



Flourishing
& Wellbeing

NIHR | Oxford Health Biomedical
Research Centre



Flourishing & Wellbeing

Investigating how non-clinical environments might be
utilised to enhance public health and mental health

FLOURISHING & WELLBEING

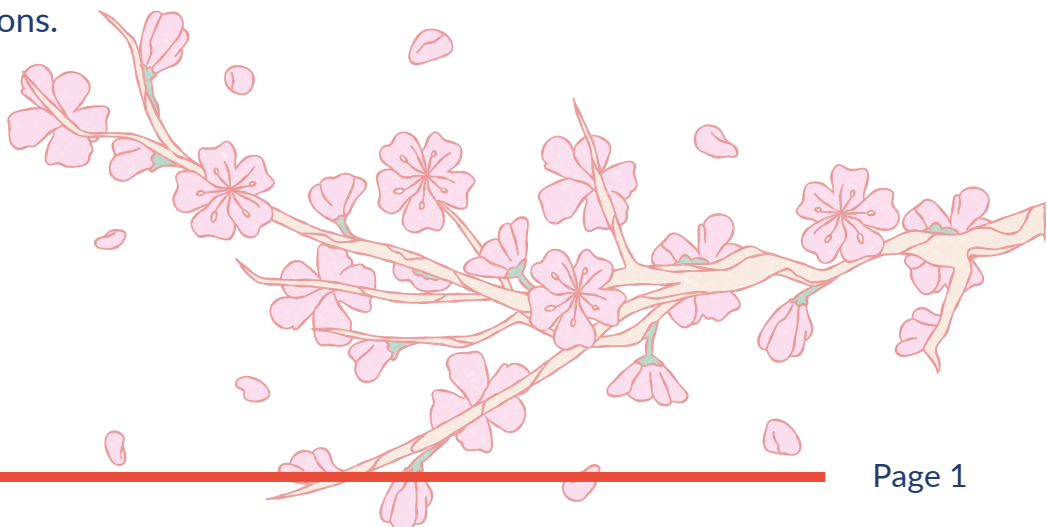
NEWSLETTER SPRING 2025



WELCOME TO OUR SPRING NEWSLETTER!

We are thrilled to bring you the latest updates from our team. This edition highlights new developments in our research, as well as ways to get involved, and the arrival of several brilliant colleagues. We share updates from some of our projects, and introduce *Sinking Ships* and *Eden Bioflo*.

Our recent publications address diverse topics, such as the racialisation of urban pollution, the role of nature in the mental health and wellbeing of young people, and the effectiveness of workplace wellbeing interventions.





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NEW ARRIVALS

We are excited to welcome two new arrivals to our team!

Meet our new Senior Researchers, Dr Erdem Pulcu and Dr Lalitha Iyadurai.



Meet Erdem



Meet Lali

“Building on our recent theoretical work and our E-Co-Flourishing walk with young people, we plan to systematically test how and why nature impacts mental health, wellbeing and flourishing. This will involve a series of experimental research studies from the laboratory to real-world green space settings (i.e. in our “living-lab” partner sites).”

(Erdem and Lali)

Erdem will be conducting a longitudinal study to follow day-to-day changes in self-reported well-being depending on varying levels of nature exposure. Using computational neuroscience, he will quantify the effects of nature exposure on negative and positive affective bias, as well as environmental value-based decision-making. He will also be using physiological markers, such as pupil dilation, and biological markers, such as actigraphy and salivary cortisol levels.

Lali’s first study will be an exploratory case series with 40 young people, including 20 from a community sample and 20 not attending school/college. Participants will complete daily questionnaires on mood and proposed psychological mechanisms (e.g. stress, nature connectedness) over three weeks. During week two, they will engage in a daily 20-minute nature-based activity (e.g., a walk in a green space). After the three weeks, interviews will explore their experiences. Her second study will be a single session prospective survey study with passive monitoring. Members of the public visiting parks and gardens in Oxford will complete questionnaires about mood, wellbeing, and proposed mechanisms before and after. During their visit, they will use passive activity and environmental monitoring (e.g., activewatch, air quality).



SINKING SHIPS

Lead Researcher: *Dr Madeline G. Reinecke*

How do teenagers perceive their moral obligations - to humans, animals, plants and robots? This new study explores moral tradeoffs and how priorities change with age. Partnering with Oxfordshire schools, we’re designing a survey informed by past research with young children. Data collection begins in Spring 2025 - keep an eye out for updates and ways to get involved!

