



**ISSUE 37**

# SOPH NEWS

## Welcome to the 37th Edition of SoPH News



Dear Colleagues,

Welcome to Issue 37 of the School of Public Health (SoPH) Newsletter. This edition covers activities and outputs of the School of Public Health between May and November last year (2025).

This issue features an impressive number of local and national events, organised by staff members of the School, including Getting Going with Health Impact Assessment, National PPI Festivals events, Health Implementation Hub Events, and Strengthening Infection Prevention and Control in Long-term Care. Staff members also provided input into a significant number of international events, such as the International Labour Organization Conference in Geneva, the European Congress on Obesity in Malaga, ERASMUS Teaching Visit at the Karolinska Institutet, Psychology, Health and Medicine Conference in Belfast, Research Exchange Visit to the Ottawa Hospital Research Institute, European Health Psychology Conference, Groningen and the 55<sup>th</sup> Annual National Suicide Prevention Conference in Paris.

Congratulations to the MSc students in Infection Prevention and Control, Elizabeth Cunningham, Elaine Molony and Pamela Landers, who presented the posters of their IPC research at the Infection Prevention Society Conference in Brighton in September, and Nora O'Connor, who won the award for "Best Student Oral Presentation" at the College of Medicine and Health Research Conference.

From a research and development perspective, staff members of the School of Public Health have demonstrated exceptional achievements in successful research grants both nationally and internationally, and at early, mid-career and senior level, which is a very encouraging development in terms of both research quality and leadership in Public Health and Public Mental Health.

Looking at the scope of this Newsletter, the Public Health impacts are wide ranging, including food policy, chronic diseases, health services research, climate change, infant health, stroke prevention, substance misuse, health & mental health promotion, and suicide prevention and social protection.

On this note, I would like to thank you all for your most valuable input and commitment to the work of the School of Public Health, at all levels. I also would like to thank our colleagues from the NSRF, CRF UCC, HSE Public Health and NCRI for the excellent collaboration, both in terms of teaching, research and service and community engagement.

I hope you enjoy this edition of our Newsletter.  
Best wishes,  
Professor Ella Arensman

**MEDIA  
PROMOTION:**  
Caroline Seacy

**COVER  
PHOTOS:**  
Tomás Tyner

# UPDATES

## School of Public Health Away Day in Fota House



The School of Public Health held its Away Day on 24th June at Fota House.

Alongside our usual strategic Away Day activities, we were treated to a guided tour of the arboretum and gardens, offering an opportunity to learn more about the history and biodiversity of the estate. It was a very engaging day, with in-depth discussions, new insights, and valuable learnings throughout.

- The Administrative Team's presentation of standard operating procedures and resources, delivered excellently by Michelle, Frances, and Tania, was extremely helpful in facilitating the work of all staff.
- Dr Gregory Martin's session on key areas for Public Health and Health Improvement was particularly insightful and provided strong inspiration for optimising teaching programmes and research methodologies, aligning closely with the actions of the Quality Enhancement Plan.
- Susan O'Mahony shared important updates on Work Life Balance policies and their implementation.
- Attendees also participated in small-group brainstorming sessions, addressing research gaps in the context of national and global public health challenges, as well as communication, knowledge exchange, and dissemination.

A BIG THANK YOU to Tania, Sofia, and Frances for their significant efforts in preparing and ensuring the smooth running of the day. Sincere thanks also to the Cork Convention Bureau for their support, and to the wonderful staff of Fota House for their hospitality.

Thank you all for a very inspiring and memorable day!



# UPDATES

## School of Public Health Civic and Community Engagement (CCEC) Committee Repository



The School of Public Health CCEC have developed an online repository to enable us to record and track the community engaged work of staff within the School. The benefit of this is to showcase the work that staff do with communities supporting public health values. This is an important part of who we are as a School and demonstrates quality within our teaching, research and civic engagement. It is also an important part of academic promotion and integral to applications for progression and promotion. To clarify what is meant by this we have included some definitions and details that are also available on the repository site.

Civic and Community Engagement describes the interaction with and collaboration between a University, its staff and students, with the wider community for the mutually beneficial exchange of knowledge and resources in a context of partnership and reciprocity. This means that a wide range of activities are relevant for inclusion in the repository as described in the categories below. You will be asked to identify which of the categories below do you think your work applies to:

- A. **COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT:** Collaboration between universities and community partners to exchange, develop and generate knowledge, research and mutually beneficial supports to the benefit of their external communities.
- B. **COMMUNITY ENGAGED LEARNING:** "Seeks to engage and accredit students, within the curriculum, for working in partnership with civic and civil society organisations (CSOs) to act on local societal challenges."
- C. **COMMUNITY ENGAGED RESEARCH:** "Research approaches and methodologies that share a common interest in collaborative engagement with the community. It aims to improve, understand, or investigate an issue of public interest or concern, including societal challenges. Engaged research is advanced with community partners rather than for them."
- D. **PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT AND INVOLVEMENT:** Involves the University staff / students, "facing outwards and connecting as widely as possible to communicate the value of learning and research and to leverage institutional knowledge and resources for social good."

If you are in doubt of which category your work falls into, please come and chat to a member of the committee or [m.smiddy@ucc.ie](mailto:m.smiddy@ucc.ie) to discuss.

You need to complete a separate form for each community-engaged activity you are involved in. This repository is for all categories of staff within the School. Thank you to Sofia Bettella for supporting the development of this repository! You can access the form [HERE](#).

# SCHOOL NEWS



## Getting Going with Health Impact Assessment

On 6<sup>th</sup> November the first 'Getting Going with Health Impact Assessment' knowledge translation event in Ireland took place in UCC. The event was hosted as part of the TRANSLATE-HIA project, funded under the HRB Knowledge Translation Award 2024 scheme. The purpose of TRANSLATE-HIA is to share findings from the HIA-IM research project. Both projects are led by Dr Monica O'Mullane (PI), with Dr Tara Kenny working as postdoctoral researcher on HIA-IM, and Eibhlín Looney as Research Assistant on TRANSLATE-HIA. Steering Group members include Dr Diarmuid O'Donovan (Health Improvement team, HSE), Vinnie O'Shea (Sláintecare Healthy Communities Programme), Dr Margaret Douglas (Public Health Scotland), Bernie Connolly (The Environmental Forum), Leonora McConville (Sligo County Council), Dr Joanna Purdy (Institute of Public Health Ireland), Dr Sheena McHugh and Dr Ger Mullally (UCC).

As part of HIA-IM, a HIA implementation model is being created using action research and implementation science frameworks applied to the conduct of two HIAs. These two HIAs address the Cork City Development Plan (2022-2028) and the national Climate Action Plan 2024. These HIAs are the first of their kind in these policy areas in Ireland. Sharing the time-relevant findings in a knowledge translation context is necessary, impactful and beneficial.



BSc Public Health Sciences Students with Monica; all of whom also are part of the first cohort of students who completed the module in HIA in third year. This is the first module in HIA delivered as part of an academic programme in a university in Ireland. Left to right: Eoin Riordan, Monica O'Mullane, Nicola Batt, Immanuela Okobia

A knowledge translation event, drawing on the HIA-IM research findings, was held on Thursday 6<sup>th</sup> November in the Dr Dora Allman room in The Hub. Eibhlín Looney led the charge with wonderful event planning. There were ~60 people at the event from the HSE, NGOs, local authorities, private sector, and academic settings. Professor Ella Arensman opened the event and set an optimistic tone for the day, reminding everyone that we are not only getting going with HIA, but keeping going with the approach. Dr O'Mullane presented an overview of HIA in Ireland, the purpose of HIA-IM project, along with implementation science informed findings that Dr Kenny is working so meticulously on currently. These findings are informing a strategy for building awareness and support for HIA in Ireland. This strategy forms the basis of a Getting Going with HIA Informational Resource, which will be underpinned by HIA-IM findings, and contributions from event attendees during a World Café held in the afternoon of the event.

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Engaged attendees in the Dr Dora Allman Room

A fantastic line-up of motivating speakers shared their experience with HIA. Karen O'Mahony, Senior Executive Planner and Urban Designer for Cork City Council, who was a member of the HIA on the Cork City Development Plan HIA, spoke about Cork City Council's experience of embedding HIA. Karen recently presented on the HIA at the Healthy Cities Design Conference in Manchester, receiving a positive response in the work.

Next up was Johnny Liu, an experienced architect and urban designer, who recently led on the Health in Planning agenda at the London Borough of Tower Hamlets. Johnny spoke about integrating Health Impact Assessments into development proposals and advocating for a health-equity lens to be applied throughout the planning process. As you can see from the photo, the audience was captivated listening to Johnny!

Dr Margaret Douglas, Public Health Consultant in Public Health Scotland, spoke about her 25+ years' experience with advancing HIA in Scotland. Dr Liz Green, Public Health Wales, concluded the presentations, sharing her experience as Director of the Wales HIA Support Unit. A discussion session followed, facilitated by Denise Cahill, Coordinator of WHO Cork Healthy Cities.



Prof Ella Arensman, Eibhlín Looney, Dr Monica O'Mullane & Dr Tara Kenny

The afternoon involved a World Café with four tables facilitated by members of the TRANSLATE-HIA team. Participants engaged in the World Café in an open and committed way. This input will inform a useful and practical informational resource for getting (and keeping) going with HIA in Ireland.

