

Research & Innovation @ ELFT Conference 2025

Chair Bios



Michelle McBride

Senior Lecturer in Community Nursing
City St George's, University of London and East London Foundation Trust

Michelle has worked in the nursing profession for over 30 years, with the latter 12 spent in Higher Education and is currently in a joint post as a Senior Lecturer in Community Nursing with both City St George's University and East London Foundation Trust. Her responsibilities include raising the profile of community nursing as a career choice and ensuring that community nursing is well represented within the curriculum. Michelle has a passion for teaching both undergraduate and postgraduate nurses with a particular focus on aspects of community and district nursing and primary care. She has an interest in psychological care and ensuring parity of esteem in healthcare, long-term conditions and self-management.

In addition Michelle is a Registered Nurse, District Nurse, Queen's Nurse, and a Senior Fellow of the Higher Education Academy.



Shobi Nagraj

Assistant Professor in Primary & Community Care
University of Cambridge and East London NHS Foundation Trust

Shobhi leads the Global Primary & Community Care group (GPACC) within the Department of Public Health & Primary Care. Her research focuses on implementation science and the use of theory in the design, implementation, and evaluation of complex interventions, including digital health. Locally, Shobi leads the [ELFT-UCAM Implementation Research Hub](#), to improve healthcare delivery for underrepresented populations across Luton & Bedfordshire, working closely with the local Integrated Care Board and Health Innovation East. She uses global health thinking to address local health challenges and involves communities in research that directly impacts their lives.

Research & Innovation @ ELFT Conference 2025

Speaker Bios



Karin Albani

Associate Director of Research
East London NHS Foundation Trust

With a background in law, journalism, and the telecommunications industry, Karin joined the research team at ELFT in 2005 to pursue a career in public service. She views her role as facilitating and promoting innovation within the NHS to improve the quality of life of the communities it serves.



Mathijs (Mat) Lucassen

Reader in Mental Health
City St George's, University of London

Mathijs originally trained as an occupational therapist and has worked in mental health teams in both England and New Zealand, primarily within Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services. Mat has contributed to several adolescent mental health projects, such as 'The Reasons for Living' project with colleagues in the USA and the UK. He's also interested in research related to LGBTQ+ youth mental health and online psychotherapy interventions (e.g., [Nau mai haere mai | SPARX](#)). He is an honorary academic at the University of Auckland and Victoria University of Wellington in New Zealand.



Camilla Parker

Child And Adolescent Psychiatry Specialty Registrar, South London And Maudsley NHS Foundation Trust
Honorary Clinical Research Fellow, Queen Mary, University Of London

Camilla is a Child and Adolescent Psychiatry Registrar in South London. She recently completed an NIHR Academic Clinical Fellowship at East London Foundation Trust and continues her academic work at the Youth Resilience Unit, Queen Mary University of London. Her research interests are focused on the mental health of young people with diagnoses of autism and ADHD, with a particular focus on addressing health and social inequalities. She led a Barts Charity-funded study using co-production and creative participatory methods to explore the experiences of neurodivergent adolescents experiencing school attendance difficulties or exclusion from the perspectives of young people, schools, parents, and CAMHS clinicians.

Research & Innovation @ ELFT Conference 2025

Speaker Bios



Mizuho Koizumi

Art Psychotherapist
East London NHS Foundation Trust

Mizuho Koizumi is an HCPC-registered art psychotherapist working in the Forensic Learning Disability and Autism Service at East London NHS Foundation Trust. Her work explores how art psychotherapy can enhance care and help reduce the use of restrictive practices in forensic settings. She has presented internationally, including at the International Association for Forensic Psychotherapy and the European Congress of Mental Health in Intellectual Disabilities, and has contributed a published case study to a professional volume.



