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News

New Covid-19 Research Programme and Survey Launched

In June, **Dr Fiona Tasker**, working in collaboration with international colleagues, launched a research programme to assess the health of young LGBTQ* adults during the Covid-19 pandemic. As part of this research programme, a survey was launched to capture experiences from the first UK lockdown. The team is currently developing a second wave of the survey to capture subsequent experiences of lockdown and the pandemic and has broadened this survey to capture experiences beyond the LGBTQ* community.



How has COVID-19 affected YOU?

We want to hear about your experiences of the COVID-19 pandemic and lockdown – **good** or **bad** or **both**!

We are researching the varied experiences of people during the COVID-19 pandemic and the impact it has had on quality of life and well-being.

We welcome views from **everyone** who is **aged 18-60 and living in the UK**.

For more information & to access the survey please go to:
bit.ly/Covid-experiences

Or please email the Birkbeck, University of London research team for more details:

Fiona Tasker and Marie Houghton
f.tasker@bbk.ac.uk and mhough01@mail.bbk.ac.uk

For further information, please see the write up on our [News pages](#) or contact Fiona Tasker, f.tasker@bbk.ac.uk or Marie Houghton mhough01@mail.bbk.ac.uk

Welcome to new colleagues

Welcome to **Kirsten Rittershofer** who has joined the Action Lab as a GTA funded PhD student. Information about her research can be found on the Action Lab's [people page](#). **Isabella Rizzo** has also started as a GTA funded PhD student, working with **Dr. Eddy Davelaar** – welcome Isabella!

The Undergraduate Team also has two new members of staff. Welcome to **Katie McAvelia** (who actually joined in April 2020) and **Zoe Hart** who joined more recently, who are both working with Yvonne Ng.

Suma Menon Nath has also recently joined as member of the Postgraduate Team – welcome Suma! Suma will be on secondment with the department for the whole of 2021.

Parental Leave

The Department continues to support staff in taking parental leave. Our colleague **Professor Tim Smith** has taken shared parental leave for 6 months this year, returning to work in July, to care for his new son Arlo. To find out about family and parental leave entitlements, please visit Birkbeck's [HR pages](#).

Top Media Mentions

Our staff have been attracting high profile media attention

Dr. Belinda Brooks-Gordon was interviewed by BBC Radio London for twenty minutes on 19 August 2020. She was also interviewed on BBC Radio Berkshire on 16 September 2020 by Phil Kennedy in relation to the Home Office White Paper on sentencing, speaking particularly about the psychological impact of indeterminate sentences and whole life tariffs.

Public Engagement and Talks

GRASP the LOOP module developed for secondary school children

Dr. Gillian Forrester (Director of *Me, Human*) worked in partnership with the BBC Presenter and Evolutionary Biologist Ben Garrod, the Clinical Psychologist Trudi Edginton, Liberia Chimpanzee Rescue & Protection, Roedean School (UK) and Charleston Primary School (Liberia) to develop and pilot an 11-week module for secondary school children. The module, *Give Respect and Seek to Protect Life on our Planet*, focusses on biodiversity, conservation, evolution, chimpanzees and human/animal cognitive wellbeing. For further information on the project, please visit the [Me, Human](#) website.



Image: Gillian Forrester (top right) and members of the GRASP team including baby chimp, Mary Beauty

Rosalind Franklin celebrations continue

The GEL Lab has led a series of events this year to celebrate the life and work of Rosalind Franklin, 100 years after her birth. In July, they celebrated Franklin's birthday with a 6-part video series in collaboration with other labs across Birkbeck's School of Science to acknowledge the contribution Franklin's research has made to current science research across the College. To view the videos please follow this [link](#).

Other public presentations, invited talks and event attendance

Professor Emily Jones recorded a podcast for the Association for Child and Adult Mental Health (ACAMH) about her research on the cognitive and neural mechanisms that drive variability in the development of core skills. The podcast is available via the [ACAMH website](#).

Dr. Belinda Brooks-Gordon continued her political engagement in September 2020. She chaired a Parliamentary Spokes panel at the Liberal Democrat Annual Conference on Saturday 19 September 2020. The panel included Lord Jonny Oates, Lord Robin Teverson, and Sarah Olney MP. She also summated a conference motion on the Impact of Covid-19.

On 22 September 2020, **Dr. Gillian Forrester** was a panellist at the Teaching and Learning Conference, Faculty of Medicine, Imperial College, London speaking to the theme on inclusivity and belonging. The panel addressed their experiences of adapting as an educator under the condition of Covid-19.

Awards and Recognition

Staff gained new editorial and advisory positions

Professor Emily Jones became an Associate Editor at Autism Research and the new journal JCPP: Advances and **Dr. Belinda Brooks-Gordon** Joined Editorial Board of Sexes journal.

Dr. Gillian Forrester became an Expert Advisory Panel member for the launch of [EI: SMART](#) (Early Intervention: Sensory, Motor, Attention Regulation, Relationships, Therapy (NHS Royal Free, Paediatric Neurodevelopment Therapy)- a research-informed therapeutic intervention approach for high-risk infants.

Grants

Congratulations to all our staff receiving research grants

NAME	FUNDER	TITLE	AMOUNT £
Emily Jones	EU	CANDY: Comorbid Analysis of Neurodevelopmental Disorders and Epilepsy	96,154
Fred Dick	NIH	Dimension-based auditory selective attention	348,287
Martin Eimer	ESRC	Uncovering mechanisms of attentional control by tracking preparatory states in real time.	679,467

Conference Activity

Normal conference activity has been disrupted by Covid-19. Nevertheless, many programmes have been able to shift to online activity and our colleagues have been taking part.

Dr. Clare Press delivered a keynote talk on *Expectation, Perception and Cognition* at the University of New South Wales, Sydney, Australia in September 2020.

Following his recent BPS prize for Cognitive Science (see previous [newsletter](#) for details), **Professor Rick Cooper** delivered the keynote at the BPS Cognitive Section e-conference titled *Set-shifting and place-keeping as separable control processes* on 27 August 2020.

Professor Tim Smith presented at the virtual departmental seminar in Psychology at Stirling University on 25 September entitled, *Directing Attention to Film Cognition*.

Professor Iroise Dumontheil presented a poster entitled *Developmental and trait anxiety differences in interference from emotional distractors* at the online Flux 2020 conference in September 2020.

Doctoral Activity

Theses Examined

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

Professor Emily Jones examined Jolie Keemink's thesis at the University of Kent. Jolie successfully defended her thesis entitled *Novel Research Paradigms to Investigate Social Development in Typically Developing Infants and Infants at Elevated Risk for Autism Spectrum Disorder*. She was supervised by Dr. David Kelly.

Dr. Gillian Forrester was the examiner for **Grégoire Boulinguez-Ambroise**, Université de Paris who successfully defended their thesis entitled: *Ontogenesis of the limb motor systems in the mouse lemur and the olive baboon: a comparative approach between two different prehensile strategies*. They were supervised by Emmanuelle Pouydebat and Adrien Meguerditchian

Dr. Fiona Tasker was the examiner for **Lucille Kelsall-Knight**, at the University of Wolverhampton for their Professional Doctorate in Health & Wellbeing. She successfully defended their thesis entitled, *Different Constellation and Shining Stars: Lesbian parents' experiences of accessing healthcare for their adopted children in England*. She was supervised by Dr. Fiona Morgan.

Publications

Accepted Manuscripts for the majority of these publications are available via Birkbeck's repository, [BIROn](#).

Journal Articles

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Books

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