# SCHOOL NEWS

## National PPI Festival Events

THE FOURTH NATIONAL PPI FESTIVAL TOOK PLACE IN OCTOBER, LAUNCHED WITH A TWO-DAY IN-PERSON EVENT IN RCSI, AND CONTINUED WITH A RANGE OF PPI FOCUSED EVENTS IN CORK AND BEYOND

### PPI Through the Research Cycle in Palliative Care Research - How to Maximise Impact

This webinar took place on the 13<sup>th</sup> of October, with 39 participants including early career researchers from AllHPC Early Career Researcher Forum and researchers from a wide range of backgrounds. The All Ireland Institute of Hospice and Palliative Care (AllHPC), a collaborative of hospices, health and social care organisations, charities, and universities on the island of Ireland, hosted this webinar. AllHPC's aim is to ensure excellent palliative care is available for everyone at the right time and place across the island of Ireland. The speakers on the day were Dr Mary Nevin, Dublin City University and AllHPC Palliative Care Research Network member, Pdraig Cronin, University College Cork, Linda Cooper, AllHPC Voices4Care member and Jane Clare, AllHPC Palliative Care Research Network Project Manager. The webinar was chaired by Dr Emmy Racine, included a short presentation on AllHPC's PPI Impact Evaluation Framework by Jane Clare AllHPC, and was followed by a panel discussion on how to understand PPI impact across the research cycle. The PPI Impact Evaluation Framework is available [here](#), and the recording is available [here](#).

### Inside a YPAG: A Lunch & Learn Webinar on Youth Involvement in Research

In4kids and the INFANT Research Centre hosted a special Lunch & Learn webinar highlighting the In4kids/CHI National Young Persons Advisory Group (YPAG). The event provided a unique opportunity to explore how a YPAG supports youth involvement in research, featuring insights from both coordinators and researchers who have collaborated with the group. The session offered valuable perspectives and practical takeaways for researchers, clinicians, and anyone interested in youth engagement in health research. You can watch a recording of the webinar here: <https://bit.ly/47YQeY0>

### PPI Partnership Kick-Off Event

The Clinical Pharmacy group of the School of Pharmacy, and the General Practice Department, held a kick-off event on the 14<sup>th</sup> of October, celebrating their new patient and public partnership. Their goal is to work together to ensure that research in clinical pharmacy (how medicines are used in real-life settings to improve patient care) and general practice is shaped by the experiences, insights, and priorities of patients and the public.

### SCOPE Lunch and Learn

On October 16<sup>th</sup>, the Standardised measurement for Childhood Obesity Prevention (SCOPE) Team hosted an event to celebrate their dedicated PPI group of mothers. SCOPE is led by Dr Karen Matvienko-Sikar and this event was led by Moira Duffy. The SCOPE PPI group is comprised of mothers of infants (<1 year old) who have meaningfully contributed to the SCOPE Project throughout 2025. The 'Lunch and Learn' event, held at the Glucksman Art Gallery on UCC Campus, provided an opportunity to thank the mothers for their invaluable input and gather their reflections on their experiences as PPI contributors. Attendees enjoyed a catered lunch from Lea's Restaurant, and each received a gift for their infants as a token of appreciation. Following lunch, the mothers took part in a discussion about their involvement in the PPI group. Their insights are being compiled into a video that will be featured on the SCOPE Project website and in future research conference presentations.



YPAG WEBINAR



MEMBERS OF THE SCOPE TEAM: MOIRA DUFFY, EIBHLÍN LOONEY, DR DIMITY DUTCH (L-R)

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### **A Seat at the Table: How you can help make healthy eating easier in your community**

The Food Policy Research Team hosted this event in the Ballyphehane Community Centre on the 21st October. FPRT postdoc Mags Steele chaired the panel made up of PI Janas Harrington, PPI panel member Leigh Quirke, and Niamh O'Leary, Community Health and Nutrition Worker based at the Glen Resource Centre on the northside of the city. Mags and Janas described the work of the FPRT and the importance of PPI, while Niamh and Leigh discussed challenges around healthy eating, including the cost of living, and mis and disinformation on social media. A highlight of the event was the lively discussion from members of the public, including highly insightful and impactful points from two mothers, who spoke about the need for more research in relation to social media and nutrition. We had twelve attendees, including our SPH colleague Julia Banasiak. Six of the attendees have expressed interest in joining our PPI panel, and a follow up meeting will be held in the coming weeks.



**A SEAT AT THE TABLE EVENT**



**BREASTFEEDING RESEARCH COFFEE MORNING – HOLDING THE QUILT THAT MOTHERS SIGNED WITH THE ECONOMIC VALUE OF BREASTFEEDING THEIR CHILDREN USING [MOTHERSMILKTOOL.ORG](https://www.mothersmilktool.org). CONTRIBUTIONS REPRESENTED A COLLECTIVE ECONOMIC VALUE OF €452,488.**

### **Breastfeeding Research Coffee Morning**

This event took place on November 1st at the Tralee Bay Wetlands Eco & Activity Park. The event was co-created through PPI to celebrate the valuable PPI contributions within the study to date. The PPI-selected venue provided a welcoming space that balanced the playful energy of children, the caring needs of families, and the collaborative spirit of PPI. Families and community members dropped in at their own pace to learn about the study and share their insights on breastfeeding support in Tralee. Refreshments were provided for parents and children, along with a play area filled with toys for the kids. Mothers were invited to use [mothersmilktool.org](https://www.mothersmilktool.org), a website that estimates the economic value of breastfeeding their children. They recorded their value on a quilt square, adding drawings to represent themselves, their children, and their support networks. Together, these contributions represented a collective economic value of €452,488.

# SCHOOL NEWS



## The PPI Ignite Network@ UCC held three events as part of the National Festival



### Ignite Insight: PPI in PhD Research Symposium

On the 15<sup>th</sup> of October, the PPI Ignite Network @ UCC hosted an inspiring day of discussion, learning, and collaboration at the PPI in PhD Research Symposium 2025, bringing together researchers, students, and PPI contributors from across Ireland and beyond. The keynote address was delivered by Sally Crowe, a renowned Research Coach and PPI Champion from the Oxford and Thames Valley Applied Research Network. Drawing on over 30 years of experience, she shared reflections on "The Human Face of Research," exploring the evolving role of public contributors in driving research excellence. Other talks throughout the day included Sinéad O'Brien (University of Limerick), Dr Sinéad Hynes (University of Galway), Lea Schäfer (University College Dublin) and a PPI panel discussion chaired by Sarah Barnes Aabo featuring Carmel Geoghegan, Ger Horgan, Chrys Ngwa, and Ashling O'Leary. The afternoon session offered interactive workshops in key PPI skills and practice, as well as a roundtable discussion.



### Introduction to PPI Workshop

An introductory workshop was held on the 22<sup>nd</sup> of October, facilitated by Dr Emmy Racine and Dr Aideen McCabe. This workshop gave attendees a brief overview of the definition and rationale for PPI, presented case examples of successful PPI and facilitated a discussion among attendees to plan their PPI approach.



### PPI Shared Learning Group for PhD Researchers

The Shared Learning Group for PhD Researchers met on the 31<sup>st</sup> of October. For the PPI Festival, we had two researchers Katarina Medved and Paula Leocadio, give flash talks on their PPI approaches as part of a "PPI Taster Session".



# SCHOOL NEWS



PPI IGNITE NETWORK

## Reflection on the PHD event from Laura-Jane McCarthy PHD STUDENT IN THE SCHOOL OF PUBLIC HEALTH

*"Since starting my PhD in 2023 and beginning my PPI journey, I have been fortunate to attend this symposium for the past two years. This year was a bit different, though; I was not just attending, I was part of the organising team! I am grateful for the opportunity to work alongside colleagues from the School of Public Health and those across the wider UCC community and beyond. Being involved behind the scenes gave me real insight into what goes into planning and running an event like this, from the early preparation stages to the logistics on the day. It was a brilliant learning experience that I will carry forward.*

*The symposium programme offered something for everyone. We heard from PhD students, PhD supervisors, and PPI contributors, each of whom shared their experiences and reflections. What struck me most this year was the number of PPI contributors who attended the symposium. The panel session led by Sarah Barnes Aabo and four very experienced PPI contributors was a real highlight: open, honest, and full of insight. Hearing directly from the contributors about their experiences was incredibly valuable. I found the talk "Too Many Cooks? Supervisors' Perspectives of PPI" by Dr Sinéad Hynes, University of Galway, was particularly insightful. Her honesty about the emotional and practical challenges her students face in embedding PPI resonated with me and offered reassurance. The symposium also provided me with the opportunity to connect with fellow PhD students. These informal chats helped build a sense of community and support, which is important during the PhD journey.*

*Overall, the event reinforced my commitment to embedding meaningful PPI in my research, and it was lovely to be part of the team that made it happen."*

## 8th International FOHNEU Congress Comes to Cork

On 2-3 October 2025, the 8<sup>th</sup> International Occupational Health Congress of the Federation of Occupational Health Nurses in the European Union came to Cork!

The conference was chaired by an alumnus of the MSc in Occupational Health programme, Una Feeney, who is the Global Employee Health & Wellbeing Director with Eli Lilly and current Chair of the Occupational Health Nursing Section of the Irish Nurses and Midwives Organisation (INMO). As a part of the congress, Dr Caleb Leduc delivered a presentation on Challenges and Opportunities in Creating and Supporting Mentally Healthy Workplaces.



The School of Public Health was delighted to have obtained institutional livestream access for the Congress, allowing all staff and students within the College of Medicine and Health within UCC the opportunity to participate in the congress virtually.

All of the sessions and presentations have been recorded and are available for viewing [here](#).

