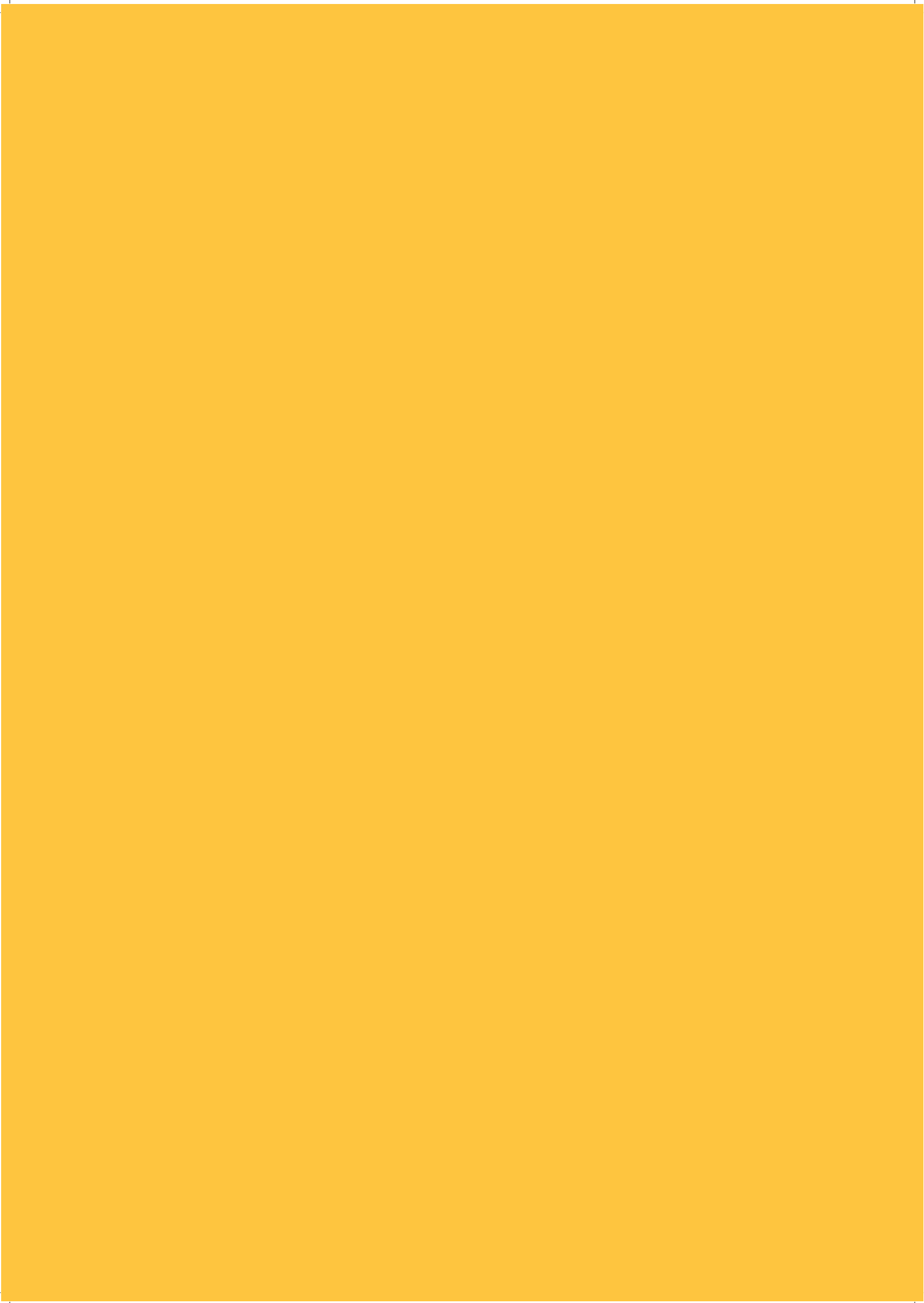# Student Dissertation Showcase

## Friday 15 September, 10:00 to 13:30

**UCL Base KX
103c Camley Street
London N1C 4PF**

COMMUNITY
RESEARCH
INITIATIVE

# Contents

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# Keynote speakers and panels

## Kathryn Woods (she/her)

**UCL Pro-Vice-Provost Student Experience (Student Academic Engagement)**

Kathryn collaborates closely with the senior education team, contributing across a range of facets within education and the student experience. Her specific areas of expertise encompass personal tutoring, fostering partnership with UCL Students' Union, nurturing student voice, promoting student engagement, and enhancing student life and well-being.

Formerly the Dean of Students at Goldsmiths, Kathryn also served as the Director of Student Experience (Arts) at the University of Warwick. With her extensive background in student-focused leadership roles, Kathryn brings a wealth of experience to her speaking engagements.

Having earned a PhD in History from the University of Edinburgh, Kathryn's ongoing research delves into the historical context of student voice within the realm of higher education in the UK. Her diverse background positions Kathryn as a knowledgeable and engaging speaker who can offer insights into the evolution of student engagement and experience.

## Muhammad Shaban Chaudhary (he/him)

**Students' Union UCL's Education Student Officer**

Shaban was elected to the Education Student Officer position earlier in 2023 and has taken up his role this summer for the academic year 2023-24. Student Officer roles, or sabbatical officers, are students who are elected by their peers to lead, advocate for, and represent them. They are agents of change. Shaban's key priorities for 2023-24 include:

- Ensuring minimised impact on student education during strike action and lobby for financial and academic compensation.
- Working alongside stakeholders in revising the structure of the academic teaching year focusing on concerns about the the high stakes exams and assessments period.
- Introducing free short courses for students/grads and introducing collaborations with top-tier institutes and organisations worldwide.

# Keynote speakers and panels CONT.

## Issy Smith (she/her)

### Students' Union UCL's Postgraduate Student Officer

Issy was elected to the Postgraduate Student Officer position earlier in 2023 and has taken up her role this summer for the academic year 2023-24. Issy's role is central to representing postgraduates and improving the postgrad experience. Her key priorities for 2023-24 include:

- Creating a weekly programme of events that caters to all students, regardless of degree-level, across both of our campuses and including students with child-related responsibilities.
- Ensuring that students feel their voices are being heard and that our Officers are more accessible and connected to the student body. E.g., anonymous feedback forms, drop-in sessions with Officers etc.
- Expanding bursary support (not based on family income but on need) and support postgraduate students through the cost-of-living crisis.

