National Student Survey result
Results of the latest NSS survey place our department 1st in London, in the top 25% nationwide, and second in the College. Find out more [here](#).

Birkbeck Psychology Department in UK Top Ten
The latest Times Higher Education World Subject Rankings rank Birkbeck’s Department of Psychological Sciences third in London and ninth in the UK. Find out more [here](#).

Centre for Educational Neuroscience launches new website
The Centre for Educational Neuroscience seeks to translate insights into neural mechanisms of learning to education. It has also just launched a [new website](#) explaining how the brain works to a non-expert audience: It’s not that complicated, after all!
You can find a video introducing the new website [here](#).

The centre also continues to develop resources for teachers and parents on its website to support the dialogue between educators and researchers. It has recently posted a series of interviews with head teachers and teachers exploring their views of educational neuroscience and more generally, their experience with evidence-based teaching practice.
Top Media Mentions

Our staff have been attracting high profile media attention

Both present and ex members of CBCD feature highly in the new BBC three-part series Babies: Their Wonderful World. Tim Smith acted as the science consultant, Emily Jones features in all three episodes, Tim Smith features in the first episode, Sarah Lloyd-Fox features in the second episode, and several others pop-up throughout. The series wouldn’t have won the BBC commission if it wasn’t for Leslie Tucker’s guidance to the production company for several years before production even started!

Angelica Ronald’s research on psychotic-like experiences has contributed to a new Radio 4 programme. Led by Prof Daniel Freeman (University of Oxford) the series explores cases of delusion and airs throughout December 2018. Angelica features in the final episode "The Future".

Gillian Forrester’s ‘left-cradling bias’ research was covered by more than 100 outlets including The Times, Daily Telegraph, The Sun and The i. The research showed a link between a lefthand cradling bias in children and higher cognitive sociability scores. These media mentions led Gillian to be invited to write an article for the magazine Early Years Educator and has more recently sparked interest from a science documentary production company.

Teodora Gliga’s research into how babies’ reactions to light can be an indicator of autism received widespread media coverage in publications such as the Daily Mail, The Mirror, Metro, Express and The i Paper, plus online outlets, amounting to more than 140 news stories.
Picks from the Birkbeck Matters

Babies' response to 'peek-a-boo' could hold autism clue

New research led by Sarah Lloyd Fox suggests that babies who show lower levels of brain activity to social stimuli, such as peek-a-boo and the sounds of yawning and laughter, are more likely to be diagnosed with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) as toddlers.

It is the first research to show that functional brain responses before 6 months of age are associated with a later ASD diagnosis at 3 years, meaning these findings could show the earliest marker of ASD to date.

This story was picked up across several media outlets including The Telegraph and The Daily Mail.

The predictive power of the brain

A new study from the Department of Psychological Sciences looks at how ‘predictions’ about the outcomes of actions influence sensory processing in the brain.

New research from Birkbeck’s Action Laboratory, investigates what is actually happening in our brains when predicting the outcomes of our physical actions. Led by Clare Press and Daniel Yon, the study examined the brain activity of volunteers through MRI scanning while they performed finger movements and watched similar movements being performed by an avatar hand. Find out more here.

Shining a light on brain development

Professor Clare Elwell, part of the Brain Imaging for Global HealTH (BRIGHT) network, of which Birkbeck is a member, discusses bringing a new imaging technology to a remote Gambian village, and how it could help babies suffering from malnutrition to reach their full potential. Find out more here.
Other Media Mentions

A BBC reporter who visited the babylab gave insight into her experiences was picked up by a variety of international outlets including BBC Azerbaijan, BBC Turkey and the Brazilian Terra and Medplan.

Belinda Brooks-Gordon wrote the article *Banning sex work advertising online will put sex workers in danger* for the Independent and journalist Cosmo Landesman used Belinda’s book The Price of Sex to highlight that consumers would prefer to know that people appearing in porn films, engaged in live sex acts or hired through an escort agency are there by consent, earn decent money and have access to health and welfare services in the article *Are you a politically correct pervert?* for The Spectator.

Mark Johnson was asked to give expert opinion on the case study *When surgeons removed one sixth of a child’s brain, here’s what happened* which was picked up in the major news outlet CNN.