# SCHOOL NEWS

## Health Implementation Research Hub Autumn Events

*The Health Implementation Research Hub's (HIRH) have hosted several events this autumn.*

In August, we hosted a Qualitative Analysis Database Training on NVivo, funded by the HRB's Research Leader Award (CUSTOMISE), and the School of Public Health. The two-day course was delivered by Ben Meehan from Lumivero and attended by UCC researchers and PhD students, primarily from the School of Public Health, General Practice, Nursing, and Pharmacy.

In September, we hosted adjunct professor and implementation expert, Professor Byron Powell, from the Brown School, Washington University in St. Louis, USA. Byron delivered a hybrid seminar entitled: "Tailoring Implementation Strategies to Strengthen Global Public Health: What We Know and What's Next?" The seminar attracted a strong audience, with Professor Powell delivering an engaging presentation on improving health service quality through the development and evaluation of implementation strategies and research methods.

On February 12<sup>th</sup> 2026, HIRH hosted the rearranged 90-minute online CFIR training course with Dr Claire Kerins from University of Galway postponed from October.

*CFIR is one of the most widely applied implementation science frameworks used to predict or explain barriers and facilitators to implementation success. This workshop introduced participants to the updated CFIR framework and provided an overview of how to apply it in implementation research across diverse settings. Using tools and templates from the recently published CFIR User Guide, participants learned how to use CFIR across different phases of implementation projects. The workshop also addressed frequently asked questions that arise when applying CFIR*



### Madison Curran joined the Health Implementation Research Hub as a research assistant

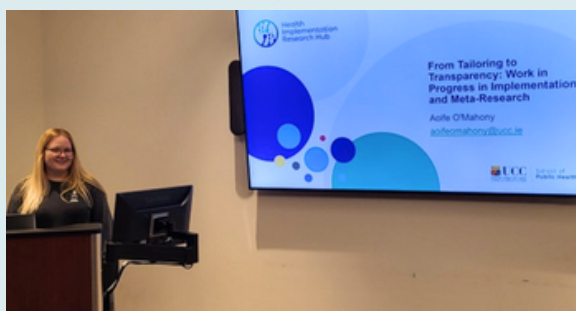
Madison recently completed the Master of Public Health (MPH) programme at University College Cork (UCC), having submitted her dissertation at the beginning of September. Her research focused on a quantitative study examining childhood obesity and its association with socioeconomic status indicators throughout early and later childhood. Prior to undertaking the MPH, Madison completed a dual bachelor's degree (B.Sc.) in Forensic Science and Anthropology in her home country, Canada. Over the summer, she worked with the HIRH as a student researcher, primarily under the supervision of Dr. Aoife O'Mahony on the HPV Vaccine Project. This project was commissioned by the National Screening Service and involves a rapid review of the evidence on barriers and enablers to HPV vaccination uptake among Roma, Traveller and migrant communities.



# SCHOOL NEWS

## Research Exchange Visit to the Centre for Practice-Changing Research

*Ottawa Hospital Research Institute*



*In June, Dr Aoife O'Mahony from the Health Implementation Hub, travelled to Canada to visit the Centre for Practice-Changing Research (CPCR) at the Ottawa Hospital Research Institute. The CPCR brings together interdisciplinary teams of scientists, clinicians, and methodologists to improve health outcomes through implementation science, clinical trials, and meta-research.*

The ten-day visit was hosted by Dr Justin Presseau, whose work in implementation science and behaviour change intersects closely with Aoife's, and who is a frequent collaborator with UCC's Health Implementation Research Hub. The exchange was supported by Dr Sheena McHugh's HRB Research Leader Award, which builds capacity and innovation in implementation science.

Aoife's visit centred on connecting her work in implementation science, evidence synthesis, and meta-research with CPCR's internationally recognised work in these areas. She met with Prof. David Moher, Dr Brian Hutton, Prof. Jamie Brehaut, and Dr Manoj Lalu, as well as Dr Kelly Cobey from the University of Ottawa Heart Institute. Topics discussed included:

- Research transparency and preregistration of research protocols
- The role of public and patient engagement in health research
- Approaches to building trust in healthcare evidence and countering misinformation
- The use of AI tools in evidence synthesis and meta-research, including their opportunities and limitations



Health  
Implementation  
Research Hub

During the visit, Aoife delivered a talk on her ongoing UCC work, including mixed-methods research on tailoring implementation strategies and a methodological study of discrepancies in scoping reviews. She also discussed her earlier work on the Registered Reports format, an open science initiative to improve the rigour and transparency of peer-reviewed publications.

The exchange provided practical feedback on current projects and helped identify areas of mutual interest that may be explored further. It also reflects UCC's commitment to integrating transparency, trust, and implementation science into health research and policy.

# SCHOOL NEWS

## EAOHP Policy Event at the ILO



To read the full event summary (source of images) [CLICK HERE](#)

The European Academy of Occupational Health Psychology (EAOHP) hosted a policy event, bringing together global leaders, policymakers, and experts to advance the conversation on psychosocial risks and mental health at work, from the 9<sup>th</sup> to 10<sup>th</sup> October 2025 at the International Labour Organization in Geneva, Switzerland.

The event kicked off with a deep dive into the UN system, featuring a high-level roundtable with senior figures from the United Nations, UNHCR, the UN Refugee Agency, World Intellectual Property Organization, UNICEF, World Food Programme and the World Bank. Practical case studies from various UN agencies highlighted the real-world challenges and innovative solutions being implemented.

In his capacity as Executive Committee member with the EAOHP, Dr Caleb Leduc chaired a session on Day 2; a powerful keynote from Yolanda Diaz, Second Deputy Prime Minister of Spain & Ministerio de Trabajo y Economía Social, who shared insights from Spain's progressive labour reforms. Subsequently, lessons were shared from policymakers in Colombia, Italy, Finland, Chile, and France, followed by a crucial stakeholder roundtable with MEPs and representatives from the ISO – International Organization for Standardization, European Agency for Safety and Health at Work (EU-OSHA), Eurocadres, International Commission on Occupational Health (ICOH), and European Trade Union Institute (ETUI) amongst many others to align policy and build partnerships.

The culmination of these rich discussions was the signing of the Geneva Partnership Commitment, a first of its kind agreement of collaboration between the EAOHP, the Asia-Pacific Academy for Psychosocial Factors at Work (APA-PFAW), the Society for Occupational Health Psychology (SOHP), and ICOH-WOPS. This network will drive the development of evidence-based policies and practices to protect worker mental health worldwide.

View the Geneva Partnership Commitment: <https://lnkd.in/eF-aJKwP>



# SCHOOL NEWS

## ERASMUS+ grant: GREEN-TRIALS

Congratulations to Prof Frances Shiely on the recent ERASMUS+ grant. Generating Resilient, Environmental Education and Training for Sustainable Clinical Trials- GREEN-TRIALS. €400,000. This will be led by Masaryk University with partners in Cyprus, Portugal, ECRIN. UCC team include Vincent Russell and Séamus O'Reilly.



**GREEN TRIALS**  
Generating resilient environmental education and training

Generating Resilient, Environmental Education and Training for Sustainable Clinical Trials  
ERASMUS+ 2025-1-CZ01-KA220-HED-000355652

- Consortium leader: Jitka Rychlíčková, Masaryk University, CZ
- Implementation: 1.11.2025–31.10.2028
- Expected results:

- online, open access curriculum
- learning management system
- teacher's guide
- translation to four languages
- pilot course
- educator training course
- workshops for knowledgeable population

Partners: HUNT Masaryk University, UCC, UNIVERSITY OF NICOSIA, ECRIN, NAVA

Map showing project locations in Europe.

## Open access SWAT Protocol and Resources (PRESS)



Health Research Board **TMRN** Trials Methodology Research Network

**HRB-TMRN / MRC-NIHR-TMRP Working Group Project Seed Funding Award 2023**

Trials Methodology **TMRP** Research Partnership

**Project Title:** Protocol and resources development for prioritised recruitment and retention strategies (PRESS)

**Irish Lead:** Dr Frances Shiely, University College Cork

**UK Lead:** Dr Adwoa Parker, University of York

**Working Group:** Trial Conduct

**Co-Applicants:** Prof Shaun Treweek, University of Aberdeen; Ms Catherine Arundel, University of York; Dr Hanne Bruhn, University of Aberdeen and University College Cork; Dr Chris Sutton, University of Manchester

Learn more about the Trials Methodology Working Groups: <https://www.methodologyhubs.mrc.ac.uk/about/working-groups/>  
X @hrbtmrn @MRCNIHRTMRP

The PRESS project developed SWAT protocols and associated resources to make it easier for trial teams to adopt and implement evaluations of priority SWATs. The purpose was to focus trialists' attention on specific evidence gaps, leading to faster generation of evidence to improve recruitment and retention strategies.

### PRESS results:

1. Master SWAT Protocol Template
2. Four randomised SWAT recruitment protocols
3. Three randomised SWAT retention protocols
4. Co-produce two PPI focused randomised SWAT protocols
5. Ethics application templates and wording for trial teams, adapted for practices in the UK and Ireland for all nine protocols
6. Two Statistical Analysis Plan templates, one for the randomised recruitment SWATs and one for the randomised retention SWATs
7. Funding guidance for researchers applying for funding to conduct the high-priority SWATs of recruitment and retention strategies
8. Health Economics guidance to evaluate cost effectiveness of the prioritised randomised recruitment and retention SWATs

The resources and materials are all available open access on the Trial Forge Website  
<https://www.trialforge.org/>  
and on the OSF

# SCHOOL NEWS

## MSc in Infection Prevention and Control (IPC) Students and Graduates Sharing their IPC Research

We are delighted to congratulate the MSc in Infection Prevention and Control students, Elizabeth Cunningham and Elaine Molony and graduate, Pamela Landers who presented posters of their IPC research at the Infection Prevention Society conference in Brighton in September! A fantastic showcase of practical meaningful IPC research being implemented by these dynamic clinical specialists.

