

NOVEMBER 2023

# Doctor of Clinical Psychology Newsletter



# UCC

University College Cork, Ireland  
Coláiste na hOllscoile Corcaigh

## Newsletter Highlights

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# Welcome from the Team

# ≡ Welcome ≡

## **Welcome to the first edition of the Doctor of Clinical Psychology Newsletter!**

The D.Clin.Psych. programme began in Cork in September 2016 with the first cohort graduating in 2019. Since then, 41 trainees have completed the programme.

In the last year, Dr Chris McCusker handed over the reins of course director to Dr Christian Ryan, we welcomed a number of new staff members to our team, and successfully completed a major five-year programme review conducted together in 2022. Our trainees also completed a number of service related as well as major research projects in collaboration with their academic and field supervisors – you can read more about these projects in the newsletter as well as in our [‘Book of Abstracts’](#) and our [‘Recent Publications’](#).

*Eadaoin Whelan*





## Looking back

*A message from our outgoing Director, Dr Chris McCusker*

Publishing this, our first newsletter, has perhaps mirrored historical efforts to get the Clinical Psychology programme at UCC off the ground. Several false dawns, fits and starts, but we finally got there! Now, there will be no stopping us, and well done to all who brought it together – towards both endeavours. As I now hand over the reins of the D.Clin.Psych. programme to Christian Ryan, some reflections on what we have achieved together since 2016.

We are now firmly embedded in the Clinical Psychology training landscape in Ireland, with a distinct ethos and reputation, attracting over 200 applications every year from across Ireland and beyond. Confident, knowledgeable, skilled, critically reflective, and curious trainees graduate from our course, and go on to make a difference in the profession and services, with socially driven values and goals. Together, we have created a vibrant, reflective, and ambitious community of learning and practice. These are not just my words. Rather, they reflect the evaluations of three accreditation visits, seven annual programme reviews and, most significant to me, the major five-year programme review we conducted together through 2022. The latter process aimed to refresh and renew our training programme. Thanks to many of you who participated in surveys, focus groups and the one-day strategy workshop.

We reflected on our many strengths and attainments. Commissions, from a range of training partners, have near doubled. The course has expanded to support this, recruiting high calibre academic practitioners who have extended and deepened our capacities. Completion and employment rates stand at 100%, and external examiners and accreditation panels have commended the standard of all aspects of our trainee work. Placement partnerships have expanded, and the quality of same has been highlighted by many stakeholders. Our trainee research shapes the knowledge base, and has impact, as evidenced by increasing publications, disseminations and other impact processes in services and society. Core strengths in our processes underpinning these attainments were highlighted. These are too many to mention but first and foremost, these were about our relationships. Repeatedly, all stakeholders highlighted the energy and collaborations evident in our partnerships – with the HSE, TUSLA, the Irish Prison Service, many charities and third sector organisations (especially in the Disability field), with service users and carers, with colleagues across the university and of course with our trainee body.

However, success brings new challenges, and we formulated strategies to increase placement capacity, restructure and reimagine our curriculum and modular structure to facilitate placement flexibility and time for research. These, and other intents, will be worked through in the coming months and years. The full report may be requested from Nora Hennessy [nhennessy@ucc.ie](mailto:nhennessy@ucc.ie)

Playing some part in shaping the future of our wonderful profession, in a meaningful and value-based way, has been my main reason for getting up to go to work in the morning for a very long time now. However, fresh leadership and vision is important, at certain points, in any system. I hope now to bring that to the wider School of Applied Psychology and I am confident that Christian Ryan will now bring that to this next phase of our D.Clin.Psych. programme. I wish Christian well and look forward to continuing to play my part in a different way.