Emily Jones’ research on imitation was the subject of a four-page feature in the August 2018 edition of French magazine ‘Sciences-Psy’, and her EDEN project was recently featured in a three page spread in Pioneer magazine.

Emma Meaburn was interviewed for the TILE blog. TILE is a network for scientists working in education to engage with the public, teachers and policy makers to help inform evidence-based teaching.

Ted Melhuish was interviewed by BBC1’s Sunday Politics about the Sure Start initiative as a result of his leading role in NESS (National Evaluation of Sure Start).

Tim Smith’s research on toddlers losing sleep due to use of tablets featured in The Daily Telegraph and his work highlighted on the CBS TODAY show.

Forthcoming Training

On 16th January 2019 the Engagement team are running a Presenting to Public Audiences workshop. It’s designed for PhDs, ECRs, and all those keen to develop skills and. For more information and to book tickets see here.
Public Engangement and Talks

Beauty in the Brain
As part of the Birkbeck One World Festival 2018, Emily Jones presented the talk *Beauty in the Brain*. An estimated 200 million children in low- and middle-income countries fail to reach their full development potential. In India alone an estimated 65 million children experience early adversity, creating a vicious cycle of inter-generational poverty and social disadvantage. Breaking this cycle requires us to understand the developing brain systems that shape mental health outcomes. The Centre for Brain and Cognitive Development at Birkbeck is a world-leading Centre for the study of the infant brain. We are partnering with researchers in low and middle income countries like India to work together to develop new ways to study the early brain systems that are affected by poverty and disadvantage. Our long term goal is to find better ways to develop and test the effects of early interventions that could improve long term life outcomes. In this talk I will showcase the methods we use to study early brain development, explain what we are learning about the early indicators of developmental conditions like autism and ADHD, and show how we are working in partnership to share our tools with researchers across the world.

Asia urged to invest in early childhood education to increase economic development
Ted Melhuish was invited by the Department of Education to be the UK academic representative on a joint UK-China government meeting to explore cooperation in the area of Early Education. He has advised a number of countries on their early childhood policies. He is also an adviser on childhood development issues to the OECD, European Commission, UNICEF and WHO.

A large and growing body of research shows that quality early childhood education delivers a wide range of benefits, not just to the children involved but to society overall. These include improved child well-being and learning, reduced poverty, increased social mobility, greater female workforce participation and increased social and economic development.

“The evidence from around the world is that when you invest in good quality early education you see improved outcomes for children in their behavioural outcomes and in their early learning and capacity to adapt to school very quickly,” Professor Melhuish said.
“That impact at the start of school then has consequences for their later developmental trajectories. Those children with good preschool education for longer duration start on a high trajectory and maintain that trajectory through to the end of school, and finish with higher levels of qualifications. They subsequently get better jobs and show better social adjustment. Thus, the skills base of the whole population is raised, and the economic potential of the country is improved. Those children are less likely to get involved in crime, to use drugs, to have an early pregnancy, or to get involved in risky behaviours that lead to bad health.

They are less likely to be dependent on welfare and unemployment benefits, and more likely to be employed, paying taxes and improving government finances.”

Ted Melhuish has also advised a number of countries on their early childhood policies, most recently Sri Lanka. It was in his capacity as a UNICEF Ambassador that he made a presentation to Building Brains, Building Futures: The Sri Lanka Early Childhood Development High-Level Meeting in July this year. Key government officials and advisors, including the education minister and the finance minister, were at the meeting.

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Sri Lanka subsequently boosted funding for early childhood education. He argues that Australian governments should follow the Sri Lankan government’s lead, and welcomed the Australian Labor Party’s commitment to increase Federal funding for early childhood education.

Other presentations and talks

Belinda Brooks-Gordon was invited to give a presentation and take part in a policy roundtable to the Irish Sex Work Research Network at Trinity College, Dublin on 16th November 2018.

Ana da Cunha Lewin provided a talk to parents at Enfield Town Schools Partnership in October 2018, a talk and taster session to student Early Years Educator course on 27th November 2018 at Westminster Kingsway College and a talk and taster session to Year 12 and 13 students at Burntwood School on 4th December 2018.