All studies were conducted in the healthcare setting to generate information to inform clinical practice.

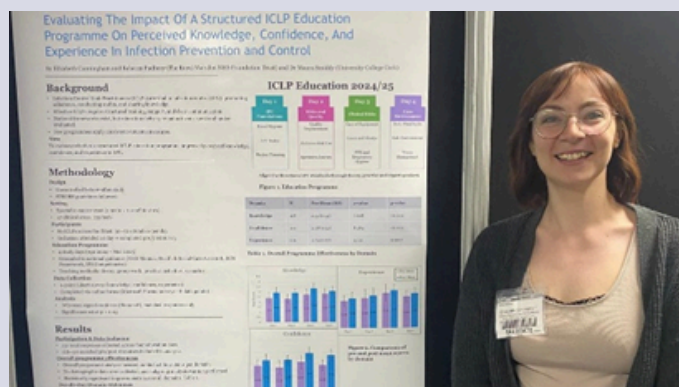


### Elaine Molony (2024 – 2025 Cohort)

Elaine focused on the challenges associated with antimicrobial stewardship (AMS) in nursing homes in Ireland (N=145) with findings indicating awareness of antimicrobial stewardship was high (96%) with antimicrobial stewardship policies present in 84% of homes. While 73% of participants reported that they had received antimicrobial stewardship training 83% of participants expressed a need for further education and training. The information generated will inform AMS education and practice in the nursing home sector.

### Elizabeth Cunningham (2024 – 2025 Cohort)

Elizabeth evaluated IPC Link Practitioner (before and after), knowledge, confidence, and experience engaging in a targeted four-day IPC educational programme. Statistically significant improvements were observed across all three domains of knowledge, confidence and experience; however, two of the four days saw no statistically significant improvement in related to the domain of experience. This information will inform future training methods.



### Pamela Landers (2023 – 2024 Cohort)

Pamela conducted a qualitative study of perceived achievements of learning outcomes of the National Infection Prevention and Control Link Practitioner Programme within Older Persons Services in Ireland and was invited to provide an oral presentation of her research. Findings indicated a positive impact on education, audit, AMS and IPC culture balanced with the challenges of lack of time, poor peer support and older structural environments. The findings support the value of the National IPC Link Practitioner programme and identify areas for future research and improvement.

**CONGRATULATIONS TO ALL THREE ON A WONDERFUL REPRESENTATION OF THEMSELVES, THEIR RESEARCH, THE MSc IN IPC AND THE SCHOOL OF PUBLIC HEALTH!**

# SCHOOL NEWS

## Nora O'Connor Wins Best Student Oral Presentation at the UCC CoMH Research Conference



The UCC College of Medicine and Health (CoMH) Research Conference in September recognised outstanding student research, with **Nora O'Connor** taking home the award for "Best Student Oral Presentation" for her impactful 3-minute elevator pitch.

Nora's presentation, entitled "Identifying Systematic Leverage Points to Minimise Food Related Inequalities in the South Side of Cork City, Ireland", drew from her dissertation research for the Master of Public Health (MPH) programme at University College Cork. Her work was carried out in collaboration with the FOODPATH project, specifically contributing to the Group Model Building (GMB) sessions under Work Package 1.

Throughout the past year, Nora has been working as an intern with the UCC School of Public Health's Food Policy Research Team, where she played a key role in planning, facilitating, and analysing the GMB sessions. Her contribution has been central to understanding and mapping the complex systems influencing food-related inequalities in Cork's south side communities.

The Food Policy Research Team and the School of Public Health congratulates Nora on this well-deserved achievement and welcomes her to her new role as Research Assistant. We are looking forward to seeing her continued impact in the field of public health and food policy research.

## Health Implementation Research Hub presentations at the UCC CoMH Research Conference



Members of the Health Implementation Research Hub showcased ongoing research at the recent College of Medicine and Health conference.

**Aoife O'Mahony** presented a poster entitled Exploring Methodological Discrepancies between Protocols and Published Scoping Reviews, describing an ongoing study which examines how often scoping reviews deviate from their preregistered protocols, the types of changes made, and whether these changes are transparently reported. Using implementation science as an exemplar field, this meta-research demonstrates the need for greater clarity and consistency in how scoping review methods and changes are documented, and highlights opportunities to strengthen transparency and reporting practices. Findings will help inform future guidance on developing and documenting scoping review protocols.



**Laura-Jane McCarthy** presented a poster entitled General practitioners and women's experiences of perimenopause consultations: a protocol for qualitative evidence synthesis and meta-ethnography. This is the first study of her PhD and uses a meta-ethnographic approach to explore the experiences and perceptions of women and GPs in relation to perimenopause consultations in general practice. It seeks to understand how these consultations are experienced, how treatment decisions are made, and which aspects of the consultation process are working well or may require improvement. The findings will contribute to a deeper understanding of perimenopause care and inform the development of future interventions to support the management of perimenopause in general practice.

# SCHOOL NEWS

## Food Policy Research Team Presented three posters at the CoMH Research Conference

"Academic Health Sciences System" was the theme this year at the CoMH Research Conference 2025 hosted by UCC's College of Medicine and Health.

Through their FOODPATH and FEAST Projects, the Food Policy Research Team explores how policies can shape healthier, more sustainable food environments in Cork City. While challenges such as socioeconomic factors and governance fragmentation remain, the team's findings highlight that local leadership, community initiatives, and stronger policy alignment across local, national, and EU levels can make real transformation possible.

**Margaret Steele** presented the poster, "Industry Impact on Food Environments in Ireland". **Kristen Herrera** presented the poster, "Barriers and Facilitators to Support Healthier and Sustainable Food Environments in Cork City" and **Angela Elipokea** presented the poster "Public perception of food policies for transitioning to healthy and sustainable food systems in Europe."



## Keynote lecture at the 55th Annual National Suicide Prevention Conference, Paris

Prof Ella Arensman presented a keynote lecture on 'Do National Suicide Prevention Strategies Work?' at the 55th Annual National Suicide Prevention Conference in France on 24<sup>th</sup> September. This lecture aimed to provide an update of national suicide prevention strategies and outcomes of available evaluations. The lecture specifically focused on:

- Recent trends in suicide and self-harm
- The Status of National Suicide Prevention Strategies at Global Level
- Impact of National Suicide Prevention Strategies
- Evaluation of National Suicide Prevention Strategies: Barriers and Facilitators
- Priorities for Suicide Prevention in Changing Environments



Overall, evaluations of national suicide prevention strategies reveal mixed outcomes in terms of impacts on suicide and non-fatal self-harm. However, implementation research is often lacking, and which limits the evaluation of the quality and intensity of the implementation of national suicide prevention strategies. In terms of explaining the variable outcomes of strategy evaluations, it may take longer than anticipated to show an effect, or to identify an effect only in certain subgroups (intensity and consolidation of actions and interventions). In addition to reductions in suicide, other outcome indicators need to be considered, such as secondary or in intermediate outcome indicators, including non-fatal self-harm, awareness of suicide risk factors, access to quality health care, access to lethal means of suicide, and numbers of people hospitalized after an act of self-harm. Lack of information as to whether specific actions and interventions had been implemented or, if implemented, the quality, scale, intensity, completeness, and timing of the implementation process should also be considered.

# SCHOOL NEWS

## SCOPE Project at the European Congress on Obesity

**Moira Duffy** and **Eibhlín Looney**, Research Assistants on the SCOPE project, presented at the 2025 European Congress on Obesity (ECO), in Malaga, Spain, from 11th to 14th May. Organised by the European Association for the Study of Obesity (EASO), ECO is the largest annual scientific congress on obesity in Europe.

Moira delivered an oral presentation entitled *“What aspects of Outcome Measurement Instruments are important to parents and caregivers in child health studies?”*

Eibhlín presented two posters on behalf of the SCOPE team. The first was *“Factors influencing use and choice of Core Outcome Sets and Core Outcome Measurement Sets in trials of interventions to prevent childhood obesity”*. The second poster was *“Outcome measurement instruments used to measure infant diet, feeding practices, environment, and anthropometric outcomes: A scoping review”*.



## Erasmus Teaching Visit to Karolinska Institutet



Dr Leduc with hosts from Karolinska Institutet: Dr Emma Cedstrand (Left), Dr Emma Brulin (Right) and Dr Gun Johansson (Rear).

From 11–16 May 2025, **Dr Caleb Leduc** had the opportunity to undertake an ERASMUS Teaching Visit to the Unit of Occupational Medicine at the Institute of Environmental Medicine in Karolinska Institutet, Stockholm, Sweden. Over the course of the week, Dr Leduc delivered both in-person and online lectures and workshops to masters and doctoral students.

On the Master’s in Work and Health programme, Dr Leduc facilitated lectures and interactive discussions within a module on the evaluation of psychosocial work environment interventions, first looking at effectiveness, or how we answer “did it work?”, and subsequently at implementation “who did it work for, and why?”.

For doctoral candidates within the Unit of Occupational Medicine, Dr Leduc facilitated two half-day workshops: the first, a more theoretically and methodologically rooted: ‘Psychosocial Work Environment Interventions: Answering “Why and how should I go about it?”’, while the second was more practically oriented, “Introduction to Systematic Literature Review Methodology”.

Dr Leduc is grateful for the funding support of the Erasmus Teaching Staff programme, and to his hosts at Karolinska for a productive and inspirational week!