## Aria Xingni Shi (she/her)

### Students' Union UCL's Activities & Engagement Officer

Aria leads with the Union on the areas of sport, societies, and volunteering. Aria will shape the co-curricular and social experiences that students want from their Union, from the Welcome Fair at the start of the year, to the Summer Balls that mark the end of the academic year. Priorities for the year include advocating for better student spaces for resting, diversifying the activities programme, and supporting students to figure out healthy work-life-study balance! Aria is fun, creative, and easy-going. Perfect for CRIS! Her key priorities for 2023-2024 include:

- Establishing more facilities for students to rest between activities and study
- Help to further diversify the SU's activities programme
- Support students with their work-life balance

## Student Panel

### Exploring Power, Inclusivity & Exclusion in Local Communities (PSYC0287)

Maddy (she/her), Ananya (she/her), and Leigh (she/her) are three students from the first ever cohort enrolled on this optional module, offered by Psychology & Linguistics

# Keynote speakers and panels CONT.

Studies at UCL. The brain-child of a wonderful former colleague, Marie Xypaki (now of SOAS!), and the supremely organised and brilliant Stefanie Anyadi, this module included a commitment to an engaged experience for students and was therefore the perfect fit with the Community Research Initiative. These intrepid students have just completed the MSc Behaviour Change programme and were key leaders in delivering the class project – a collaboration with the Black Woman Kindness Initiative for International Women's Day 2023. Following a short reflective film from Cherrill Hutchinson, the founder of Black Woman Kindness Initiative, this student panel will share their skills development and learning journey, doing something they perhaps weren't really expecting!

- Creating a weekly programme of events that caters to all students, regardless of degree-level, across both of our campuses and including students with child-related responsibilities.
- Ensuring that students feel their voices are being heard and that our Officers are more accessible and connected to the student body. E.g., anonymous feedback forms, drop-in sessions with Officers etc.
- Expanding bursary support (not based on family income but on need) and support postgraduate students through the cost-of-living crisis.

## Priscilla Igwe

### The New Black Film Collective

Priscilla has spent the last decade in film exhibition within the Black media sector. She is currently the Founder and CEO of The New Black Film Collective (TNBFC) – a nationwide network of film producers, educators and programmers of Black representation on screen. She has diversified the organisation into Production, Exhibition, Distribution, Education and PR. Since 2011, Priscilla has established a regular film club, an annual Black History Month programme and co-founded S.O.U.L. Fest at BFI Southbank. The aim is to become the UK's top agency and resource for Black film and eventually operate on a global level. In 2015 TNBFC became the first Black female-led organisation to distribute a film in the UK with Dear White People. The focus for TNBFC is on building a circuit of commercial and community cinemas that will curate a diverse range of titles from the African diaspora. In 2022, she launched TNB XPO, at Picturehouse Central, which showcases Black excellence in Film and High End TV.

# 2022-23 collaborators

**\* Find out more from the posters in the room!**

## Rachael Leonard (she/her)

**Course title:**
MSc Social Policy
Social Research

**Dissertation title:**
Understanding the role of
volunteer-led community-
based perinatal mental health
peer support for fathers

**Community Partner:**
National Childbirth
Trust

**Academic supervisor:**
Alison Koslowski

**Research abstract:**
The transition to parenthood can be a stressful time, with changes to lifestyles which can significantly impact the mental health and well-being of parents. During the transition to parenthood, men are twice as likely to develop depression and anxiety compared to other times in their life. However, more research is needed about the most appropriate form of intervention and service provision for fathers to support their mental health. Some studies have shown that peer support can have positive impact for mothers through various mechanisms such as sharing experiences, normalisation and feeling understood and accepted. However, there is a paucity of research exploring the role peer support programs could play for fathers struggling to adjust to parenthood.

The focus of this study was decided collaboratively with NCT Parents In Mind (PIM) for fathers, a charity-run program that uses local volunteers with lived experience to support expectant and new fathers experiencing emotional health difficulties through a variety of delivery methods in Newham, St Helens and East Sussex. 2 focus groups (2-6 participants each) and semi structured interviews (2-4) will be used to collect PIM peer supporters, program workers, and service users' experiences and perceptions of the PIM peer support services. A critical realist approach allows for a detailed investigation of the mechanisms of change that are active in the program to explain how it works, what outcomes it achieves for whom, and in what contexts.

Preliminary findings suggest that fathers experience mental health struggles in the context of societal environments, such as stigma and individual factors, such as experiences of healthcare professionals. Mechanisms offered through peer support in the program include encouragement through positive feedback and non-judgmental listening, providing a safe space to talk honestly. This has led to outcomes including emotional release, self-compassion, self-esteem and disclosure.

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## Alexandra Ashworth (she/her)

**Course title:**
MSc Social Policy
and Social Research

**Dissertation title:**
Understanding the
experiences of benefit
claimants with non-visible
disabilities within the UK
benefit system

**Community Partner:**
Real

**Academic supervisor:**
Antonia Simon

**Research abstract:**
The project focuses on the experiences of people with non-visible disabilities who claim disability benefits in the UK, with particular focus on the process of applying for and being assessed for Personal Independence Payment (PIP). The study aims to gather insights from approximately 5-10 participants through interviews and will analyse key themes to understand the experiences and feelings of participants during the benefits application process. The community partner, Real, is a user-led disabled people's organisation.

## Louise Macaulay (she/her)

**Course title:**
MSc Social Policy
and Social Research

**Dissertation title:**
Estimating the impact of
Sister System's initiatives
on care-affected girls: A
synthetic control analysis in
Haringey, with implications for
expansion to other London
boroughs

**Community Partner:**
Sister System

**Academic supervisor:**
Lorraine Dearden

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# 2022–23 collaborators CONT.

**Research abstract:**

The aim of this project is to provide valuable insights into the characteristics and educational outcomes of care-affected girls across all London Boroughs, with a particular focus on the impact of Sister System's early intervention programs in Haringey. Sister System aims to bridge the gap between care-affected girls and mainstream society by offering early intervention programs to young women aged 13-24. However, with the saturation of referrals to their services in Haringey, the organization plans to expand into other London boroughs as part of their 3-year strategy. Through this research, Sister System aims to make informed decisions regarding resource allocation and program development to maximize their impact in areas with the highest needs. The study also aims to provide an early evaluation of the effectiveness of their programs in Haringey. The research outcomes will facilitate a targeted approach in providing essential services to care-affected girls in various London Boroughs, identifying high-need elements and supporting provisions and partners to address the needs of vulnerable girls and young women in care. The findings of this research will serve as a valuable resource for Sister System, enhancing their capacity to support and empower care-affected girls throughout London.