## Looking forward

*A message from our new Programme Director Dr Christian Ryan*



I am delighted to have taken up the role of Programme Director from Chris McCusker, who has done so much to craft and shape the programme since its inception in 2016. This year has seen several changes in staffing on the programme team: Fionnuala Larkin went on maternity leave at the end of 2022. Kim Keating joined us part-time as Practice Educator in January 2023 and went full-time with us in May 2023. Sheila Boland joined us as a part-time sessional Practice Educator for the rest of this year. Samantha Dockray joined us, replacing Mike Murphy as our Research Director. And Sinead Kelleher and Eadoain Whelan joined us from the School of Applied Psychology in UCC to support research developments.

We have several exciting developments in the coming year. Firstly, we have expanded our intake to 14 training places per year. This is rolling funding, so we expect to have a full cohort of 42 trainees, across three years, by the start of 2025. This is considerable growth from our original funding for 24 places. Secondly, to manage this expansion, we are in the process of recruiting new staff to the team and hope to have them in place by the end of the year. Thirdly, we had our PSI 5-yearly accreditation visit. Thank you to all the programme team, trainees, service managers and clinicians who all contributed so effectively on the day, representing the programme and answering all the accreditation panel's many questions! We are looking forward to seeing the PSI report and recommendations, once it has been ratified by Council.

Following our major 5-year review in 2021 we have plans to revise the structure of modules and placements. Implementation was delayed a year, due to the imminent accreditation visit. We will be implementing these changes shortly and will keep you abreast of the changes and the timetable for them in the coming months.

Finally, congratulations to our graduates from the course this year. All eight trainees from the 2020 cohort successfully defended their excellent research at viva and are graduating this September. We look forward to celebrating with you all (again!) at conferring in October.

# Meet the Team

**Dr Samantha Dockray**



Hello! I joined the Doctor of Clinical Psychology programme in late 2022 as Director of Research, and it's been a really terrific time over the last year as I get to know the community of Clinical Psychologists, and people in training across Cork and beyond. My role spans a number of areas, including providing guidance and support to people involved in research with the UCC Clinical Psychology programme, both trainees and collaborators. My own areas of research span topics related to developmental processes that contribute to physical and mental health, and I have a particular interest in how psychobiological processes (e.g. stress, puberty) influence psychological wellbeing. Most recently I've been working with people with a rare disease that affects puberty on research that seeks to describe the lived experience and to examine how the disease may shape their psychosocial development. I work with people interested in psychobiology, health and developmental psychology in a group called 'Biology, Emotions and Transitions Studies'.

**Dr Christian Ryan**

I am the Programme Director, Clinical Psychologist and Senior Lecturer in Clinical Psychology. I was the Placement Coordinator on the DCLinPsych programme from 2017 – 2022 and took over as director in January 2023. Before joining the programme team, I worked for many years in autism and Intellectual disability services with children and adults. My current research focus is on developing a better understanding of emotion awareness, emotional dysregulation, and alexithymia, and how these transdiagnostic features can inform interventions for a range of populations, including autistic individuals, people with eating disorders and offenders. I also have an interest in the application of data science, using the R programming language, to psychological research.



**Dr Chris McCusker**



I have been privileged to have been the Director of the Doctor of Clinical Psychology programme since 2016, and until I took up Head of School role this year. Prior to coming to UCC I held a joint appointment as Director of the clinical programme at Queen's University Belfast and Consultant Clinical Psychologist at Royal Belfast Hospital for Sick Children. My clinical work has been within the areas of Paediatric Psychology and Neuropsychology. My research has focused on (a) understanding the determinants of outcomes for children with chronic illness and their families and (b) designing and evaluating psychological interventions which improve outcomes for children, by strengthening the resilience of the family.

**Nora Hennessy**

Nora Hennessy is the full-time administrator of the DCLIN programme. Nora joined the School of Applied Psychology in 2017, prior to that she worked in various research and administrative roles in the University, mainly in the area of international development and food security.

Originally from Sligo but has been resident in Cork for over 25 years and almost assimilated. Her Cork born children disagree.