## Food Policy Research Team welcomes MPH student, Kendall Visco, to the group as a Student Intern until September 2026

Kendall Visco is currently a Master’s in Public Health student and an intern with the Food Policy Research Team at UCC School of Public Health. She has a BSc in Pre-medicine from the University of Dayton in the United States. Her research interests include food insecurities and their impact on long-term health, food policy, and global food systems.

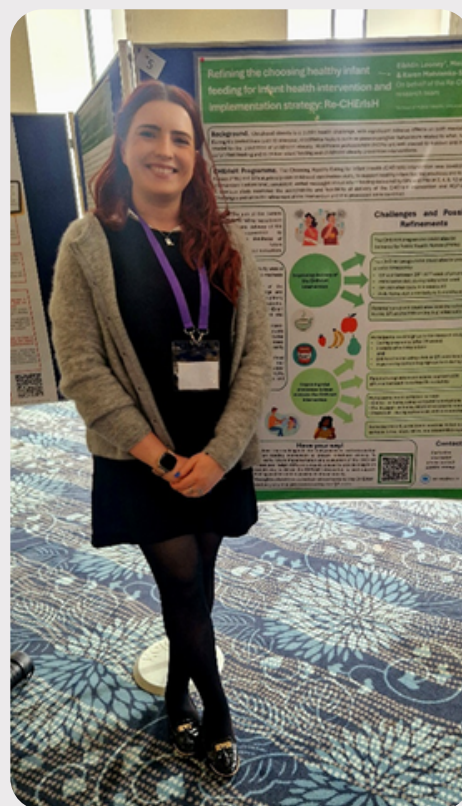
# SCHOOL NEWS

## SCOPE and Re-CHERISH Projects at the Psychology, Health and Medicine Conference

**Eibhlín Looney**, Research Assistant on the SCOPE and Re-CHERISH projects, presented at the Psychology, Health and Medicine (PHM) Annual Conference 2025, at Queen's University Belfast on May 27th. Eibhlín delivered a lightning talk entitled "What aspects of Outcome Measurement Instruments are important to parents and caregivers in child health studies?"



Eibhlín also presented two posters at PHM this year. The first poster was "Outcome measurement instruments used to measure infant diet, feeding practices, environment, and anthropometric outcomes: A scoping review". The second poster was titled "Refining the choosing healthy infant feeding for infant health intervention and implementation strategy: Re-CHERISH".



## SCOPE Project at the International Society of Behavioural Nutrition and Physical Activity Annual Conference



**Dr Dimity Dutch**, postdoctoral researcher on the SCOPE Project attended the International Society of Behavioural Nutrition and Physical Activity Annual Conference held in Tāmaki Makaurau Auckland, New Zealand (11–14 June).

Dimity presented two posters on behalf of the SCOPE project team:

- "What aspects of outcome measurement instruments are important to parents/caregivers in child health trials".
- "Factors influencing use and choice of Core Outcome Sets and Outcome Measurement Instruments in trials of interventions to prevent childhood obesity".

Dimity also presented the findings of her PhD research which explored child health behaviour screening in Australian primary health care.

# SCHOOL NEWS

## SCOPE Project at the European Health Psychology Society Conference

The SCOPE Project team were delighted to lead a rich and inspiring symposium at the European Health Psychology Society (EHPS) Conference, held in beautiful Groningen, The Netherlands from 26-29th August.

The symposium was convened by SCOPE PI, Dr Karen Matvienko-Sikar, and was titled *"Supporting Healthy Child Growth and Preventing Obesity: Evidence and Innovative Methods in Research and Practice"*. It brought together international experts to share novel and collaborative methods for the development, implementation, and evaluation of child obesity prevention initiatives. These included SCOPE Postdoctoral Researcher Dr Dimity Dutch, Professor Sarah Redsell (University of Nottingham), Professor Anna Lene Seidler (University Medical Centre Rostock), and Professor Luke Wolfenden (University of Newcastle).



Dimity was awarded an EHPS Conference Grant to support her conference attendance and the CREATE pre-conference workshop for early career researchers on Open Science Practices.

## SCOPE and Re-CHERISH Projects at the UCC College of Medicine and Health Conference

The SCOPE Project team were excited to share their research at this year's University College Cork College of Medicine and Health Research Conference on September 3rd.

Eibhlín Looney presented updates from the Re-CHERISH Project (Refining the Choosing Healthy Eating for Infant Health intervention and implementation strategy) during the "Latest Advances" sessions.

SCOPE Project research was also on display in the poster sessions, presented by Dr Dimity Dutch *"Developing a Core Outcome Measurement Set for Infant Feeding"* and Moira Duffy *"What aspects of Outcome Measurement Instruments are important to parents and caregivers in child health studies?"*.



# SCHOOL NEWS

## Public Health and Planning team up on a SATLE Project to Develop Teaching Methods and Tools for Enhancing Healthy Places!

Creating Healthy Places: Exploring teaching methods and tools for enhancing healthy places (HealthyPlaces) is a collaborative pilot project co-led by Dr Monica O'Mullane in the School of Public Health and Jeanette Fitzsimons in the Department of Planning.



The project is supported by the Office of Vice-President for Learning and Teaching, the Centre for the Integration of Research, Teaching and Learning (CIRTL), and the National Forum. The project involves testing teaching and learning methods with students of public health and planning to create sustainable, healthy places, using tools, including Health Impact Assessment (HIA) and Place Standard Tool (PST), as a basis for co-creating a future joint microcredential. Healthy urban planning guru Marcus Grant will collaborate on the project, working with the team in preparing and facilitating a world café with public health and planning students, to elicit their perspectives in testing the use and application of HIA and PST. The project is a pathway to developing curriculum within UCC across public health and planning disciplines, which are already such close theoretical and historical partners. More to be announced as the project progresses!

## School of Public Health Transition Year Programme

Earlier this year, the School of Public Health was delighted to welcome 16 Transition Year (TY) students from five different schools for a three-day taster of Public Health.

The programme, organised by Dr Maura Smiddy, Chair SPH Civic and Community Engagement Committee (SPH CCEC), and Prof Janas Harrington, Director BSc in Public Health, included support from a wide range of staff from the school, including Kate O' Neill, Paul Beirne, Colette Cunningham, Julia Banasiak and Aoife O' Mahony. The programme included specific TY lectures on the core elements of public health, the opportunity to sit in on first years BSc in Public Health lectures, and additional interactive events such as a tour of the Main Campus, a "thinking like a scientist" session and an interactive hand hygiene workshop. Participants also had the opportunity to engage with and hear about the BSc in Public Health Sciences from two fantastic 4<sup>th</sup> year students and members of the SPH CCEC, Joseph O' Keeffe and Chloe McDonagh. Joe and Chloe provided an engaging overview of their travels on an Erasmus semester and a valuable opportunity for the TY students to ask questions. A huge thank you to both of them!

Eleven of the sixteen students participated in providing feedback for the week. When asked what public health meant to them students feedback is presented below.



Practical hand hygiene technique practice with TY Students



TY Student thoughts on what Public Health meant to them at the end of the programme.

Additional feedback about their experience was positive with student indicating their interest in Public Health and consideration of it as a future possibility, "I am going to consider doing public health more as I didn't know how many routes you can take", and "public health is a pretty good course, I was expecting very different and I will definitely be thinking about doing it".

# SCHOOL NEWS

## Department of Health Launch of the Patient and Staff Stories' Project regarding Antimicrobial Resistance, Infection Prevention and Control, and Sepsis, knowledge, practices, experiences and perceptions

The launch of the Patient and Staff Stories' Project regarding Antimicrobial Resistance, Infection Prevention and Control, and Sepsis, knowledge, practices, experiences and perceptions took place on the 8<sup>th</sup> of September in the Department of Health, Dublin. Dr Maura Smiddy was delighted to be able to contribute to this valuable research led by Dr Aoife Fleming, School of Pharmacy, UCC.

The report provides detailed insights into the experiences of those who have experienced antimicrobial resistance, infections and sepsis and the experiences of the healthcare workers caring for them. The report provides a narrative of peoples lived experience and the long-term impacts of these events on their health and wellbeing.

These findings will inform future actions to improve education, understanding and implementation of healthcare activities to reduce the risk of AMR, infection and sepsis to reduce morbidity and mortality and improve patient outcomes.



[CLICK  
HERE  
to access  
the full  
document](#)



Clara Heinrich, Maura Smiddy, Aoife Fleming (PI), Teresa Barbosa, Kevin Murphy.  
Additional Authors not in image: Michelle O' Driscoll, Sandra Murphy



## Family-based intervention programs are insufficient to prevent child obesity

A major international study, led by Dr Kylie Hunter at The University of Sydney, and co-authored by Dr Karen Matvienko-Sikar, recently published in The Lancet has found that early, family-based intervention programs do not improve body mass index in young children. The research, involving data from 31 international studies, found no meaningful difference in BMI between children who participated in the programs and those who did not.

The study forms part of the TOPCHILD Collaboration, a global network of 70 researchers from 47 institutions, contributing to the largest early childhood obesity prevention database to date, encompassing nearly 30,000 children. Findings highlight the need for broader systemic change to address the social and environmental factors driving early childhood obesity, not just targeting parental behaviour. Click here to read more: <https://www.ucc.ie/en/news/2025/family-based-intervention-programs-are-insufficient-to-prevent-child-obesity-major-study-finds.html>

# SCHOOL NEWS

## Visiting Scholar Dr Jessica Appleton

The SCOPE Project team were delighted to welcome Dr Jessica Appleton, visiting scholar from the University of Technology Sydney, Australia to the School of Public Health in October. Dr Appleton is a registered nurse, lecturer, and researcher with expertise in infant feeding and nutrition, health promotion, and child and family health.