Naz Derakshan ran a one hour 'meet the expert' session with MSc and PhD students at the University of Ghent, where she engaged in contemporary discussions on her research with the audience. She also gave the invited talk Pathways to resilience in breast cancer at the bi-annual national Odyssey Cancer...
Survivorship conference at St Johns College, Oxford in September 2018 and gave a talk at the International Society for Psychophysiological Research (SPR) in Quebec City, Canada in October 2018.

**Gillian Forrester** gave the Science Guest Lecture *Becoming human – the evolution of cognition* at the The City Literary Institute on 16th November 2018.

**Ulrike Hahn** gave the workshop *Bayesian Pragmatics - Is there such a thing as Bayesian pragmatics?* at UCL, London in September 2018, contributed *Testimony and Social Networks* to the Minds, Machines and Society event at Wisconsin Institute for Discovery in July 2018, and was an invited symposium speaker at the 40th Annual Meeting of the Cognitive Science Society in Madison, Wisconsin in July 2018.

**Matt Longo** took part in a discussion addressing *What does art do to (and with) our bodies?* at The ‘Scratch’, part of the Experimenting in the Galleries: Performing with Vernon Lee on 2nd November 2018.

**Emma Meaburn** was an invited speaker for the UCL Rosalind Franklin STEM ambassadors workshop in September. This workshop was designed to encourage and support under represented groups in STEM, and as part of this she is providing ongoing mentorship for a 16 year old (support and advice for university applications, subject choices, etc). She also organised and led a genetics activity for year 6 primary school children as part of STEM week (Julian’s Primary School, Streatham). Here she read and discussed the book ‘all about me’, made DNA models with pipe cleaners, guessed how related we are to other organisms, and extracted our DNA from spit!

**Mike Oaksford** gave the talk *We Rarely Reason Alone: Social Rationality and the Psychology of Reasoning* at the 11th London Reasoning Workshop, held at Birkbeck, 24th-26th July 2018.

**Clare Press** gave given external seminars at University of Birmingham (November, 'How do actions influence perception?') and at the Wellcome Centre for Human Neuroimaging, UCL (October, 'The influence of action predictions on perception and perceptual processing').

**Alex Shepherd** convened the Applied Vision Association Xmas meeting at Birkbeck on 17th December 2018. Find out more here.

**Ted Melhuish** produced a video for StoryPark on a child's ability to self-regulate. Described as one of the most important predictors of their later success, throughout school, and throughout life Ted helped produce the video to help develop this important skill in young children. In addition, on November 13th the Secretary of State for Education in the UK announced a major new initiative on the Home Learning environment largely based Ted’s work to try to improve outcomes for children. His work has also influenced the government of Ontario, Canada, who announced a new policy of free universal early education for all children from 3-years-old.

**Daniel Yon** gave a talk at Open Self, Technische Universität Berlin, Germany (September, ‘Action sharpens sensory representations of expected outcomes’), in a symposium on Prediction-by-production in language and action at 1st International Workshop on Predictive Processing at BCBL, San Sebastian, Spain (June, 'Predicting the sensory consequences of action'), and two recent talks giving an overview of our projects in the Netherlands (December, 'Expectation, action and perception', University of Amsterdam and Donders Institute, Radboud University).
Awards and Recognition

Congratulations to all our staff and students receiving awards

Dr Sarah Lloyd-Fox awarded Wiley Prize

Dr Lloyd-Fox awarded the Wiley Prize from the British Academy, in recognition of her distinction in research into infant cognitive development.

A recent Birkbeck graduate has been awarded two top Psychology awards for research and academic excellence.

Along with graduating first in her class and winning the prestigious British Psychological Society Undergraduate Award, Tanya Botha has also received the Honorary Research Fellows in Quantitative Psychology Prize from Birkbeck for the best final-year undergraduate psychology project of the year using quantitative methods.

Tanya’s project investigated ways to boost emotional resilience and wellbeing in individuals prone to high levels of rumination, a major risk factor for depression and anxiety, using innovative neurocognitive interventions. These interventions were developed to increase attentional control and processing efficiency using daily, web-based training tasks. The findings of this research are clinically important and add to a growing body of research expounding the efficacy of brief, computer-based cognitive interventions for reducing the symptoms of some of the most burdensome psychological disorders.