## Hongzhe Yan (he/him)

**Course title:**
MSc Global Prosperity

**Dissertation title:**
Age, Digital Inclusion and Community-based Services: A Case Study on The Digital Inclusion Project of Fulham Good Neighbours

**Community Partner:**
Fulham Good Neighbours

**Academic supervisor:**
Kate Maclean

**Research abstract:**

One of the key aspects of prosperity is "the relationship between individual lives – their quality, aspiration and purpose – and the larger systems and constraints within which they are embedded" (Moore and Mintchev, 2021, p.3). As the Covid pandemic has accelerated the process of the digitalization, digital skills have become essential for people to establish relationships with others and the larger social system (Great Britain. Office for National Statistics, 2019). Age has always

been an important determinate of the digital divide. Studies have shown that during the lockdown, older people have become more isolated than other groups of people due to the inability to stay connected with others (Cosco et al., 2021; Weil et al., 2021).

Therefore, this dissertation aims to explore potential solutions to the digital divide through examining how age and digital inclusion co-constitute each other. It argues that since age and digital divide are complex and co-constituting assemblages that exist locally, community-based services based on progressive localism is a better way to solve the digital divide than current policied based on austerity localism. A case study on the digital inclusion project of Fulham Good Neighbours will be used.

I have done 20 interviewees with the staff, beneficiaries and volunteers of Fulham Good Neighbour. The expected outcome will be an dissertation with clear argument about the complexity of age and digital inclusion and how community-based services and progressive localism could offer a potential solutions to the generational digital divide. There will also be a community product (potentially a poster or an executive report outlining the strength of FGN to help FGN attracts more funding).

## Scarlett O'Malley (she/her)

**Course title:**
MSc Social Policy and Social Research

**Dissertation title:**
A Hotel not a Holiday: How community relations are experienced and utilised by Asylum Seekers in Bridging Hotels

**Community Partner:**
Afghanistan and Central Asian Association

**Academic supervisor:**
Roch Dunin-Wasowicz

**Research abstract:**
This project focuses on evaluating the impact of integration workshops conducted by the Afghanistan and Central Asian Association (ACAA) for asylum seekers in the UK. Scarlett, who has been actively involved with ACAA in running these workshops, aims to interview five participants from Afghanistan seeking asylum to gather valuable evidence for her evaluation. The research seeks to provide measurable outcomes regarding the effectiveness of ACAA's integration program, specifically its workshops, in facilitating the integration process for Afghan asylum seekers.

The findings will be instrumental in demonstrating the positive impact of ACAA's work to relevant authorities, validating the importance and success of the integration program. Through Scarlett's research, ACAA will gain valuable insights into the outcomes and efficacy of their workshops, enabling them to make informed decisions, enhance their services, and advocate for continued support and funding to further their mission of supporting and empowering Afghan asylum seekers during their integration process.

## Ko Sum Yue (Jessica) (she/her)

**Course title:**
MSc Social Policy and Social Research

**Community Partner:**
Fulham Good Neighbours

**Dissertation title:**
The impact of information communication technology interventions on reducing social isolation in older adults: A mixed-methods systematic review update
Community Partner: Fulham Good Neighbours

**Academic supervisor:**
Katy Sutcliffe

**Research abstract:**
This project aims to address the pressing social problem of population ageing and its associated challenges, particularly the issue of social isolation among older adults (OAs). The study highlights the importance of fostering social participation and connectivity for OAs to remain as integral members of society. Information and communications technology (ICT) has been recognised as a valuable tool for reducing social isolation through enhancing social participation and interaction among older adults. However, the lack of synthesised information on the impact of ICT on alleviating social isolation necessitates further exploration. This dissertation aims to evaluate and assess said impact. The research outcomes will have significant implications for the community partner, Fulham Good Neighbours (FGN), and their digital inclusion project, which aims to combat social isolation among OAs. The findings may be helpful for FGN in shaping and enhancing their project by providing research-based evidence for future funding applications, appeals, and lobbying efforts in support of digital inclusion initiatives for the elderly.

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## 2022–23 collaborators CONT.

### Elise Robinson (she/her)

**Course title:**
MSc of Public Health

**Dissertation title:**
Community-based initiatives to improve maternal and newborn health in high-income settings - A Systematic Review

**Community Partner:**
Women and Children First

**Academic supervisor:**
Aradhna Kaushal

**Research abstract:**
This project seeks to explore community-based initiatives utilized in high-income settings to improve maternal and newborn health (MNH). The primary research outcomes involve investigating the effectiveness of these initiatives in enhancing MNH outcomes and examining their relationship with Participatory Learning and Action (PLA) methodology. Additionally, the study aims to determine whether community-based initiatives effectively reduce MNH inequalities. While community-based interventions, including PLA groups, have demonstrated significant success in improving health outcomes and promoting equity in low to middle-income countries, the evidence in high-income settings remains limited. This review aims to synthesize existing literature on community-based interventions in high-income settings and their relevance to PLA methodology. The findings will be of utmost importance to the community partner, Women and Children First (WCF), which specializes in PLA interventions for MNH primarily in low-income rural settings. This research will provide valuable insights into the potential applicability and effectiveness of PLA in high-income countries, guiding WCF's future work and contributing to the understanding of MNH interventions in diverse settings.

### Can Su Cimenbicer (she/her)

**Course title:**
MA Creative and Collaborative Enterprise

**Dissertation title:**
Theatrical Placemaking: The Construction of Flow by Creating a Liminoid Zone

**Community Partner:**
Hackney Shed

**Academic supervisor:**
Matthew Doyle

# 2022-23 collaborators CONT.

**Research abstract:**

This dissertation explores how physical space can create and inform a liminal state of being and flow, indicating joyous immersion, in performing arts spaces. I begin by conveying the application of liminality to pre-modern societies These societies engage in rituals and undergo positive transformations. In contemporary societies, liminoid instances replace liminal experiences during creative activities. Previous studies and practices suggest that active engagement and subsequent immersion in performing arts practices can lead to well-being transformations. However, the facilitators of immersion remain insufficiently explored. The present research addresses the gap by examining aspects of the physical space that create a liminal state of being and flow. I collaborated with the UCL Community Research Initiatives to enhance the applicability of my research by aiding the creation of a creative and accepting place for the youth performing arts company Hackney Shed (n.d.). I acquired a qualitative approach involving interviews with stakeholders of performing arts, analysis of YouTube videos by the Hackney Shed, and field observation at the Hackney Empire. I categorised various perspectives through reflexive thematic analysis into five themes: Pre-Liminal Preparation, Layering and Compartmentalising of Physical Spaces, Breaking Choice Boundaries, Emic and Etic Experience of Emotions, and Community Engagement and Empowerment. The findings inform the development of a framework for reconstructing performing arts spaces, with a focus on benefiting the Hackney Shed and promoting immersive, creative environments.