Charli Paterson

Art Psychotherapist
East London NHS Foundation Trust

Charli is an HCPC-registered Art Psychotherapist currently working within East London NHS Foundation Trust across two services: the Forensic Learning Disability and Autism Service, and male PICU and female acute ward. She has over ten years of clinical experience, having previously worked in the private sector before joining the NHS. Charli's clinical and research interests centre on the relationship between creativity, containment, and recovery in high-acuity environments, with a particular focus on how art psychotherapy can support communication, identity formation, and relational safety for individuals with complex needs.



Jessica Catchpole

Lived Experience Researcher, PEGASUS project

Jessica is a Lived Experience Researcher on the PEGASUS project, which aims to improve the cardiometabolic health of people diagnosed with SMI through peer support. She is passionate about highlighting the brilliant things that people living with mental and physical health conditions can do both despite, and because of, their differences. She lives in Essex with her two cats.

Research & Innovation @ ELFT Conference 2025

Speaker Bios



Mairead Fergus

Occupational Therapist
East London NHS Foundation Trust

Mairead is an Occupational Therapist with ELFT NHS Specialist Children's and Young People's (SCYPS) Service based at West Ham Lane in Newham. Mairead has an undergraduate degree in Psychology and completed her MSc in Occupational Therapy from the University of Limerick, Ireland in 2009. She has worked as an OT in Schools in Ireland, in private practice in the UK, and has been with the SCYPS since Sept 2014, initially as a Locum and then as a permanent member of the team. Having two close family members with autism has shaped the way she works with parents and carers of children with additional needs.

Working in the vibrant, culturally rich borough of Newham has been a gift. Both Mairead and Melissa (below) are passionate about working with our communities to enable equitable health promotion, prevention, and living well.



Melissa Homer

Occupational Therapist
East London NHS Foundation Trust

Melissa is an Occupational Therapist with ELFT NHS Specialist Children's and Young People's (SCYPS) Service based at West Ham Lane in Newham. Melissa studied art at Wimbledon College and went on to complete her degree in Occupational Therapy. She has worked as an OT in a specialist college within the charity sector since 2012 and has been with the SCYPS team since March 2015. Melissa also teaches yoga at St Margaret's House - a community Arts and Wellbeing Centre. She is passionate about well-being and inclusion.

Research & Innovation @ ELFT Conference 2025

Speaker Bios



Catherine Carr

Senior Clinical Lecturer in Music Therapy, Strategic Lead for Allied Health Professions Research and Innovation and Music Therapist

Queen Mary, University of London and East London NHS Foundation Trust

Catherine studied Music Technology at the University of York before training as a music therapist at the Guildhall School of Music and Drama. She completed her PhD at Queen Mary University of London. Her research focuses on group music therapy in different contexts including PTSD, intensive group music therapy for psychiatric inpatients and group songwriting for chronic depression. From 2018-2025 she led the ERA trial, a multicentre, randomised controlled trial of group arts therapies for community mental health patients. Catherine is a Senior Clinical Lecturer in music therapy at Queen Mary University of London, Strategic Lead for Allied Health Professional Research and Innovation, and provides music therapy and clinical supervision in mental health services for older adults at East London NHS Foundation Trust.



Andrea Palinski

Lecturer in Mental Health

Centre for Psychiatry and Mental Health, Queen Mary, University of London

Andrea's research examines inequalities in mental health care and the co-construction of shared illness narratives in multicultural urban settings. Drawing on anthropology and psychiatry, her work explores how culture, identity, and institutional structures shape meaning-making in clinical encounters. She has managed two NHS projects applying the Cultural Consultation Service model to enhance cultural responsiveness in mental health services and leads the MSc in Cultural Psychology and Psychiatry at Queen Mary University of London.

Research & Innovation @ ELFT Conference 2025

Speaker Bios



Natasha O'Sullivan

Academic Clinical Fellow in General Practice
University of Cambridge

Natasha splits her time between the GPACC Group (Global Primary and Community Care) within the Department of Public Health and Primary Care, and working clinically in a local GP practice. Natasha has a strong interest in sustainable healthcare, and previously worked at QMUL on a collaboration with UNFPA, looking at the intersections between Climate Change and Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights. Her current research in the GPACC Group focuses on Planetary Health and Health Inequalities.