On Thursday 23<sup>rd</sup> October, Dr Appleton presented a seminar titled "Support and health promotion for families with infants and young children". In this seminar Dr Appleton shared her research on supporting optimal infant and child growth, highlighting the interactions between the carer and infant dyad are influenced by the wider social, cultural, and economic environments, and how health and early years professionals can provide support and health promotion for families. Thank you to everyone who attended in-person and online.



## MSc in Occupational Health Programmes host Erasmus+ Traineeship Visiting Lecturer

The MSc Occupational Health Programmes Team was delighted to welcome Dr Joana Amaro, an invited assistant professor at the Faculty of Medicine and a member of the Epidemiology Research Unit (EPIUnit), of the Institute of Public Health of the University of Porto, to the School of Public Health from 20<sup>th</sup> October – 23<sup>rd</sup> October.

Dr Amaro was successful in receiving funding via the Erasmus+ Staff Mobility for Training from the University of Porto to collaborate with Dr Mallorie Leduc, Academic Director of the MSc in Occupational Health (Online), on a 4-day training visit.



Dr Amaro is currently leading on the development of a distance learning Master's program in Occupational Health for Portuguese-speaking students. While visiting the School, sessions were held by Dr Mallorie Leduc, Dr Caleb Leduc, and Ms Michelle Syron, to highlight and discuss learnings from the MSc in Occupational Health programmes, accreditation process, and module-level delivery. Dr Amaro attended live synchronous student sessions and also stakeholder meetings. Dr Maura Smiddy shared insights into the development of an online

programme. A visit was also undertaken to Optima Health for a discussion with experienced Module Coordinators and Occupational Health Physicians, Prof John Gallagher and Dr Rozali Athanasaki.

# SCHOOL NEWS



## Strengthening Infection Prevention and Control in Long-Term Care

LESSONS FROM A LANDMARK EDUCATION INITIATIVE BASED IN THE SCHOOL OF PUBLIC HEALTH, UNIVERSITY COLLEGE CORK

We were delighted to see the collaborative [Competency-Based Evaluation of the Postgraduate Certificate in Infection Prevention and Control \(IPC\) \(2020-2023\)](#), published in October 2025 in conjunction with colleagues from Leading Healthcare Providers (LHP) Skillnet. The research team from the School of Public Health included Maura Smiddy, Sinéad Creedon, Fiona Barry and Julie Arnott. Collaborators from LHP Skillnet included Carmel Kelly, Managing Director, and Clodagh Kileen, Learning and Development Project Manager.

The aim of the report was to evaluate and explore the impact of completion of the PG Cert in IPC on clinical practice in long-term residential care facilities.

A mixed methods convergent design was used which was framed on the World Health Organization, Infection Prevention Society and Health Service Executive IPC competencies of Leadership, Education, Clinical Practice, Microbiology and Surveillance and Quality Improvement and Patient Safety. Data included, quantitative data from student feedback, programme advisory panel feedback, external examiner feedback, an IPC competency-based survey and qualitative data from IPC competency-based semi-structured interviews.

Participants shared high levels of satisfaction related to experience, engagement, content, assessment and practical learning. Challenges were associated with peer collaboration, workload and online learning.



THE FINDINGS WERE PRESENTED AT THE INFECTION PREVENTION SOCIETY CONFERENCE IN BRIGHTON, SEPT 2025

- Leadership was evidenced through enhanced professional credibility reflected in statements such as, “people listened to things that needed to improve.”
- Over 90% of graduates felt confident to lead IPC Education for their organisation.
- The Clinical Practice competency showed 95% of graduates feeling they had fully or partially achieved this competency with everyone reporting confidence in conducting risk assessments and applying standard precautions.
- The Microbiology and Surveillance competency was less prominently achieved compared to other competencies, with 83% of graduates indicating they had achieved this competency. This may reflect the traditionally lower emphasis on microbiological surveillance within LTCFs.
- All graduates reported they were able to identify Quality Improvement (QI) and Patient Safety opportunities, with 95% feeling capable of implementing QI initiatives, including data collection to inform practice.

### Key Takeaways / Recommendations

- Evaluation of all clinical programmes to ensure they are “fit for purpose”. This should ideally be framed using discipline relevant competencies to establish application to clinical practice.
- Engage in formal methods of seeking graduate feedback in relation to programmes to fully assess the clinical impact of engagement and completion. Utilise the findings to support development of changes to the practical facilitation and management of the programme.
- Shared methodological approach so it can be adapted for other programme evaluations.
- Shared findings to highlight strengths and weaknesses and how these may be harnessed to improve the student learning experience and clinical value of programmes to support shared learning and enhance teaching and learning.
- Continued engagement with graduates to support programme review and development into the future e.g. advisory panel, other professional activities, research, teaching.

This report examines the programme’s development, implementation, and outcomes, capturing valuable insights into how collaborative, needs-driven education can:

- Address national IPC priorities
- Enhance quality and safety of care in LTCFs
- Build a more resilient, better-prepared healthcare workforce
- Evaluate outcomes in terms of competency attainment among programme participants



A competency-based evaluation of a Postgraduate Certificate in Infection Prevention and Control (2020-2023)

October 2025



VISIT THE LHP SKILLNET BLOG TO READ THE FULL REPORT



# SCHOOL NEWS

## Driving Innovation in Infection Prevention & Control (IPC) Education and Research **A YEAR IN REVIEW**

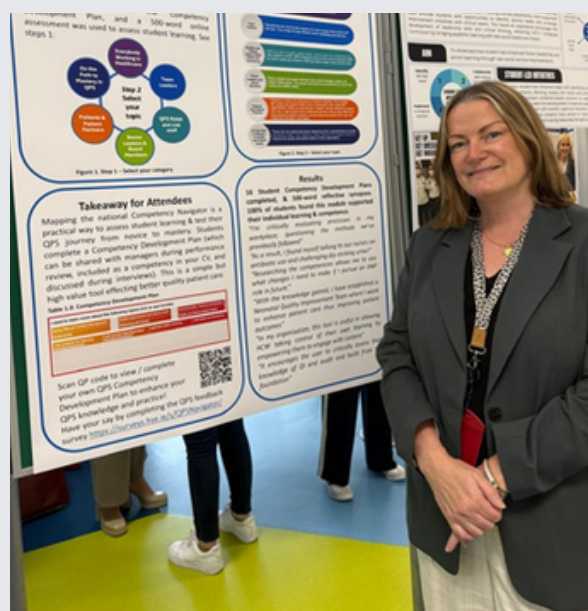
2025 has been an exciting and productive year for the IPC team. Sineád Creedon is a key member of the IPC teaching team – a qualified nurse with over 30 years clinical experience and expertise spanning IPC, Quality & Patient Safety, leadership, and behaviour change. She is advancing her expertise in human factors and the ethical use of AI in education and assessment, while her PhD research focuses on burnout among Infection Control Practitioners. Holding a law degree and a master's in applied psychology, she also coaches healthcare professionals on burnout and leadership using a compassionate, strengths-based approach.

In 2024/25, Sineád led a full revision of the IPC PG Certificate curriculum to align with national and international standards.

Her work featured at the June CoMH Learning & Teaching Showcase where she presented a poster: *Mapping the new HSE Quality Patient Safety Competency Navigator to a Level 9 Quality Patient Safety Module*, to assess student knowledge, competence, and clinical practice skills. She is showcasing her work on Generative AI at the December Learning & Teaching Showcase where she will present a poster: *Bridging the Gap: Artificial Intelligence meets Infection Prevention & Control Teaching, Learning and Assessment*.

A regular contributor to IP Lifeline in Infection Control Today (US), Sineád is currently writing an article exploring the power of 'quiet disruptors' and the role of 'appreciative inquiry' in advancing IPC leadership. Her most recent IP Lifeline article, 'Burnout in Infection Prevention: The Silent Crisis We Must Confront, highlighted findings from her master's dissertation: 'From protection of sacrificial self to critical turning points and growth: Redeployed nurses' experiences on the frontline during the COVID-19 pandemic', which was published with PLOS One in August. This work has informed her first PhD paper: A systematic review on burnout in Infection Control Practitioners, due to be published in 2026 (protocol peer reviewed on HRB Open).

Sineád represented the School of Public Health at the 60 year celebration of Applied Psychology conference at Devere Hall, UCC, in September, with Dr Anna Trace, School of Applied Psychology, where they shared a poster demonstrating Sineád's approach to bringing coaching psychology into the public health arena.



Sineád Creedon at the CoMH Learning & Teaching Showcase in June 2025



Sineád Creedon, Julie Arnott and Dr Maura Smiddy at CoMH Learning and Teaching Showcase, June 2025

[continues on next page]

Sineád was successful in obtaining Infection Prevention Society (IPS) funding to attend the [2025 IPS Annual Conference](#) in Brighton this year. She returned from the conference with a wealth of new evidence-based science, including sessions on IPC in prisons, the psychology of behaviour change, and whole genome sequencing. She published an abstract in the [September edition](#) of the Journal of Infection Prevention and presented a [poster](#) on her systematic review of burnout in infection control practitioners. She also co-published and presented a [poster](#) in collaboration with Dr Maura Smiddy, Julie Arnott, Fiona Barry, and LHP Skillnet colleagues, Clodagh Killeen & Carmel Kelly, on a 'Mixed Methods Competency-based Evaluation of a Postgraduate Certificate in Infection Prevention & Control (2020–2023)'. The [report](#) is published with LHP Skillnet and the full paper will follow in 2026.

Under Sineád's supervision, two of her masters students, [Pamela Landers](#) and [Elaine Molony](#), showcased their master's research at IPS Conference 2025, by presenting posters and publishing their [abstracts](#) in the Journal of Infection Prevention. Pamela was even selected to deliver a poster talk. Both are now preparing full publications with Sineád's guidance.