## Ziyi Wang (she/her)

**Course title:**
MSc Built Environment : Sustainable Heritage

**Dissertation title:**
What role can community engagement and participation play in shaping the future of heritage practice?

**Community Partner:**
Clitterhouse Farm

**Academic supervisor:**
Richard Sandford

**Research abstract:**

What was the focus of the project: This project focuses on sustainability and the long-term viability of Clitterhouse Farm and explores its successful factors, acknowledging the significant role that community engagement plays in shaping its future. What have you done so far on your project: Visited Clitterhouse Farm several times. Made interviews with Clitterhouse Farm staff and volunteers

helping out in the cafe and garden. Analyzed and discussed the collected data.
What is your hope for the outcome of your project: Identify the different forms of community engagement used for heritage practice on Clitterhouse Farm and the extent to which they can be applied to other sites. Explore the potential of community participation in shaping the future of heritage practice.

## Neerajha Krishna Kumar (she/her)

**Course title:**
MSc Social Policy Social Research

**Community Partner:**
Westminster Council

**Dissertation title:**
Analysis of Energy Crisis and Fuel Poverty - Impact of Energy Efficiency Interventions

**Academic supervisor:**
Lorraine Dearden

**Research abstract:**
The project aims to analyse the ongoing energy crisis and the concerning problem of fuel poverty, which disproportionately impacts vulnerable households. I am collaborating on this initiative alongside the Westminster City Council in the UK. The primary objective is to examine the scope of the issue within the UK and investigate the strategies implemented both in the short and long run to tackle fuel poverty. A specific focus of this project is to evaluate the retrofitting measures that the council has undertaken in social housing located in Westminster. The goal is to assess the immediate effectiveness of these measures (with the data available) in order to progress in an evidence-informed manner.

## Daria Ghezzi (she/her)

**Course title:**
MSc Social Policy Social Research

**Community Partner:**
Community Assets for Society and Housing

**Dissertation title:**
Community building in a London Community Land Trust

**Academic supervisor:**
Aris Komporozos-Athanasiou

# 2022–23 collaborators CONT.

Community Land Trusts (CLTs) are nonprofit organisations that seek to provide genuinely affordable homes, as well as empower local communities by transferring decision-making power over to residents. This dissertation aims to explore ideas of community within CLTs, and identify what the barriers are to engaging communities with community-led housing in London. The dissertation is being carried out in partnership with CASH (Community Assets for Society and Housing), which is a CLT founded by members of housing co-operatives across London. Interviews will be conducted with volunteers working at CASH, and the transcripts of these interviews will be analysed to find common themes. During the interviews participants were asked about their motivations for getting involved with CASH, their experiences with housing and what community means to them. Community-led housing models are becoming increasingly important in the current housing crisis in London, yet they face significant challenges in securing land and funding. This research will contribute to understandings of how CLTs navigate this challenging context and work to build inclusive communities.

## Uday Shrivastava (he/him)

**Course title:**
MSc Social Policy Social Research

**Dissertation title:**
Bridging the Gap: Unmet Mental Health Needs of Afghan Refugees in London: A Qualitative Study of Perceptions of NHS Policy Gaps and Recommendations for Improvement

**Community Partner:**
Helen Bamber Foundation

**Academic supervisor:**
Roch Dunin-Wasowicz

**Research abstract:**
This project explores the unmet mental health needs of Afghan refugees in London and their interaction with National Health Service (NHS) policies. Amid a surge in Afghan refugees due to geopolitical events, this study, in collaboration with the Helen Bamber Foundation, seeks to identify and address gaps in the NHS's mental health provision. The research aims to analyze existing policies, investigate barriers to effective mental health services, and formulate evidence-based recommendations. Using a qualitative design, the study engages healthcare professionals, volunteers, and policymakers through semi-structured interviews. Purposive sampling ensures relevant expertise, and thematic analysis uncovers key insights. The anticipated outcome is a master's dissertation

# 2022-23 collaborators CONT.

followed by potential dissemination in journals, conferences, and policy circles. Preliminary findings suggest that the NHS's current approach might not align with Afghan refugees' specific mental health needs, driving the investigation towards creating a more inclusive and effective healthcare system for this demographic.

## Daniel Casey (he/him)

**Course title:**
MSc Social Policy Social Research

**Dissertation title:**
Why do businesses donate food? Using the Theory of Planned Behaviour to explain why managers decide to donate food from their businesses

**Community Partner:**
LifeAfterHummus

**Academic supervisor:**
Tobias Ruttenauer

**Research abstract:**
Focus of project (Dissertation): I am looking to understand why managers decide/ don't decide to donate food from their businesses using the Theory of Planned Behaviour as a framework - the basic premise is that attitude towards donating food, perceived behavioural control over donating food and subjective norms (what an individual thinks other people think the individual should do) inform intentions to donate food, with these intentions going on to donate whether they donate food or not.

Focus of project (Outside of Dissertation): We are surveying both businesses and Volunteer Community Sector (VCS) organisations. I will analyse the data produced from these surveys to produce a report which can be used to help the local authority decide whether they want to implement a low food waste zone in Somers Town, Camden.

What has been done so far:
● Me and LifeAfterHummus (the organisation I have partnered with) have coproduced surveys
● LifeAfterHummus have recruited researchers to conduct the survey with managers of businesses in person
● Data are currently being collected, which I will analyse

Hopefully the research can help to convince the local authority to produce policy which will allow for a low food waste zone in Somers Town, Camden.

# 2022–23 collaborators CONT.

## Carly Cormier (she/her)

**Course title:**
MA in Cultural Heritage Studies

**Dissertation title:**
Heritage and Museums

**Community Partner:**
Museum of the Home

**Academic supervisor:**
Nadia Bartolini

**Research abstract:**
I wanted to explore the relationship between visitors and museums by focusing on the connections visitors make with objects, displays and themselves. Specifically, I was interested in understanding how the concept of heritage is being communicated by museums in a way that allowed visitors to understand or reflect upon themselves and others. I have been working with Museum of the Home in London, who have kindly let me interview staff and conduct exit surveys with visitors. My hope for this research is simply that it adds to the growing conversations around museum engagement and heritage studies.