Mike Oaksford has been appointed Associate Editor of Cognition, one of the main journals in Cognitive Psychology.

Birkbeck Public Engagement Awards 2019

Applications have opened for the Public Engagement Awards. These celebrate projects in which researchers have worked with the public to make our research accessible and include non-academic expertise. The deadline for applications is 17 February. Contact the Public Engagement team to discuss your application or join us for a Q&A at 13:00, 21 January, B04 Malet Street.
Grants

Congratulations to all our staff receiving research grants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Funding Body</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Amount</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Emily Jones</td>
<td>ESRC</td>
<td>Why are we social? Mapping the development of social motivation through adaptive sampling</td>
<td>253,017</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Michael Thomas</td>
<td>MRC (subcontract from UCL)</td>
<td>Cognitive Development in the Urban Environment (The CLUE study)</td>
<td>10,622</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emily Jones and Mark Johnson</td>
<td>IMI, Innovative Medicines Initiative</td>
<td>AIMS-2-TRIALS: Autism Innovative Medicine Studies</td>
<td>2,899,831</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sarah Lloyd Fox</td>
<td>Royal Society</td>
<td>Influence of Social partner on the neural correlates of affective touch in the first year of life</td>
<td>2,500</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Denis Mareschal led a team of researchers including Tim Smith, Atsushi Senju Michael Thomas, Matt Longo, Adam Tierney, and Mark Johnson from Birkbeck and Clare Elwell from UCL biophysics who successfully applied to the Wellcome Trust for £850,458 towards the Toddler Lab Cave facility. This immersive audio-visual environment will enable us to transport toddlers virtually into any environment and the ability to record EEG and brain oxygenation through fNIRS in freely mobile and interacting toddlers.
Conference Activity

Members of staff from across the department have been representing Psychological Sciences at conferences across the world

On 25th October 2018 Jaqueline Barnes delivered the Workshop presentations: Societal determinants of the intergenerational transmission of health inequalities in Centre-based child care and preschool systems at the Intergenerational transmission of health inequalities meeting at Erasmus University Medical Centre in Rotterdam. In addition she attended the 7th Early Childhood Care and Education Studies Seminar (ECCESS) at the University of Utrecht on 14th November 2018 and delivered the Keynote address Inter-agency working to support family functioning and child development: Background and emerging European evidence and the workshop Covering care and education at the local level. St. Stephen’s School and Children’s Centre, London, UK.

Emily Jones delivered the presentation Promising biomarkers of early autism at the International Society for CNS Clinical Trials and Methodology, Miami in October 2018.

Fiona Tasker contributed to the following:

- Costa, P. A., Tasker, F., & Leal, I. Motivations for adoption among LGBTQ individuals (paper presentation) and Psychosocial adjustment of children in adoptive LGBT+ and heterosexual families in the U.K. (poster presentation) at the 6th International Conference on Adoption Research. Vancouver, Canada, July 8-12 2018.
- Tasker, F. Today’s Family Maps & Tomorrow’s Possibilities: Family Formations and LGBTQ Parenting 9th European Society on Family Relations (ESFR) congress “Families through the lens of diversity”, University of Porto, Oporto, Portugal, 5-8 September 2018.
- Figueroa, V. & Tasker, F. Parenting desires and intentions among Chilean young lesbian and bisexual women. 9th Congress of the European Society on Family Relations. Porto, Portugal, September, 5-8 2018.