Julia Michalek

Postdoctoral Researcher, Youth Resilience Unit in the Centre for Psychiatry and Mental Health
Queen Mary, University of London

Julia is a postdoctoral researcher at the Youth Resilience Unit, currently working on the Barts Charity funded longitudinal cohort study (DEER), which explores risk and resilience factors in young children in East London. Her previous research focused on emotion perception and attention in populations of children affected by war and displacement.



Alina A. Marinca

LISS DTP PhD student at the Youth Resilience Unit in the Centre for Psychiatry and Mental Health
Queen Mary, University of London

Alina's research is funded by the London Interdisciplinary School Science Doctoral Training Partnership (ESRC). She holds a first-class honours degree in Sociology, Psychology and Pedagogy, and is a graduate member of the British Psychological Society. She completed her MSc in Child Development at UCL Institute of Education, where she is currently a member of the Multilingual and Cognition Lab.

Currently she has a keen interest in developmental psychology, psychopathology, psychiatry and research. Using quantitative methods, her work examines how poor sleep habits impact children's behavioural (i.e., ADHD symptoms) and emotional difficulties and how these affect their psychological and socioemotional functioning.

Research & Innovation @ ELFT Conference 2025

Speaker Bios



Sam Ereira

NIHR Academic Clinical Fellow, Core Psychiatry Trainee (CT1)
Queen Mary, University of London and East London NHS Foundation Trust

Sam studied pre-clinical medicine at Oxford University and intercalated with a BA in neuroscience. He then moved to UCL for his clinical studies, where he enrolled in the MB-PhD programme. In 2019 he completed his PhD at the Max Planck UCL Centre for Computational Psychiatry and Ageing Research. During his PhD he used quantitative methods in neuroimaging and behavioural modelling to investigate how the brain distinguishes between Self and Other, both in the general population and in people with borderline personality disorder. Sam completed his academic foundation training at Barts Health NHS Trust, working on a project to develop an fMRI-based predictive biomarker for dementia patients. As an Academic Clinical Fellow at QMUL he is now combining his interests in social cognition and dementia to build on these earlier projects.



Kirsten Prest

Research Fellow in Early Child Development, London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine
Disability and Occupational Therapist, East London NHS Foundation Trust

Kirsten is a paediatric occupational therapist and researcher focused on supporting caregivers of children with disabilities across diverse settings. She is currently a Research Fellow in Early Childhood Development and Disability at the London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine. Kirsten has co-adapted the "Baby Ubuntu" caregiver programme, originally developed in Uganda, for use in East London, where she led a pilot and feasibility study of the adapted programme, "Encompass". She also works with a community occupational therapy team in Newham, East London.

Research & Innovation @ ELFT Conference 2025

Speaker Bios



Afia Ali

Clinical Reader in Intellectual Disability Psychiatry and Honorary Consultant Psychiatrist
Queen Mary, University of London and East London NHS Foundation Trust

Afia is a clinical academic with a keen interest in stigma and health inequalities, co-production, and clinical trials of psychosocial interventions for people with learning disabilities.

Afia holds several active NIHR grants. She is the Chief Investigator of the ICONIC study, which aims to adapt and evaluate DIALOG+, a solution-focused intervention designed to improve quality of life for people with learning disabilities. She is also Co-chief investigator for the PETAL study, which aims to evaluate a personalised intervention for adults with learning disabilities who present and aggressive or challenging behaviours. She is also Co-chief investigator for the OptiCat, which assess Care, Education, and Treatments reviews (CETRs) for people with learning disabilities and autistic individuals.

Research & Innovation @ ELFT Conference 2025

Panel Bios



Paul Gilluley

Chief Medical Officer
NHS North East London Integrated Care Board

Paul qualified in Medicine from the University of Glasgow in 1991. He subsequently trained in psychiatry and was appointed Consultant Forensic Psychiatrist for Westminster in 2000.