## Callum Parris (he/him)

**Course title:**
MSc Social Policy Social Research

**Dissertation title:**
How are foodbanks responding to their changing role in local welfare provision?

**Community Partner:**
Uttlesford Foodbank

**Academic supervisor:**
Sarabajaya Kumar

**Research abstract:**
My project focuses on the ways in which foodbanks are responding to both growing demand form service users, and their increasing role in local welfare assistance schemes. The dissertation utilises a

case study of my local foodbank in Uttlesford, where I have volunteered since 2022, informed by interviews with foodbank staff and volunteers, as well as local council officials and those working in partnered community organisations. In particular, the research aims to investigate whether foodbanks have become functionally embedded in local welfare state infrastructure, whilst also exploring the internal tension between service delivery and advocacy in voluntary sector organisations.

So far, I have conducted, transcribed and begun analysing 12 interviews with those working both within and alongside the foodbank, exploring a range of themes. These interviews were, in large part, facilitated with the help of the Uttlesford foodbank, the community partner in this research. Whilst the analysis of these interviews is ongoing, they have highlighted a number of interesting findings concerning the ways in which the voluntary sector cooperates with local authorities to support those in need of crisis support, as well as indicating a number of ways in which this relationship might have changed in recent years.

I hope that this project has the capacity to draw attention to the impressive work being carried out by voluntary sector organisations, and foodbanks in particular, in terms of local crisis support. In practical terms, this research will inform a presentation that I will deliver with the foodbank, to both its own staff members, local council officials and other community organisations. Hopefully this presentation will draw attention to the particular problems faced by the foodbank in the local area and suggest how these obstacles might be overcome. I also hope that the research findings can make a valuable contribution to the growing academic literature on the subject of how voluntary sector organisations are becoming increasingly embedded within the welfare state, and perhaps make some suggestions as to how these organisations' advocacy work might play a role in counteracting this trend.

## Emma Lavarone (she/her)

**Course title:**
MRes Social Research

**Dissertation title:**
Increasing student voice in the quality cycle evaluation of the whole-school approach to mental health

**Community Partner:**
The College of Richard Collyer Mental Health Team

**Academic supervisor:**
Olga Cara

# 2022-23 collaborators CONT.

**Research abstract:**
The focus of my project and dissertation are the ways to increase the student voice and participation in school/college approaches to mental health improvement. I will be taking a coproduction and co-design design approach, from developing the question to planning the project. I am interested particularly in young people in Sixth Form education.

I am a second year, part-time student and so far I have written a proposal which includes methods, working with my colleagues in the Mental Health Team at the College of Richard Collyer. My hopes for this collaboration is that it will positively impact my career direction, possibly to move away from teaching in order to increase strategic or research work related to improving mental health of staff and students in education.

## Chloe Robinson-Hunter (she/her)



**Course title:**
MSc Social Policy Social Research

**Dissertation title:**
Exploring the meaning and perceived impact of self-care on Black women living in London

**Community Partner:**
The Black Woman Kindness Initiative

**Academic supervisor:**
Gillian Stokes

**Research abstract:**
This project explores how Black women in London perceive self-care and how societal biases related to race and gender affect their self-care practices and well-being. Additionally, I intend to investigate facilities for self-care, Black women's self-care experiences, and potential actions by communities and schools to address self-care challenges.

This project is in collaboration with The Black Women's Kindness Initiative, and I have created an advisory board who have been actively involved in developing the research questions and participant recruitment. So far, interviews have been conducted with six participants, and I am currently coding and analysing the data.

My hope for the research is that The Black Women's Kindness Initiative and I both gain an in-depth understanding of how Black women perceive and practice self-care and the facilities and resources available to them. I then hope that this information can be used to help The Black Women's Kindness initiative with future funding.

## 2022-23 collaborators CONT.

## Charlotte Temple (she/her)

**Course title:**
MSc Sociology of Education

**Community Partner:**
Brook

**Dissertation title:**
Young people's entanglement with Tik Tok as a developmental space for gender and sexuality

**Academic supervisor:**
Sara Braggs

**Research abstract:**
TikTok has fast become the most used app amongst young people. It's a space where they are learning about a vast range of topics, explicitly and implicitly, through an endless and highly personalised feed of short-form video. This dissertation will focus on how young people learn about their identity, sexuality and gender on the platform and the role that Relationship's and Sexual Education plays in a society where young people's contexts and perceptions are so intertwined with this digital media space. This work will aim to understand gaps in the current RSE curriculum in order to help increase its relevance and effectiveness.

## Medina Bakayeva (she/her)

**Course title:**
MSc Political Science

**Community Partner:**
We and AI

**Dissertation title:**
Framing policy on deepfakes in the EU, UK and US

**Academic supervisor:**
Melanie Garson

**Research abstract:**
This project hopes to explore how the EU, US and UK frame policy relating to deepfake media (AI-generated audio and visual materials). For example, how do policy documents from these

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jurisdictions describe the threats that deepfakes pose to society and individuals, as an issue of national security, democratic resilience, cybercrime, etc? The framing of policy debates can inform policy action; therefore, this dissertation aims to identify emerging policy frames as drivers of policy, particularly as deepfakes pose a challenge to the EU, US and UK as they head into elections in 2024.

I have identified relevant policy documents and started coding them to identify themes and frames using a content analysis software called NVivo.

I hope this project can provide information that We and AI can use to develop workshops on deepfakes.

## Yi Huang (she/her)

**Course title:**
The Bartlett Development Planning Unit

**Dissertation title:**
The role of good relations between voluntary community-based groups and local authorities in sustaining Greenspace: Practices of UK Friends Groups

**Community Partner:**
National Federation of Parks and Greenspaces

**Academic supervisor:**
Liza Griffin

**Research abstract:**
My priority research objective is to complete the investigation of the relationship between the two (Friends Group-Local Authority)

Identifying what constitutes a good relationship between a Friends group and a local authority, where are these good relationships occurring and what are the key success factors behind these good relationships?

I have completed the literature review, methodology and collection of first-hand information: interviews, and am in the process of coding the analysis and writing the finding section.
I want to end up with an essay that meets the academic requirements and preferably gets a good grade!

## 2022–23 collaborators CONT.

### Meghana Sweeta

**Course title:**
MSc Social Policy Social Research

**Community Partner:**
The Mix

**Dissertation title:**
Working Title: Exploring compassion fatigue experienced by helpline agents (staff and volunteers) at The Mix

**Academic supervisor:**
Sandy Oliver

**Research abstract:**
This project is exploring compassion fatigue experienced by helpline agents (staff and volunteers) at The Mix. It also focuses on identifying coping strategies. The study is using qualitative data and will be carried out by collecting interviews with helpline staff and volunteers.

