE](#). The report offers fresh insights into patterns of work-related ill health across the UK, providing valuable evidence to support occupational health policy, practice, and prevention efforts.

📖 **Read more about the report:** [New THOR Trends Report Published](#)

News from SALIENT: building security and resilience

SALIENT continues to bring together researchers, policymakers and practitioners to address some of the UK's most pressing security and resilience challenges. From supporting new interdisciplinary research through devolved funding and delivering their popular [SALIENT Lunch & Learn webinar series](#), to launching public engagement initiatives such as the *Security at Sea* podcast, the SALIENT hub continues to create opportunities for collaboration, innovation and impact.

RISE: Researching Solutions to Prevent Violence Against Women and Girls



Violence against women and girls remains one of the most significant challenges facing society, and the **RISE (Research into Intervention, Safety and Empowerment)** project is helping to strengthen the UK's research response.

Led by **SPRITE+** and supported by the [Network for Security Excellence & Collaboration](#) (NSEC) and the [SALIENT Hub](#), RISE brings together researchers, policymakers, practitioners

and community organisations to better understand, prevent and respond to violence against women and girls. Earlier this year, the programme celebrated a major milestone with its [first](#)

[successful devolved funding call](#), supporting a range of new interdisciplinary projects designed to generate evidence and inform practical solutions.

TAI, SALIENT and NSEC are proud to be part of this growing community, helping to connect expertise across disciplines and sectors to tackle a complex and urgent societal challenge.

👉 **Find out more about RISE:** [RISE | SPRITE+ Hub](#)

👉 **Read the SALIENT feature:** [RISE Project Strengthens UK Research to Prevent Violence Against Women and Girls - SALIENT](#)

SALIENT Lunch & Learn Webinars

SALIENT's Lunch & Learn webinar series continues to provide a platform for sharing research, ideas and practical insights on security and resilience. Open to researchers, policymakers and practitioners, the sessions offer an excellent opportunity to learn from experts and connect with the wider SALIENT community.

💡 **Explore upcoming sessions:** [Join Us! SALIENT Lunch & Learn Webinars in 2026 - SALIENT](#)

New for 2026: Introducing SALIENTcast

SALIENT is launching **SALIENTcast**, a new podcast series exploring community practice and perspectives on security, resilience and risk.

The series will feature accessible conversations with people whose work connects to [SALIENT's mission](#) of supporting interdisciplinary, human-centred and systems-based approaches to security and resilience challenges.

The first episode, currently in development, will feature Molly Ralphson, a Community Volunteer Coordinator from the Yorkshire village of Trawden. Faced with the potential loss of important local amenities, including the village shop, community centre and local pub, local residents came together to raise funds, purchase assets and take on the management of key community facilities. The episode will explore what can be learned from this inspiring example of community resilience and collective action.

🎧 [Keep an eye out for the first episode, due to launch in October 2026.](#)

Security at Sea podcast

From subsea cables to critical infrastructure, the hidden world beneath our oceans plays a vital role in keeping modern society running. The new **Security at Sea** podcast explores the security and resilience challenges facing the maritime domain, bringing expert perspectives on some of today's most important and least visible risks.

The podcast is a strong example of how SALIENT supports public-facing communication around complex security and resilience topics.



🎧 **Listen and learn more:** [Exploring Subsea Infrastructure Security](#)

SALIENT devolved funding: supporting new interdisciplinary projects

Earlier this year, SALIENT announced the projects funded through its first devolved funding call, supporting innovative interdisciplinary research that addresses real-world security and resilience challenges. The projects highlight the breadth of expertise across the network and the value of bringing different disciplines together to tackle complex societal issues. We are delighted to report that all seven projects are making good progress and are on track for successful completion.

 Find out more: [Devolved Funding Calls - SALIENT](#)

NSEC - Building connections for a more secure future

Whether exploring emerging technologies, resilience challenges, or national security priorities, NSEC continues to bring together researchers, policymakers, and practitioners to turn ideas into collaborations and research into real-world impact.

 Explore NSEC: [Network for Security Excellence & Collaboration](#)

 Read NSEC's [Summer Round-up 2026](#).

Looking ahead

What's Next?

While this newsletter celebrates achievements from the past six months, exciting new opportunities are already taking shape across the Institute. Researchers are developing projects on topics including **artificial stone and silica exposure**, **next-generation PPE for the nuclear industry**, digital safety, **occupational health inequalities in construction**, and the **health impacts of climate change on workers**. Alongside this, work is continuing to explore new approaches to **infrastructure resilience**, **construction safety**, and **emerging technologies**.

Over the coming year, we will continue to build new collaborations, strengthen existing partnerships, and support the development of ambitious interdisciplinary research programmes. We are also looking forward to **expanding our education and professional development activities**, growing our visibility and influence, and creating more opportunities for researchers, practitioners, and policymakers to connect and collaborate.

With exciting funding opportunities on the horizon, a growing network of partners, and a strong pipeline of innovative projects, the future looks bright. We look forward to sharing the next chapter of the Thomas Ashton Institute's journey with you.

Together, we will continue to deliver research, learning and regulatory insights that help create safer, healthier, and more resilient workplaces and societies. 

Operational news

This autumn marks a new chapter for the Institute's operations team. From **5th October 2026**, Darren Clement, our Operations Manager, will move to a **two-day working week**.

As we look to the future, recruitment is now underway for a **0.6 FTE Grade 7 position** to work alongside Darren to help support the growing portfolio of activity across TAI.

 **Interested in joining the team?** Keep an eye on the [University of Manchester Jobs page](#) for further details and application information.

Alongside these changes, [Professor Suzan Verstappen](#) has taken on the role of **University of Manchester Theme Lead for Workplace Health and Wellbeing**, while **Dr Anne Clayson** has stepped into a new role as **Teaching and Learning Lead for TAI** as we begin to develop our future education, training and professional development activities.

Over the coming months, Anne will be working with colleagues across the University and HSE to explore the current education, training and professional development landscape and identify opportunities that align with the Institute's future priorities

Final thanks

Thank you to all colleagues, partners, collaborators, and supporters who have contributed to TAI's work over the past six months.

Our strength lies in the people and partnerships that make the Institute possible — from researchers and professional services colleagues to HSE partners, policy stakeholders, industry collaborators, funders, and wider networks.

We look forward to continuing this work together and sharing more stories, opportunities, and impact in the months ahead.

Join the conversation

The work featured in this newsletter is only possible because of the fantastic community of researchers, practitioners, policymakers, and partners who contribute their expertise, ideas, and enthusiasm.

Stay connected with the latest news, events, funding opportunities, and research from:

Thomas Ashton Institute

 [Website](#) |  [News](#) |  [LinkedIn](#) |  [Bluesky](#) |  [Research Explorer](#) |  [YouTube](#)

SALIENT

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NSEC

 [Website](#) |  [News](#) |  [LinkedIn](#)

Whether you're looking to collaborate, attend an event, explore our research, or simply stay informed, [we'd love to hear from you](#).