Paul has worked in a number of clinical settings. He helped develop the Quality Network for Forensic Psychiatry at the Royal College of Psychiatry and went on to be specialist advisor in forensic mental health to the Care Quality Commission.

In 2012, he became Head of Forensic Services at East London NHS Foundation Trust, where in 2017 he became Chief Medical Officer. During the Covid-19 pandemic, Paul provided clinical leadership in the roll-out of the Covid-19 vaccine across North East London. In July 2022 he took up the post of Chief Medical Officer at NHS North East London Integrated Care Board.



Lynis Lewis

Service Director, R & D
Noclor

Lynis has been working in the field of healthcare research for over 25 years and has been the Service Director of Noclor for almost two decades. Over that time, she has led the development of Noclor into the largest non-acute research office in the country, partnering with mental health trusts, primary care, and non-NHS organisations across North London. She has been a constant champion of research in these settings and a challenger to traditional views of their research capabilities.

Lynis was appointed as the first Director of Research for the new North London NHS Foundation Trust and has co-lead on shaping an ambitious strategy for mental health research across the area with the UCL Institute of Mental Health. In 2024, she received the Lifetime Achievement Award at the NIHR North Thames CRN Research Awards, recognising her outstanding contribution to advancing research and fostering collaboration across sectors. She is part of the leadership team for UKRD, which brings R&D leaders together to be powerful influencers of change. This role places her in a pivotal position to drive policy in mental health research and research in wider care settings on a national scale.

Research & Innovation @ ELFT Conference 2025

Panel Bios



Frank Röhrich

Medical Director for Research, Innovation and Medical Education, East London NHS Foundation Trust
Clinical Professor of Psychiatry, Queen Mary University of London

Frank started his career in Psychiatry as a Community Support Worker in a psychiatric day centre for patients with chronic mental illness in Hagen, Germany, subsequently working part-time as psychiatric nurse assistant in an acute psychiatric hospital. Frank trained in Integrative Body Psychotherapy in the Netherlands. He studied Medicine in Germany, obtained his Medical Qualification (State Exam, MBBS equivalent in Berlin) and completed his M.D. at Free University Berlin/Germany, (Doctor of Medicine by Thesis): "Body concept and body schema and their relationship with psychopathological symptoms within acute paranoid schizophrenia".

Frank undertook specialist Training in Psychiatry, Neurology and Psychosomatic Medicine. Since 1997, Frank worked as a Consultant Psychiatrist at Newham Community NHS Trust / East London & the City University Mental Health NHS Trust (now East London NHS Foundation Trust). From 2000-2013, Frank was Clinical Director for Adult Mental Health services in Newham, and since 2018, he is Medical Director for Research, Innovation and Medical Education.

He is Honorary Professor of Psychiatry at Wolfson Institute for Population Health, Queen Mary University of London and Clinical Professor of Psychiatry at the University of Nicosia, Cyprus; from 2020-2023 he was ELFT Director on a Masters Programme in Body Psychotherapy at Maltepe University in Istanbul, Turkey.

Research & Innovation @ ELFT Conference 2025

Panel Bios



Liz Sampson

Professor of Liaison Psychiatry
Queen Mary, University of London

Liz is an inaugural chair in the Queen Mary University of London and Bart's Health Academic Centre for Healthy Ageing (ACHA), leading on mental health, dementia and delirium. She is a liaison psychiatrist for ELFT at the Royal London Hospital. Her research focuses on the complex interfaces between physical and mental health, particularly in older adults and those who are frail, clinical studies of delirium and how this translates into policy influence. She studied medicine at the University of Birmingham and gained her MD from the UCL Institute of Neurology. Liz is President Elect of the European Delirium Association and Research Lead for the UK Faculty of Liaison Psychiatry Executive Committee.