### Claire Bolderson

**Course title:**
MSc Social Policy & Social Research

**Dissertation title:**
Working with Inclusion London to conduct research on social care charges

**Community Partner:**
Inclusion London

### Martina La Verghetta

**Course title:**
Education Practice and Society

**Community Partner:**
The Breteau Foundation

### Elyse McCarty

**Course title:**
MA in Cultural Heritage Studies

**Community Partner:**
Hackney Shed

## 2022-23 collaborators CONT.

### Aisha Milsom

**Course title:**
Business Analytics

**Community Partner:**
Centrepoint

### Sara Omar

**Course title:**
Sustainable Built
Environments, Energy and
Resources

**Community Partner:**
Better Homes Enfield

### Sanjoli Shah

**Community Partner:**
Life After Hummus

# A short introduction to the Community Research Initiative

## Our values

The Community Research Initiative is all about bringing people together, across the student-community divide. To do this we embody three key values; first, there are valid perspectives and ways of knowing besides academic knowledge; second, the highest quality knowledge and information is multi-perspective; and third, new knowledge should lead to positive social change. These underpinning ideas shape our work, as we strive to:

- **Emphasise power sharing and knowledge democracy:** we are not 'academic saviours' of our lesser local communities and citizens. We acknowledge gaps in our own knowledge and seek to find out more from experts within the community and voluntary sector.
- **Act as a bridge:** a bridge into the university of grounded, experiential, lived experience from citizens and citizen groups while at the same time, a bridge out of the university of academic perspectives and skills.
- **Promote the creation of useful and useable products from student research:** we challenge our students to always ask 'why?'. Why does the work that they are doing matter? We not only give our students space to work out the answers to this question, but we help them equip each other to work with their partners to answer these questions together.

We think every master's student who wants to, should be able to explore the principles of knowledge equity, co-design, and solve 'real life' problems with their dissertation. We think that every master's student should be excited about their dissertation because they are doing it with and for a Community Partner.

## Very brief history

Through student-community research partnerships, the aims of the Community Research Initiative are to improve the master's student dissertation experience and to create useful and useable knowledge for our local communities.

The Community Research Initiative began in November 2018 because of cross-university interest in a "science shop" model of student engagement and a desire to create a more fulfilling experience for students' dissertation work. The two-year pilot saw a period of innovation, experimentation, learning from others across the world and closer to home, and building the service. Funding flowed in: Office for Students in 2020, which secured a full-time staff position, the Students' Union UCL, and UCL's Knowledge Exchange Innovation Fund, and our offers have expanded to include exciting new projects

# A short introduction to the Community Research Initiative CONT.

on at the Community Research Initiative. With the support of our wider volunteering team and the power of the Student Life Strategy in our sails, it's exciting to see where the CRI ship will venture next!

## What we offer

1:1 coaching & advice
Brokering with Voluntary & Community Sector organisations
Skills development for students and organisations
Supported knowledge exchange
Partnership building and maintenance
Supported development for micro and grassroots Voluntary & Community Sector organisations
A 'Science Shop': the Community Research Hub

## What have we been up to this year?

**Developing The Community Research Network: April 2023-March 2024**
As we have continued to innovate and build our service, what we have repeatedly heard is that universities – and this includes us to some extent - struggle to be nimble enough for very small and grassroot organisations. To address this, we're flinging open our doors and creating better ways for such 'micro' organisations to get connected with the university and to our students. Why? To understand how to change so that we are more user-friendly for very small and grassroot organisations and to figure out what we can support with to get organisations into a position where they are more ready to engage with students – and genuinely benefit. Thus, the Community Research Network project was created to take on this task in our own backyard of Camden and East London. We are doing this thanks to the generous support of the Knowledge Exchange Innovation Fund from UCL Innovation & Enterprise.

We gathered an all-star team of key actors in the Voluntary & Community Sector and the higher education world, with skills in capacity-building, evaluation, academic relationships, and community engagement. We are proud to partner with Compass Wellbeing CIC and Voluntary Action Camden. Our goals are to:

- Develop a network of very small and grassroots organisations.
- Map the development needs of organisations for (i) university engagement, (ii) engagement processes, and (iii) research collaboration skills.
- Create "action learning set" inspired model for organisations to self-organise, support, and learn.
- Map UCL with and for the Network, focused on broad research disciplines and student research capabilities.

# A short introduction to the Community Research Initiative CONT.

In the first five months, our Network has grown to include 22 micro-organisations across Camden and East London. Through conversation, together with our amazing micro-orgs, we have identified areas for improvement and research capacity-building.

In the coming months to the end of the year, our Community Research Initiative Coordinator, the marvellous Molly, will be working with the network to develop trainings, new processes, and even a super-secret new programme that will build up these organisations and prepare them to collaborate and create with our UCL students.

Finally, we will pilot our capacity-building ideas and evaluate what difference we've made.

### A Science Shop: Establishing our Kentish Town Community Research Hub



Nestled in the heart of Kentish Town, our Community Research Hub is a new innovative space that takes UCL and plops us into the community. Inspired by the science shop[1] model, this leafy, cozy hub is a place for ideas (and plants!) to thrive! Also funded through the Knowledge Exchange Innovation Fund, the Hub at Kentish Town Community Centre represents our presence as a sponge in the community, soaking up ideas to advocate for in the university setting.

Molly works from this space one day a week, enabling her to engage with the Centre's visitors, local organisations, residents, and staff that make Kentish Town Community Centre such a valuable buzzing community-driven space. We are learning so much from the incredible partnership.

Our goal with this space is to immerse ourselves in the life of Kentish Town Community Centre, to meet local people and communities with ideas and give them a voice. We won't just listen - we will take these conversations and ideas right back to the university to bring authenticity to students, whether that's through volunteering or collaborative research opportunities. We have big plans in the next year to continue to develop this hub, from hosting community research events, to giving a space for PhD students to develop their consultancy skills. Watch this space to see where we take this exciting project.

[1] What Is A Science Shop? **scishops.eu/resources/what-is-a-science-shop-faq**

# A short introduction to the Community Research Initiative CONT.

**Exploring Power, Inclusivity & Exclusion in Local Communities (PSYC0287)**



It's an age-old complaint during school, isn't it – *what's the point in learning this? Or I'm never going to use this in* **real** *life*. Unfortunately, this disconnect between the classroom and the outside world continues into university lecture halls as well. This leads to students emerging with great degrees but little practical experience or the broader skills essential in the workplace. It's not all about jobs – but a large part of doing a degree is employment-related, right?