### **Dr Sinead Kelleher**

Sinéad Kelleher is a lecturer and research officer in the School of Applied Psychology, University College Cork. This role includes coordinating modules, overseeing research-related activities, and supporting grant applications that align with school-related strategies and objectives. Her research interests include minority populations' developmental pathways and implications for wellbeing, as well as the reduction of social inequalities based on gender and sexuality.



### **Eadaoin Whelan**

I am a lecturer in the School of Applied Psychology and a research officer in the Doctor of Clinical Psychology Programme, University College Cork. My role in the programme includes developing content and resources for research modules, supporting grant applications and contributing to research projects. My own research interests include adolescent health and development and uses a psychobiological framework to understand how emotional experiences can become biologically embedded and shape health outcomes during adolescence. I am a member of the 'Biology, Emotions and Transitions Studies (BEaTS) Lab' in the School of Applied Psychology <https://www.beats-lab.com/>



### **Dr Kim Keating**

I joined the Doctor of Clinical Psychology programme at the School of Applied Psychology in UCC as a Practice Educator in January 2023. My role includes teaching, placement visits, and research. I also work as a Clinical Psychologist in private practice with children and young adults, specialising in psychological interventions for functional neurological disorder and complex pain. This work has led me to develop an interest in the interplay between cognition, language, and emotion, with a view to developing and evaluating transdiagnostic psychological interventions.



### **Dr Fionnula Larkin**

Dr Fionnuala Larkin is a Clinical Psychologist and Senior Lecturer in Clinical Psychology at University College Cork. She has a particular interest in clinical teaching and training, with a PGCert in Education of Health Professions from the Hull-York Medical School and training in Advanced Supervision and Process Skills; she is Curriculum Coordinator for the DCLin course at UCC. She conducts academic research in the areas of neurodiversity, mental health, parental mentalisation, and parent-child relationships. Her areas of clinical specialism are in assessment and intervention in autism with children and adults, ADHD, intellectual disabilities, as well as in clinical supervision.

### **Dr Sheila Boland**

Dr. Sheila Boland works as a Clinical Psychologist in a busy community adult mental health team. She joined the UCC team as a secondee in March this year. Her interests are in trauma informed therapies and compassionate approaches to wellbeing. She welcomes this current opportunity to bring her clinical experience to supporting trainees, particularly in their developing assessment, formulation, and intervention skills.

# MEET THE TRAINEES



Our trainee cohorts have been growing over the past number of years thanks to increased government funding for clinical psychology programmes. There are currently 8 trainees in Year 3, 11 trainees in Year 2, and 14 trainees in Year 1. Trainees participate in academic, research, clinical practice, and personal and professional development learning and assessment throughout their three years on the programme.

In Year 1, trainees complete teaching in adult psychology, disability, personal and professional development, and research. Trainees complete an adult psychology placement concurrently academic assignments including a critical literature review, clinical case report, and reflective practice assignment 1, and research including a service-related research project, and development of a major research project proposal.

At the end of Year 1, trainees commence a disability placement across child and adult disability services which is completed in Year 2, concurrently with academic and research assignments including clinical case report 2, and research and ethics proposals. Trainees go on to complete teaching in child and family psychology before completing a child and family psychology placement concurrently with academic and research assignments including clinical case report 3, reflective practice assignment 2, data collection and analysis, and supplementary thesis chapter write up.

Finally in Year 3, trainees complete teaching in elective topics in clinical psychology before completing two elective placements in a variety of specialist services within the HSE, Irish Prison Service, and section 38/section 39 agencies. Placement takes place concurrently with academic and research assignments including clinical case report 4, systematic review and major research project write up and submission for examination by viva in June. Trainees have a publication block to write up and submit research for publication prior to completing training in September.

*By Dr Kim Keating*

# CLASS OF 2023



**CONGRATULATIONS TO OUR RECENT GRADUATES!**





# Current Projects

Each year, second year trainees undertake a service research project, (SRP) before embarking on their major research project (MRP) in their final year. Service-related research projects include successful university and psychology service partnerships across a range of settings, such as Tusla, CAMHS, and adult mental health services. Some of the most recent SRPs from last year's cohort, are listed below.