Sineád Creedon at IPS Conference, Brighton, September 2025



Sineád Creedon and Elaine Molony at IPS Conference



Sineád Creedon and Pamela Landers at IPS Conference



Pamela Landers presenting her Poster Talk at IPS Conference

This year Sineád's passion for teaching, and her commitment to teaching and learning, has earned her two nominations for the UCC Teaching Excellence Awards. The first nomination came from a graduate student from the PG Cert in IPC who has just completed the masters programme. The second was part of the Infection Prevention and Control / Health Protection teaching team nomination by Prof John Browne.

Looking ahead to 2026, Sineád has collaborated with US IPC experts Dr. Brenna Doran and Dr. Sara Reese on a speaker proposal which they jointly submitted for the 2026 [Association for Professionals in Infection Control & Epidemiology \(APIC\) National Conference](#) in Nashville, Tennessee. The proposal features an interactive workshop on burnout – a critical issue in the field. If accepted, Sineád will also present her systematic review on burnout to the US audience in a poster session. Sineád is also applying to speak at the IPS Annual Conference in Leeds in September 2026 under theme 5 'Behavioural & Implementation Science in IPC: Leadership, culture, and change.'

# SCHOOL NEWS

## School of Public Health research shows that the home environment and organised extra-curricular activities significantly influence adolescent cannabis and stimulant drug use **NEW STUDY**

School of Public Health research conducted by Dr Fionn Daly, Dr Seán Millar, Emmet Major and Dr Peter Barrett on the 2020 Planet Youth Survey has revealed that home life dynamics and extracurricular activities significantly influence adolescent cannabis and stimulant drug use. Conducted among nearly 5,000 secondary school students in Galway, Mayo, and Roscommon, the research provides insights into factors linked to teenage substance use in Ireland.

In this research, which has been published in the journals *Public Health* and *PLOS One*, it was found that 18.5% of adolescents had tried cannabis, with 7.5% having used it in the past month. Overall, 3.4% of respondents reported having used cocaine and 2.8% had tried ecstasy. The study found that adolescents who spent time outside after midnight, had less parental monitoring, or weaker community ties (referred to as intergenerational closure) were significantly more likely to report cannabis and stimulant drug use. Notably, participation in structured extracurricular activities, such as sports and volunteering, was linked to lower rates of drug use.

The findings echo international evidence, particularly from Iceland, where structured leisure time and strong parental involvement have been linked to dramatic declines in adolescent substance use. Ireland's relatively high rates of youth cannabis and stimulant use, compared with other European countries, suggests a need to bolster protective social environments. Evidence from Iceland shows that strengthening family bonds, curbing unsupervised late-night activities, and promoting widespread participation in organised sports can substantially reduce substance use among young people.

The study authors call for increased investment in community-based prevention strategies. These include promoting parental engagement, expanding access to youth clubs and sports teams, and considering initiatives like Iceland's "Recreation Card" to reduce financial barriers to participation in extracurricular activities.

Commenting on the findings, study lead Dr Peter Barrett said: "Social environment factors related to cannabis and stimulant use, both within the home and in the wider community, identified in this study, may provide valuable insights for primary prevention interventions which require action at a grassroots level."



## New School of Public Health study shows a rise in cocaine-related harms in Ireland **NEW STUDY**

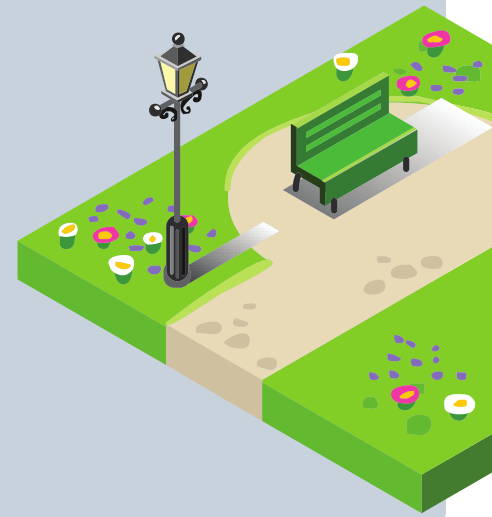
A recent study has revealed a sharp increase in cocaine use and associated health harms in Ireland over the past two decades. Conducted by Dr Seán Millar from the School of Public Health and colleagues from the Health Research Board (HRB), Trinity College Dublin and the Health Service Executive (HSE), the study used data from five national databases to track trends from 2000 to 2023.

In this research, which has been published in the journal *BMC Public Health*, findings show that last-year prevalence of cocaine use among 15–64-year-olds in Ireland more than doubled, rising from 1.1% in 2002–03 to 2.4% in 2023. Hospitalisations, psychiatric admissions, treatment episodes, and deaths related to cocaine use have all risen dramatically over this time period. For example, cocaine-related hospital discharges increased from 1.4 per 100,000 population in 2000 to 24.3 in 2022. Treatment entrants reporting cocaine as their main problem drug increased from 1.5 per 100,000 population in 2000 to 93.2 in 2023, while cocaine-related poisoning deaths rose from 0.13 to 2.6 per 100,000 between 2000 and 2020.

Using jointpoint regression analysis, the researchers identified distinct periods of increase and decrease. Harms generally rose until 2007, declined during the recession years, and surged again from around 2013 onwards. This trend likely reflects both Ireland's economic recovery and broader increases in cocaine availability and purity across Europe.

The study highlights the growing challenge posed by cocaine use in Ireland. Notably, a large share of cocaine users are young adults, with rising use reported among third-level students. Despite increased seizures by law enforcement, cocaine remains highly accessible.

The authors stress the urgency of targeted prevention and harm reduction, particularly in adolescent and university settings. They also call for expanded treatment capacity, especially given the lack of approved pharmacological therapies for cocaine use disorder. With cocaine use now widespread in Ireland, and with harms accelerating, the researchers conclude that Ireland, and Europe more broadly, must prioritise coordinated public health responses to address this evolving health issue.



## School of Public Health research on Hexahydrocannabinol use and harms in Ireland **NEW STUDY**

A new study published in the International Journal of Drug Policy highlights the rapid rise in use of Hexahydrocannabinol (HHC) in Ireland and the potential public health implications associated with the drug. HHC, a semi-synthetic cannabinoid derived from cannabidiol, was marketed as a legal alternative to cannabis until its control under Irish law in July 2025.

The research, conducted by experts at the Health Research Board, Health Service Executive, School of Public Health UCC and the European Union Drugs Agency, analysed data from over 2,300 adults who took part in the 2024 European Web Survey on Drugs. These participants had used drugs in the previous year and responded to a dedicated module on HHC use.

The findings reveal that 36.2% of respondents reported lifetime HHC use, 33.5% used the drug in the past year, and 17.8% in the past month. HHC was most commonly sourced from high street shops (62.4%) and online stores (15.7%), reflecting its widespread availability prior to regulation. Vaping was the dominant method of administration (85.4%), followed by edibles such as gummies (34.1%) and smoking (14.5%).



A key factor driving initial use was accessibility: more than 60% of participants cited ease of purchase as their main reason for trying HHC. Many also perceived it as safer than illegal cannabis due to its legal status at the time. Motivations for ongoing use included recreation (62.9%), stress relief (51.9%), and self-medication for issues such as anxiety or pain.

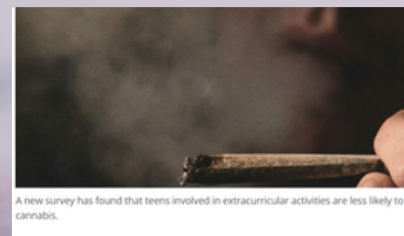
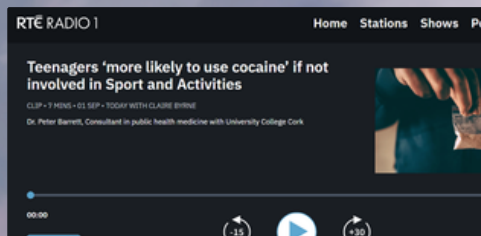
The study also found high levels of self-reported harms. Nearly 90% of users experienced at least one negative effect. The most common harms included anxiety or panic reactions (14.7%), dizziness (13.4%), and dissociation (11.9%). More severe outcomes, such as hallucinations or psychosis, were reported by 3.9% of users.

The prevalence of HHC use in Ireland appears significantly higher than the European average, where last-year use of similar semi-synthetic cannabinoids was around 14%. This pattern mirrors earlier trends in new psychoactive substances (NPS) prior to their control under the Psychoactive Substances Act 2010. Previous legislative action on NPS led to sharp declines in their use and related health harms, suggesting that similar outcomes could be expected for HHC following its scheduling under the Misuse of Drugs Acts.

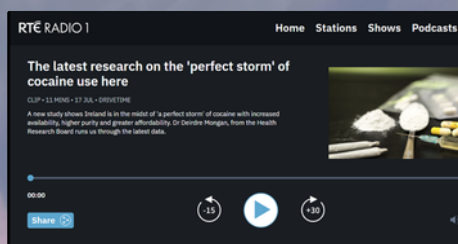
However, while its legal status has changed, the authors stress the importance of ongoing monitoring of HHC and related substances through population surveys, hospital and psychiatric data, and treatment services. They also highlight the need for legislative frameworks that can adapt more rapidly to emerging psychoactive substances.

# SoPH in the News

The research on pages 27& 28 has appeared in several articles in the press. Click on the images below to access a selection of these news items and interview with study lead Dr Peter Barrett on RTE Radio 1.