Recently we've done something a little bit different; we participated in a star-studded collaboration with the Division of Psychology and Language Sciences' Sophie Scott and Victoria Showunmi on this exciting new optional module. The module development and delivery team felt really strongly that the student projects should be community-based. Cue the Community Research Initiative! Starting with a small cohort, we decided on a class project (rather than individual ones) which would bring maximum benefit to the Community Partner and also offer a valuable team-working environment for students.

After a lot of work, supported by the incredible Stefanie Anyadi, the project kicked off by partnering with the Black Woman Kindness Initiative CIC[2]. They were a perfect match, in terms of their own aims and objectives and the overarching themes of the module – power and inequity. Cherrill Hutchison was working with the Community Research Initiative anyway, working out how we might be able to help and mentioned this project she had coming up for International Women's Day - a photography exhibition, a Walk of Confidence, and reflections publication.

As a team, Cherrill and the students co-created project tasks, roles and responsibilities and agreed the team's Rules of Engagement and core values: empowerment, collaboration, and inclusivity. The deliverables were achieved: a fantastic photography exhibition, a hardcopy reflective journal of the process of all involved, and a powerful and energetic event with the all-important Walk-Of-Confidence. Check out the film by using the QR code during the Student Panel today.

**Student skills development**

Our skills development and capacity-building offer has gone from strength-to-strength. We had over 300 students interested in the sessions on project management, communication skills, and basics of community-based research. We were also delighted to offer personalised versions of our materials for specific courses e.g. MSc Smart Buildings & Digital Engineering and MSC Urban Planning.

[2] **bwkindness.co.uk/community**

# A short introduction to the Community Research Initiative CONT.

It was brilliant to bring students together from across the university during a session delivered by our expert friends in the Voluntary & Community sector, Introduction to your local Voluntary Sector. Giving students a really honest and open introduction to the sector, including strengths and their journey to their current role, our Community Partners.

Completing this year's suite of session, we also co-developed a session Enabling Effective Conversations with Non-Academic Audiences to introduce students to the principles of cross-sector working.

While we will still offer in-person live skills development, for 23-24 we are trying something new, acknowledging new student habits and ways of learning. We will be launching our new You Tube channel with our skills materials in short bite-sized videos.

## Student Life Strategy

The Student Life Strategy[3] was recently published, outlining ambitions for the largest ever expansion of co- and extra-curricular activities and experiences at UCL. Underpinning this is genuinely effective partnership working between the Union and its university, UCL. The Strategy will create 1000s more opportunities for students to get involved, off campus and on, to have fun but also learn, to make friends and find their tribe.

There are six priority projects and Community Volunteering is one, with an ambitious target of more than doubling the number of students participating in Community Volunteering. It's more than a numbers game though – we want to get to a place across UCL where being a good citizens of our university, our city, and beyond – through volunteering – is regarded as a core activity. To achieve this we need to:

1. Make it easier to get involved, for both our students and our Voluntary & Community Sector
2. Expand the super popular and highly impactful student opportunities like Social Hackathons and the Consultancy Challenge.
3. Integrate with academic departments and departmental student societies.
4. Collaborate with our student Sports Clubs and Societies, enabling their members to connect with the Voluntary & Community Sector as well as think closer to home and what they do on campus.

On the Community Research Initiative, we are seeing this as something of a moonshot moment; a time to get super innovative and see how far we can get over the next five years.
- Our Community Research Network is already making things easier for micro-organisations to get involved, not just with the Community Research Initiative but with any aspect of a university where there might be meaningful partnership possibilities.

[2] **ucl.ac.uk/strategic-plan-2022-27/supporting-strategies/student-life-strategy**

# A short introduction to the Community Research Initiative CONT.

- We are expanding our challenge-based learning offer, the Research Consultancy Clinics delivered by trained PhD students, to two per year with one focused on East London micro-organisations.
- With more PhD students trained through our Research Consultancy in brief setting, communication skills, and the principles of knowledge democracy, we will be able to expand our Science Shop to become a student-led initiative and grow a pro-bono research service.
- We are piloting a university-engagement 'hatchery' for community organisations.

## Intro to the team and our friends

### The A-Team
### Anne Laybourne
Often referred to as The Lovely Anne Laybourne, Anne's journey with the Students' Union UCL began in 2018 as the first Community Research Initiative manager. In a previous life, she was a researcher in health services research but became frustrated with the life of short-term research projects and an absence of meaningful social change stemming from research. In 4 short years, Anne has risen to prominence both within the Union and the wider UCL community. As the Head of Volunteering (interim), Anne is working to reshape the way we think about connecting with community and is driving us toward a culture of student citizenship at UCL.

### Molly McCabe
Molly joined the Students' Union UCL in 2022 as the Community Research Initiative admin assistant – in addition to being a master's student in our program herself! Molly leads on the Community Research Network project and has cultivated a network of micro and grassroots organisations (lovingly referred to as her 'besties'). Molly has been working to develop her expertise in participatory research and brings strong theory vibes to students' conversations about community-partnered research. She is overjoyed to have a full-time role at the Students' Union and excited to continue to build up the Community Research Initiative in years to come.

### Abena Akonnor
Abena keeps the student right at the very centre of the Community Research Initiative. She worked part-time as the Community Research Initiative admin assistant while completing her own master's degree in Social Cognition. Abena is the grounding member of the team as she works to bring so many projects across the finish line with her lightning-fast task completion and infectious sense of calm.

### The Students' Union UCL Marketing Squad
Annalisa and David are graphic designers working with Guy in the Marketing team at the Students' Union UCL. Our materials only look so good because of them – they are our secret weapon! Annalisa deserves a special mention for her work creating the new design identity for the Community Research Initiative: the unfinished circle represents coming together, community and the Community Research Initiative fills in the gaps; the negative space is like a doorknob for opening doors; and the changing

# A short introduction to the Community Research Initiative CONT.

colourway represents the change that happens through collaborative work and inclusivity. Natalie Leal, a new addition to Guy's team, is just the most impressive human, breaking down concepts behind great communication campaigns so us mere mortals. If our narrative gets stronger and our story more prominent, it will be because of Natalie in the coming months!