Findings from SRPs are disseminated to services and stakeholders in collaboration with psychologists who acted as supervisors, with a view to informing future service planning where appropriate.

## Service-related Research Projects

On-going service projects include:

- Two projects with the psychology service in Tusla exploring life story work with children in care.
- Two projects with the psychology service in the Irish Prison Service evaluating psychoeducation and primary care psychological interventions in prisons.
- Two projects with psychologists from HSE CAMHS across inpatient and community settings.
- One project with psychologists from HSE CAMHS and children's disability network teams exploring joint working across services.
- One project exploring wellbeing, and compassion satisfaction and fatigue with staff at Cork University Maternity Hospital with the staff wellbeing psychologist.
- One project exploring attendance and record-keeping for DBT skills groups in HSE adult mental health services.
- One project exploring staff's view of factors influencing positive outcomes for adults attending an intellectual disability service.

## Major Research Projects

On-going major research projects include:

- Two projects exploring sensory sensitivities in autistic adults.
- Two projects exploring the role of childhood traumatic experiences in different populations (young autistic adults, and HSE early intervention psychosis service users).
- One project exploring mental health professionals experience of co-produced DBT training in collaboration with the HSE National DBT training office.
- One project exploring positive psychology in the clinical context.
- One project exploring parental mentalisation in migrant mothers.
- One project exploring the lived experience of father with physical disabilities and their partners in collaboration with the National Rehabilitation Hospital.

# Past Projects 2019 - 2022

**Title:** Understanding the role of family factors in predicting outcomes for childhood epilepsy.

**Title:** Exploring Ageism in Irish Healthcare.

**Title:** Exploring the schema mode inventory in an Irish context and its applicability for psychosis

**Title:** Prevalence of mental health distress among Syrian and Iraqi refugees and contextual and culturally relevant indicators affecting their mental health and resettlement experiences in Ireland

**Title:** Treated as a person, not a case': Exploring meaning-making in an Open Dialogue informed mental health service.

**Title:** The use of eye contact during a naturalistic face-to-face interaction in autism spectrum disorder.

**Title:** Mental Health Clinicians' Perspectives on Implementing Externalisation in Family-Based Treatment.

**Title:** Dual Diagnosis: The experience of participating in an adapted Dialectical Behaviour Therapy Skills Training programme.

**Title:** Survivors' Experiences of Disclosing Intrafamilial Childhood Sexual Abuse to Their Families: An Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis.

**Title:** Long-term neuropsychological and behavioural outcomes of mild and moderate hypoxic ischemic encephalopathy.

**Title:** The Relationship between Social Support, Coping Strategies and Psychological Distress and Positive Mental Well-being in Carers of People with Borderline Personality Disorder.

**Title:** Individuals who report having benefitted from dialectical behaviour therapy (DBT): A qualitative exploration of processes and experiences at long-term follow-up.

**Title:** Shattered scripts and broken narratives: A dyadic phenomenological study of interpersonal relationships following acquired brain injury.

**Title:** An exploration of the experience of mentalizing capacity development following an introductory Mentalization Based Treatment (MBT-I) group within an Irish prison service.

**Title:** A cocoon or a prison: Older adults with mental health difficulties and the COVID-19 lockdown restrictions- An Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis.

**Title:** Deliberate and self-conscious adaptation of eye-contact by people with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD).

**Title:** "A Hidden Subject": An Exploration of Intergenerational Narratives from an Experiential Perspective Among Families Living with Psychosis in Ireland.

**Title:** Irish Psychologist's experience of offering therapy online: a qualitative study.

**Title:** Impact of the Temperament Trait of Sensory Processing Sensitivity and a Virtual Environmental Intervention on Cognition and Affect.