Ulrike Hahn gave the talk Some thoughts on trust at the Leading Integrity Conference in London, July 2018.
Doctoral Activity

Theses Awarded
Congratulations to all those successfully defending their theses

Candidate: Jacqueline Allan
Title: Understanding, Measuring and Treating Eating Disorders in those with Type 1 Diabetes
Supervisors: Dr Anne Miles, Professor Annette Karmiloff-Smith
Examiners: Dr Colin Jones, Professor Jackie Sturt

Candidate: Klaudia Ambroziak
Title: Malleability of body image: how looking at other people affects perception of our own body
Supervisors: Matthew Longo, Marie Smith
Examiners: Aikaterina Fotopoulou, Stephan de la Rosa

Candidate: Annie Brookman-Byrne
Title: The cognitive and neural bases of science and maths reasoning in adolescence
Supervisors: Dr Iroise Dumontheil, Prod Denis Mareschal, Prof Andrew Tolmie (UCL IOE)
Examiners: Prof Michelle de Haan (ICH UCL), Dr Sinead Rhodes (University of Edinburgh)

Candidate: Nicole Cruz
Title: On the Role of Deduction in Reasoning from Uncertain Premises.
Supervisor: Mike Oaksford/David Over/ Jean Baratgin
Joint award under a co-tutelage arrangement with l’École Pratique Des Hautes Études, Paris
Examiners: Professor Nick Chater (Warwick), Professor Wim De Neys (Sorbonne), Professor Shira Elqayam (De Montfort), Professor Dorothy Edgington (BBK)

Candidate: Georgina Donati
Title: Investigating the relationship between emotion and cognition during adolescence: genes and behaviour
Supervisors: Dr Iroise Dumontheil and Dr Emma Meaburn
Examiners: Prof. Yulia Kovas (Goldsmiths) and Dr Catherine Sebastian (Royal Holloway)

Candidate: Emmanuel Ducrocq
Title: Understanding The Neurocognitive Mechanisms of Sports Performance Under Pressure Through Cognitive Training
Supervisors: Nazanin Derakhshan
Examiners: Vince Walsh and Raoul Oudejans

Candidate: Megumi Fieldsend
Title: Facing and dealing with the challenge of involuntary childlessness: An interpretative phenomenological analysis
Supervisor: Jonathan Smith
Examiners: Rudi Dallos (Plymouth) and Joel Vos (Metanoia Institute)
Candidate: Melina Makatsori  
Title: The impact of food allergy and food challenge testing on health-related quality of life and emotional distress in adults  
Supervisors: Dr Anne Miles, Professor Denis Mareschal  
Examiners: Dr Rebecca Knibb, Dr Alice Simon

Candidate: Germaine Symons  
Title: *The Effect of Source Reliability on the Understanding of Causal Systems in Primary and Secondary School Children.*  
Supervisor: Mike Oaksford/Andrew Tolmie  
Examiners: Professor Christine Howe (Cambridge), Professor Jacqueline Barnes (BBK)

Candidate: Wafa Turkistani  
Title: Unemployment in Spinal Cord Injury: Understanding the lived experiences of unemployed individuals with spinal cord injury and those who provide spinal cord injury vocational support in the community  
Supervisor: Jonathan Smith  
Examiners: Brett Smith (Birmingham) and Sally Anstey (Cardiff)

Candidate: James Vance  
Title: Negations without “Not”: Alternative Forms of Negation and Contrast Classes in Conditional Inference  
Supervisor: Mike Oaksford  
Examiners: Professor Linden Ball (UCLAN), Dr Adam Harris (UCL)

**Theses Examined**

Staff from around the department are frequently invited to examine doctoral theses at institutions across the country

**Jacqueline Barnes** was external examiner at Canterbury Christ Church University for the thesis *The Nature of Scaffolding Interaction: Mother and child contribution across time and culture.*

**Clare Press** was external examiner for Victoria Schroeder at University of Birmingham and Nathan Foster at Liverpool John Moores University.

**Naz Derakshan** was external examiner at the University of Sussex for the thesis *Testing a goal-driven account of involuntary attentional capture by motivationally salient stimuli* in September 2018 and at the University of Roehampton for the thesis *Modulation of attentional bias modification using Transcranial Electrical Stimulation* in October 2018.
Publications

Journal Articles


Dwan, Connor and Miles, Anne (2018) The role of attitude and attitude ambivalence in acceptance of the cancer risk associated with red meat. *Health, Risk and Society* 20, pp. 147-162. ISSN 1369-8575.


Thomas, M. S. C. (2018). A neurocomputational model of developmental trajectories of gifted children under a polygenic model: When are gifted children held back by poor environments? Intelligence, 69, 200-212


**Book Chapters**