### Max Keeble
Max is Head of Systems at the Students' Union UCL and the best thing since sliced bread. Max has supported the Community Research Initiative with building the website and built the underlying system of workflows that will enable scaling. He has a solution for everything and a seemingly endless amount of patience for our non-tech centred approaches

### Nicky Fawcett
In a few short months (it feels like, gone too soon!), Nicky took the reins of the Volunteering Service and set about a real period of growth in the team's thinking and aspirations. Harnessing Anne and Molly's ridiculous levels of innovation and running-before-walking tendencies, Nicky brought some order to the House of CRIS. We miss you, Nicky.

### Sarah Hoyle
Sarah Hoyle brings the connected community vibe to the Community Research Initiative. As the resident queen of Kentish Town Community Centre, Sarah provides us not only with a space for our Community Research Hub but also a healthy dose of inspiration and perspective (and strong vibes). Sarah's energy and momentum adds so much to many of the projects that we conduct within the Community Research Initiative, and she is an outspoken advocate for what we do.

### CRN Working Group
### Ian McKay
Ian is the master recruiter for the Community Research Network. As a not-so-retired retiree and part-time worker at Compass Wellbeing, Ian has been instrumental at bringing the Community Research Initiative to East London. His insight into the sector and lovely input into the project has allowed us to excel through our project deliverables.

### Mike Sulu
Mike brings the cool to CRIS: a researcher in microbial fermentation processes like yeasts (isn't that, like, beer!?), Mike also is hilarious, participating in Bright Club, and does incredible work on campus around all things equity and inclusion. Mike is a bit unsure why he's on this project, we think, but it's clear to us – we lack biochemist and engineering appeal. They simply don't dig us. We'll be working with Mike to turn that around.

### The Voluntary Action Camden Crew: Keith Morgan and Donna Turnbull
As the resident Camden experts, Donna and Keith have been an important feature of the Community Research Network. By offering their insight, perspective, and support, we have been able to confidently grow our reach across the Camden Voluntary Sector. We look forward to our future with VAC by our
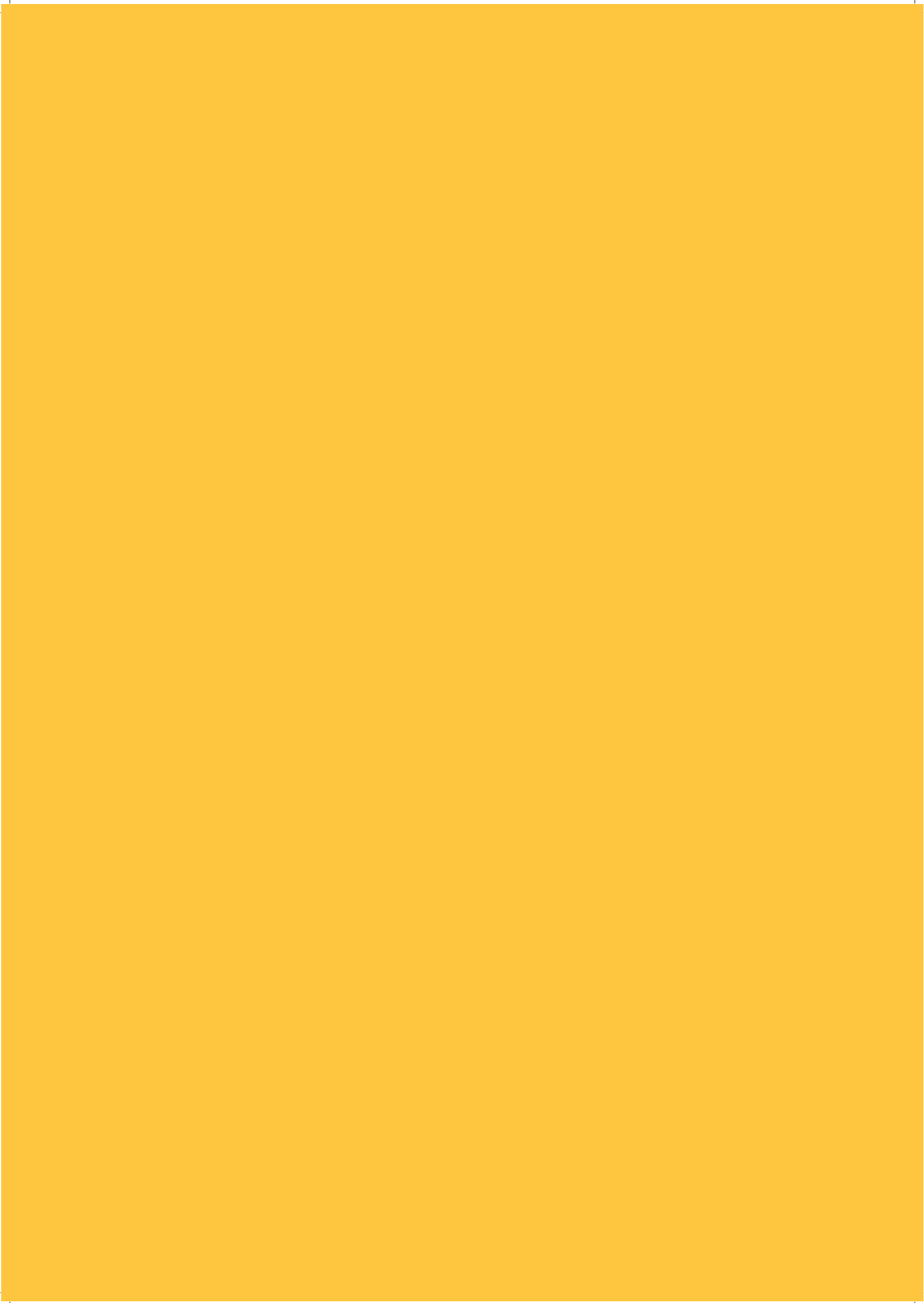
# A short introduction to the Community Research Initiative CONT.

**Gemma Moore feat. Ruth Unstead-Joss**

Gemma is quite simply the guardian angel of the Community Research Initiative. Responsible for Anne's epiphany to leave research and take on the challenge of the Community Research Initiative, Gemma is a researcher with a difference – she simply doesn't know how to not work collaboratively! She has given her time, expertise, and advice generously from the very beginning and leads the way with her Evaluation Exchange programme for UCL's PhD and early-career researchers. And she brought us Ruth –. Ruth has given her time and ever calming perspective to the Community Research Network project. Ruth not only offers her expertise and insight but also is a source of joy, warmth, and kindness to the CRIS team. We adore our Evaluation Exchange besties and cannot wait to continue to work with them in the future!