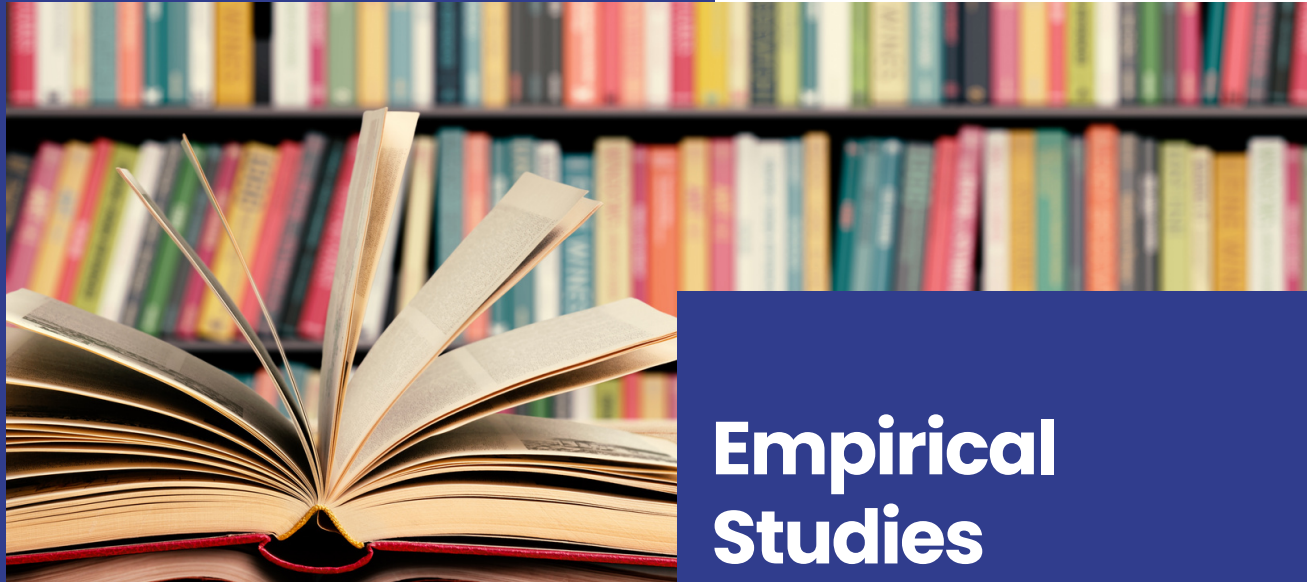
**Title:** Does Infant Massage Confer Benefits for the Mother - Infant dyad? Findings From a 4 Year Longitudinal Study.

**Title:** An Exploration of Intergenerational Narratives of Resilience in Families Living with Psychosis.

**Title:** Clients' Experiences of Eye Movement Desensitisation and Reprocessing (EMDR) Therapy.

**Title:** Predictors of Socio-Emotional Functioning in Early Childhood: A longitudinal examination of the Role of Mother-Child Relationships and Maternal Mental Health.

# BOOK OF ABSTRACTS



## Empirical Studies 2019 – 2022

### Book of Abstracts

Each trainee conducts an empirical study in the final year of the programme, also known as their Major Research Project (MRP). The titles listed in the table of contents refer to the projects that have been completed by trainees in the programme.

A list of authors and abstracts for each of these projects conducted between 2019 - 2022 can be found here:

<https://sites.google.com/ucc.ie/bookofabstracts/home>



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# Impact statements

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Each year, trainees enrolled in the Doctor of Clinical Psychology programme complete a service-related research project (SRP) in which they examine an issue surrounding the provision of clinical psychology-related services. To recognise the work of trainees and their supervisors, as well as the contribution that these projects can make to services, we will disseminate a series of impact statements to the School of Applied Psychology's Research webpage.<https://www.ucc.ie/en/apsych/research/> This will include a summary of the 'challenge' and why this research matters, the methodologies used and testimonials from research commissioners, as well as the impact and relevance of each project to service users. These impact statements will be used to generate an archive of research carried out within the Clinical Psychology programme and will help to further profile the programme within University College Cork. Disseminating this research will also reinforce to research commissioners that these SRPS are not just a programme requirement, but that we instead encourage change through the SRP process.