Extracurricular activities can lower teen cannabis use



Almost one-in-five teens have used cannabis, new research suggests



Cocaine: Abundant availability leading to an increase in overdoses and hospitalisations | Newstalk

## UPCOMING EVENT

UNIVERSITY COLLEGE CORK  
SCHOOL OF PUBLIC HEALTH  
TRANSITION YEAR DAY  
PUBLIC HEALTH IN PRACTICE



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# UPDATES FROM THE NSRF

## 30<sup>th</sup> World Congress of the International Association for Suicide Prevention, Vienna

Several of the NSRF team presented on a range of topics at the 33rd World Congress of the International Association for Suicide Prevention in Vienna from June 10th-13th.

The conference provided a unique opportunity for researchers, clinicians, policymakers, and advocates from around the world to come together, share ideas, learn from one another, and work on real solutions to the global public health challenge of suicide and suicidal behaviours.



TUESDAY, JUNE 10TH	THURSDAY, JUNE 12TH	FRIDAY, JUNE 13TH
<p><b>Prof Ella Arensman</b> The IASP (E) Arensman Special Lecture Award: Bridging the Gap between Research, Implementation and Policy 4:30 PM-6:00 PM (Plenary Hall)</p>	<p><b>Prof Ella Arensman</b> Oral 29: Real-time Suicide Surveillance: Insights from a Regional Suicide Observatory in Ireland 10:30 AM - 12:30 noon (Schubert 4)</p>	<p><b>Dr Eibhlin Walsh</b> Symposium 32: Experiences of Postvention Support for Clinicians in Ireland Following Patient Suicide 05:00 PM-06:30 PM (Schubert 1)</p>
<p><b>Prof Ella Arensman</b> Trends in self-harm in children aged 5-12 years in Ireland: 2010-2023 12:00noon - 1:00 PM (Strauss Room)</p>	<p><b>Dr Grace Cully</b> Feasibility of a national register of probable suicide in mental health services in Ireland: a mixed methods study 10:30 AM - 12:30 noon (Strauss)</p>	<p><b>Ms Kerrie Gallagher</b> Symposium 33: Enhancing university suicide prevention curricula 5:00 PM - 6:30 PM (Lehar 1)</p>
<p><b>Ms Daisy Wiggins</b> Oral 1: Trends in age of onset of self-harm in young people in Ireland (2010-2018) 12:00noon - 1:00 PM (Strauss Room)</p>	<p><b>Prof Ella Arensman, Dr Paul Corcoran</b> Real-time Suicide Surveillance: Insights from a Regional Suicide Observatory in Ireland 2:00 PM - 3:00 PM (Schubert 4)</p>	<p><b>Dr Eric Kelleher</b> Symposium 34: Door 4 or Door B: Medically assisted death or suicide prevention, do we know when to provide which and which to provide what? 5:00 PM - 6:30 PM (Strauss)</p>
<p><b>PERMANENS</b> Developing clinical decision support systems that assist the assessment and management of patients with self-harm in emergency department settings (E) PERMANENS - An interactive workshop. 5:00pm - 6:30pm (Schubert 6)</p>	<p><b>Dr Michelle O'Driscoll, Ms Kerrie Gallagher</b> The evaluation of a suicide prevention workshop for MPharm students 2:00 PM - 3:00 PM (Schubert 4)</p>	<p><b>FRIDAY, JUNE 13TH</b></p>
<p><b>Dr Eibhlin Walsh</b> Symposium 26: The Impact of Patient Death by Suicide on Psychologists and Psychologists in Training in Ireland 5:00pm - 6:00pm (Schubert 4)</p>	<p><b>Prof Ella Arensman</b> Workshop - Crisis 2:00 PM - 3:00 PM (Schubert 4)</p>	<p><b>Prof Ella Arensman, Dr Isabela Troya</b> Addressing depression and suicidal behaviour in public health emergencies and beyond through evidence-based SAAD four-level community intervention approaches 11:30am - 1:00pm (Stolz 2)</p>
<p><b>Dr Eve Griffin</b> Dr Griffin will be chairing the 'Oral 4' session. 12:00noon - 1:00 PM (Lehar 1)</p>	<p><b>Dr Grace Cully</b> The impact and implementation of a national clinical programme self-harm and suicidal ideation in emergency departments. 2:00 PM - 3:00 PM (Schubert 1)</p>	<p><b>Ms Kerrie Gallagher</b> Self-harm among Irish prisoners: findings from a national surveillance project (SAMAS) 2022-2023 11:30 AM - 1:00 PM (Stolz 1)</p>
<p><b>Dr Paul Corcoran</b> Symposium 38: Data Monitoring: International Approaches and Surveillance Systems 5:00 PM - 6:30 PM (Strauss)</p>	<p><b>Dr Michelle O'Driscoll, Dr Grace Cully, Dr Eve Griffin, Ms Zara Harnett</b> Symposium 33: Advances in the development and implementation of suicide prevention education and training programmes 05:00 PM-06:30 PM (Schubert 2)</p>	<p><b>Dr Grace Cully</b> Symposium 42: Identifying the impact of suicide and needs for support: implications for support 2:00 PM - 3:30 PM (Schubert 1)</p>
		<p><b>POSTERS</b></p>
		<p><b>Dr Eibhlin Walsh</b> Evaluating the Collaborative Assessment and Management of Suicidality (CAMS) Framework in Ireland: An Implementation-Evaluation Approach</p>
		<p><b>Ms Daisy Wiggins, Ms Doireann Ni Dhálaigh, Dr Elaine McMahon, Dr Eve Griffin</b> Age of onset of self-harm in children and adolescents: A scoping review</p>
		<p><b>Dr Isabela Troya, Dr Eve Griffin, Prof Ella Arensman</b> Wish to die and healthcare use in older people: findings from the Irish Longitudinal Study on Ageing (ILSA)</p>

Full list of presentations and workshops by the NSRF team at the IASP Congress



# UPDATES FROM THE NSRF



## NSRF supports the development of Ireland's next suicide reduction strategy

The National Suicide Research Foundation (NSRF) has played a key role in supporting the Department of Health's development of Ireland's next Suicide Reduction Strategy, which will follow Connecting for Life (2015–2024) and Reach Out (2005–2014)—the country's first two national suicide prevention strategies.

On 5th March 2025, Minister for Mental Health Mary Butler TD launched a national public consultation to gather views from individuals, communities, and organisations on Ireland's progress in suicide prevention and priorities for the future. The consultation placed special emphasis on hearing from people with lived experience of suicide, reflecting the growing importance of inclusive, co-produced mental health policy.

As part of this work, the Department of Health commissioned the NSRF to analyse and report on two components of the Public Consultation to Inform Ireland's New Suicide Reduction Strategy:

### Public Consultation Survey

The online survey, completed by 1,895 individuals from across Ireland, found that 82% of respondents had lived experience of suicide, most commonly through bereavement or personal impact (68%). A large majority (85%) believed that suicide reduction policy should continue to be a national priority. Respondents identified key areas for future focus, including:

- Ensuring accessible and high-quality services, with attention to continuity of care, affordability, and timely responses.
- Enhancing care systems, including better service integration and alternatives to hospital emergency departments.
- Targeted interventions for high-risk groups, including men, Irish Travellers, neurodiverse individuals, LGBTIQ+ people, and those bereaved by suicide.
- Education and stigma reduction, through public awareness campaigns.
- Addressing social determinants, such as housing, inequality, and economic instability.

### Public Consultation Submissions

In addition to the survey, 25 standalone written submissions were received, 80% from organisations and 20% from individuals with lived experience. These submissions reinforced the five themes above and identified two additional themes:

- Suicide surveillance and research: Many highlighted the need for timely, accurate data and a real-time suicide surveillance system to improve national and local prevention responses.
- Learning from Connecting for Life: Contributors recognised Connecting for Life as a strong foundation and urged that the new strategy continue to build on its achievements.

This research was undertaken by Grace Cully, Eve Griffin, Leigh Huggard, and Isabela Troya at the NSRF, with Sofia Bettella contributing to the design and editing of the report.

Both reports offer important insights to guide Ireland's next national strategy for suicide reduction and reaffirm the need for a whole-of-society approach to suicide prevention, one that combines accessible services, lived experience, and attention to the broader social determinants of health.



To read the full reports on the Department of Health website  
[CLICK HERE](#)

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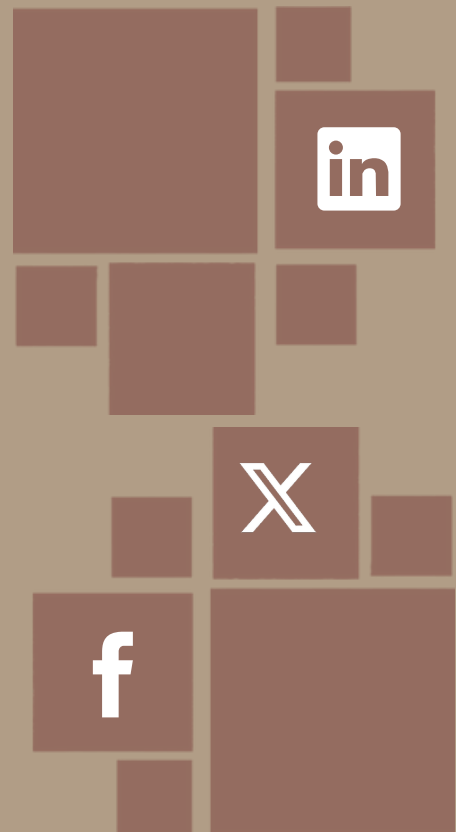
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