Find out more



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E-CO-FOURISHING WALK

Lead Researcher: [Dr Katrin Wilhelm](#)

The EcoFlo Walk is a pilot PPIE study with our Young People's Advisory Group to design and test methods targeting hypothesised mechanisms linking nature experiences to mental health and wellbeing. Preliminary findings suggest a 1-hour semi-structured outdoor walk is an acceptable and valuable way for young people to reflect on their wellbeing - even in cold, wet conditions!

Novel methods have successfully encouraged curiosity about nature, which may enhance nature-relatedness. Playful, sensory activities deepen personal connection to nature and social bonds, though some (e.g., blindfolded listening) made some participants uneasy. This highlights the importance of co-designing activities to ensure they feel acceptable and meaningful.



[Find out more](#)

EDEN BIOFLO

As mental health challenges among young people continue to rise, nature may be a powerful yet underutilised tool to enhance resilience and wellbeing. We are collaborating with Prof. Stella Chan, a clinical psychologist at the University of Reading, to examine the mechanistic pathways that underpin nature connectedness in the transitional period between childhood and adolescence. We will then develop a brief intervention to help sustain nature-relatedness and nature-based curiosity in children and young people. Over 18 months, children and young people aged 10-15 will visit our research partner, [Eden Project](#) in Cornwall, to take part in guided walks with nature-related education and activities. Using a mix of quantitative and qualitative methods, we will capture both data-driven insights and subjective experiences.

Lead Researchers: [Professor Ilina Singh](#), [Professor Stella Chan](#)



[Find out more](#)



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AGILE SPRINT

This project explores whether nature-based approaches can improve mental health in schools by reviewing existing evidence and engaging with community and youth groups. With mental health challenges in young people on the rise, we aim to assess nature's role as a scalable, policy-driven solution for schools. Our recent Deliberative Policy Action workshop brought together teachers, young people, researchers and Department for Education policymakers to explore how nature-based education supports mental health and well-being in secondary schools. Discussions focused on research findings, key benefits and policy solutions, fostering a shared language for future initiatives.

Lead Researchers: [Professor Ilina Singh](#), [Dr Katrin Wilhelm](#)



Find out more

LAST HAVEN

Lead Researcher: [Dr Edmond Awad](#)

What if the last habitat for an endangered species - say, tigers - was targeted for infrastructure development? Would your opinion change if it were to become a profitable farm, the area's first hospital, or a mental health facility? What if the species were snakes, rare plants, or microorganisms? Now flip it - what if a hospital was removed to restore endangered habitat? These are the kinds of dilemmas at the heart of the Last Haven project, which explores how people navigate the trade-offs between human infrastructure needs and non-human conservation.

So far, we have conducted three pilot studies with 2,500 participants to refine our research questions, test the proof-of-concept, and explore the different factors that may influence people's preferences. Our gamified website - launching globally in mid-2025 - houses our scientific study, and invites participants to make choices between prioritizing endangered species or human infrastructure. We will use quantitative statistical methods to explore both local and global preferences regarding conservation-development trade-offs, and the underlying cognitions, affects, values and interests that drive decision-making.

Find out more



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NEW PAPERS

'An aerial slum': Race, air pollution and the affective atmospheres of urban modernity (Chapman), investigating changing connections between atmospheric pollution, spectral colour, ideas of a spatially "modern" built environment, and racism.

A commitment to Equality, Diversity and Inclusion : a conceptual framework for equality of opportunity in Patient and Public Involvement in research (Lignou, Sheehan, & Singh), emphasising how the lack of clear justifications for the EDI commitment in existing guidelines inadvertently complicates the work of those involved with PPI.

Effect of nature on the mental health and well-being of children and adolescents: meta-review (Lomax, Butler, Cipriani, & Singh), reviewing what the evidence shows regarding how nature effects the mental health and wellbeing of children and adolescents.

Employee well-being outcomes from individual-level mental health interventions: Cross-sectional evidence from the United Kingdom (Flemming), suggesting that common individual-level wellbeing interventions are not providing additional or appropriate resources in response to job demands.

The Double-Edged Sword of Anthropomorphism in LLMs (Reinecke, Ting, Savulescu, & Singh), exploring how anthropomorphism of chatbots can influence education, both motivating and misleading students.

Explore

GET INVOLVED

Interested in research on flourishing and wellbeing? Get involved with us! We work with patients, the public, local communities, youth groups, and charities to explore how green spaces beyond the clinic can inspire innovative ways to improve flourishing for both people and the planet. Whether you take part in studies or help shape our insights, your contribution matters. Find out how you can get involved here:



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