The SRPs profiled in upcoming impact statements include; the experiences of front-line staff and residents during the initial Covid-19 lockdown; challenges to service provision for ASD referrals and the need to establish multi-disciplinary teams; AMH staffs' perceptions of service changes and the impact that this may have to service provision; and current practice surrounding clinical assessments within CAMHS and factors determining decision making processes and recommendations for therapeutic actions.

*By Dr Sinead Kelleher*



## **Dr Alison Garvey**

My name is Alison and I graduated from the Doctorate of Clinical Psychology at UCC in 2022. Some of the highlights of the course for me included the range of interesting topics covered in lectures, the quality of teaching, and learning from my colleagues at the formulation clinics. For my Doctoral research, I carried out a qualitative study in the area of autism research. I have submitted my research for publication and have developed a great appreciation for the important role of research in the practice of psychology. Beyond the academic and research advantages, there were wonderful placement opportunities associated with the UCC clinical programme. I have an interest in trauma informed therapeutic approaches and I was lucky to have the opportunity to complete my specialist placements in a Trauma-informed Adult Mental Health Service and the Perinatal Mental Health Service. I graduated from the course with knowledge of, and appreciation for, different therapeutic models and approaches, in addition to developed competencies in the areas of assessment, formulation, intervention, and research. The training programme prepared me well for my current post with a Community based Child, Adolescent and Family Psychology Service in Cork.

## **Dr Eric Byrnes**

I graduated from the UCC Clinical Psychology programme in 2020. I have very fond memories of the programme which for me was vibrant and exciting with huge interest from both the School of Psychology, the HSE Psychology Department, and all the Psychologists involved in both lecturing our group and those providing clinical placement/supervision. The interest translated into well organised and thorough lectures on core areas of clinical psychology. I completed a specialist elective placement in Infant Mental Health in Clonmel Co. Tipperary. My other specialist elective was Early Intervention for Psychosis. The breadth of clinical experience and interests of the Psychologists supporting the programme was really obvious and I feel I left UCC a very informed clinician. Since leaving UCC in 2020 I have worked predominantly with children/young people and families. I currently am working in Tusla.



## **Dr Stephen Halpin**

I currently work as a Senior Clinical Psychologist in an acute major trauma service at Cork University Hospital. My role involves identifying patients at risk of psychological distress post-injury, providing emotional support to patients in the early stages of recovery, assessing and formulating cognitive and behavioural changes, supporting rehabilitation and onward care planning, and promoting psychological informed ward environments. I really enjoyed my D.Clin.Psych. experience at UCC. I had many highlights along the way. I met fabulous individuals amongst my fellow trainees, who provided peer support and friendship throughout. I felt the quality of placements were excellent, and I appreciated the guidance provided by all my supervisors. Reflective practice groups developed my self-awareness as a clinician and enabled me to identify areas for improvement and refine my clinical skills. Finally, the research opportunities provided by the course allowed me to pursue my areas of interest. My D.Clin Psych thesis looked at neuropsychological and behavioural outcomes of adolescents with acquired brain injury at birth.

# Recent Publications

Moore, L., Larkin, F., & Foley, S. (2023). Mental Health Professionals' Experiences of Adapting Mental Health Interventions for Autistic Adults: A Systematic Review and Thematic Synthesis. *Journal of Autism and Developmental Disorders*, 1-18.

Kearney, I., Veale, A., & Murphy, M. (2023). Facilitators of posttraumatic growth in family members of persons with experiences of psychosis: a thematic synthesis. *Psychosis*, 1-14.

Parry, J. A., Newton, T., Linehan, C., & Ryan, C. (2023). Dental visits for autistic children: a qualitative focus group study of parental perceptions. *JDR Clinical & Translational Research*, 8(1), 36-47.

Cadogan, E., Lionetti, F., Murphy, M., & Setti, A. (2023). Watching a video of nature reduces negative affect and rumination, while positive affect is determined by the level of sensory processing sensitivity. *Journal of Environmental Psychology*, 102031.

Sheerin, J., McHale, R., Quinlan, S., Ryan, C. (2022) Perceptions of the impact of initial COVID-19 lockdown restrictions on people with an intellectual disability in residential care. *The Irish Psychologist* Oct 2022

McDonnell, D., Vasiliou, V. S., Lonergan, E., & Moore, P. (2022). Psychologists' Experiences Who Managed Waitlists in Mental-Health Services During the COVID-19 Lockdown: A Mixed-Method Study. *European Journal of Psychology Open*.

Gillespie, C., Murphy, M., & Joyce, M. (2022). Dialectical Behavior Therapy for Individuals With Borderline Personality Disorder: A Systematic Review of Outcomes After One Year of Follow-Up. *Journal of Personality Disorders*, 36(4), 431-454.

Gillespie, C., Murphy, M., Kells, M., & Flynn, D. (2022). Individuals who report having benefitted from dialectical behaviour therapy (DBT): a qualitative exploration of processes and experiences at long-term follow-up. *Borderline Personality Disorder and Emotion Dysregulation*, 9(1), 1-14.

Halpin S, McCusker C, Fogarty L, White J, Cavalière E, Boylan G, Murray D. Long-term neuropsychological and behavioral outcome of mild and moderate hypoxic ischemic encephalopathy. *Early Hum Dev*. 2022 Feb;165:105541. doi: 10.1016/j.earlhumdev.2022.105541. Epub 2022 Jan 17. PMID: 35065415.

Byrnes E, Ross AI, Murphy M. A Systematic Review of Barriers and Facilitators to Implementing Assisted Dying: A Qualitative Evidence Synthesis of Professionals' Perspectives. *Omega (Westport)*. 2022 Aug 5:302228221116697. doi: 10.1177/00302228221116697. Epub ahead of print. PMID: 35929771.

Lonergan, K., Whyte, A., & Ryan, C. (2022). Externalisation in family-based treatment of anorexia nervosa: The therapist's experience. *Journal of Family Therapy*, 44(3), 351-369.

Pellegrini, S., Moore, P., Murphy, M., & Flynn, D. (2022). Experiences of Psychologists in Applying Mandatory Reporting in Ireland (Children First). *Journal of Public Child Welfare*, 1-24.

Pellegrini, S., Moore, P., & Murphy, M. (2022). Secondary Trauma and Related Concepts in Psychologists: A Systematic Review. *Journal of Aggression, Maltreatment & Trauma*, 31(3), 370-391.

Cadogan, E., Murphy, M., Francesca, L., & Setti, A. (2022). The Effect of Environment on Psychological Outcomes of the Highly Sensitive Person: A Systematic Scoping Review. <https://psyarxiv.com/edy7k/>

Cunningham, M., Murphy, M., Sweeney, P., & Richards, H. L. (2022). Patient reported factors influencing the decision-making process of men with localised prostate cancer when considering Active Surveillance—A systematic review and thematic synthesis. *Psycho-Oncology*, 31(3), 388-404.

Warner, N., & Murphy, M. (2022). Dialectical behaviour therapy skills training for individuals with substance use disorder: A systematic review. *Drug and Alcohol Review*, 41(2), 501-516.

NOVEMBER 2023

# Doctor of Clinical Psychology Newsletter



# UCC

University College Cork, Ireland  
Coláiste na hOllscoile Corcaigh

**Special thanks to all those who contribute to the D.Clin.Psych programme.**

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For more information please visit our website  
<https://www.ucc.ie/en/apsych/taughtprogrammes/postgraduatecourses/dclinpsych/>

