



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 SUMMER 2025



WELCOME TO OUR SUMMER NEWSLETTER!

We are delighted to bring you the latest updates from our team. In this edition, we're excited to introduce new members of our team, share updates from ongoing projects, and highlight some of the critical questions our research is helping to address.

We welcome Dr Anne Wolfes as our new Senior Project Manager, whose experience in neuroscience and strategic research offers fantastic support to our Flourishing & Wellbeing Theme.

We spotlight fieldwork preparations in Ghana, where Dr Laurence Canning is working to advance our understanding of urban green spaces. We also explore the findings of Lost Nature, a report led by Dr Kiera Chapman that raises urgent questions about the future of housing and ecological responsibility in the UK.

We also reflect on three major events attended by our Agile Sprint Team.





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NEW ARRIVALS

We are very pleased to welcome [Dr Anne Wolfes](#) to our team!



Meet Anne

Anne has recently joined us as Senior Project Manager to support researchers in the Flourishing & Wellbeing Theme. With a background in neuroscience, medical communications, and scientific project management, she is now helping the team align their goals within a broader research strategy and acting as a core contact point amongst the interdisciplinary research team and collaborators, as well as with the central BRC team. Her previous experience as a careers adviser for research staff is also coming in handy when discussions lead to future plans around funding.

I regularly ask myself this one question to guide my work: what is it the researchers need to be able to do their research well? And then that's what I'll focus on that week.

"With a team as diverse as this, I often switch between supporting grant applications, research strategy, project milestones, risks, and opportunities, or collaborations, but it all feeds into the team's core goal of tackling the mental health and climate change crisis simultaneously. I absolutely love that it's not just the research that is amazing – the team, too, are incredible and seem to just catalyse each other's work at a pace you can only find in truly interdisciplinary spaces."

Urban Green Spaces in Ghana

Lead Researcher: [Dr Laurence Cannings](#)

As part of a trip to Ghana, Dr Laurence Canning visited the University of Ghana in Accra and KNUST in Kumasi. The primary purpose of the visit was to provide training for the field researchers who will be delivering a survey across both cities over the summer.

Dr Canning's trip also served to identify suitable locations for the survey, as well as to begin scoping sites for future qualitative fieldwork.

The survey is now complete with over 800 respondents across both cities.



Find out more



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Lost Nature?

Lead Researcher: [Dr Kiera Chapman](#)

Last December, Dr Kiera Chapman published the Lost Nature report, commissioned by Wild Justice, which explored whether housing developers are delivering on the ecological conditions of their planning applications. The research, coauthored by Professor Malcolm Tait and Sarah Postlethwaite, audited 42 developments across 5 Local Planning Authorities across England, and found that only 53% of the promised ecological enhancements were delivered on the ground. This fell to 34% when newly planted trees were excluded.



The research highlights a gap between the rhetoric of 'nature protection' in development and the reality on the ground. The question it raises is: how can we better protect green spaces whilst continuing to build much-needed housing?

Dr Chapman is also writing a new book, due to be released in 2026, exploring folk customs and how they link to health, wellbeing, and community.

[Find out more](#)

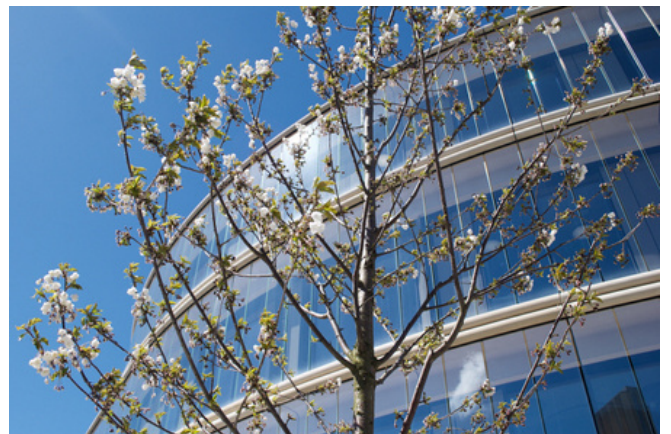
Last Haven

In a thought-provoking letter to The Guardian on 9th June, Dr Edmond Awad introduced the Last Haven citizen science project, a collaboration between The University of Oxford, The University of Exeter and the National University of Singapore. This initiative explores how people value nature when faced with difficult choices between conservation and development. He emphasised in his letter that human wellbeing is deeply connected to the health of the natural world.

Through staged scenarios - from hospitals versus plant sanctuaries to agricultural schemes versus wildlife habitats - Last Haven invites participants to reflect on the ethical values guiding land-use decisions.

Lead Researcher: [Dr Edmond Awad](#)

As the UK debates planning reforms, Dr Awad challenged readers to consider not only the need for housing and infrastructure, but also the irreplaceable value of wild spaces in promoting mental health, flourishing and ecological resilience.



[Read the article here](#)

[Visit the website](#)



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AGILE SPRINT

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

Over the past few months, the Agile Sprint Team has participated in three major events that showcased our ongoing work and deepened engagement with the research, education, and policy communities.

Putting Science into Action – Presenting at Agile Initiative Showcase

In March, Dr Katrin Wilhelm and Jessica Lorimer represented our Sprint at the Putting Science into Action half-day event at the Oxford Martin School. The event brought together a range of Agile Initiative teams from across the university. It fostered a lively, engaged atmosphere and sparked wide-ranging conversations; from detailed project feedback to broader reflections on how research can more effectively support decision-making. Read more about the event [here](#).

The Teach-In: Engaging with Policy Partners

In June, Professor Ilina Singh, Dr Katrin Wilhelm, and Associate Professor Apostolos Tsiachristas shared the Agile Project's latest findings at a government 'Teach-In,' co-organized by our policy partners at the DfE. The Teach-in sparked rich discussion about the real-world implications of the Agile team's work, and how it might intersect with ongoing government priorities. This teach-in was another great step in co-creating solutions with policy partners, researchers, and young people. We're excited to see where the conversation goes next!

Oxford Education Deanery & ETC Hub Event (18 June)

Also in June, Dr. Kim Polgreen organized a webinar with the Oxford Education Deanery and the Education and Training for the Climate (ETC) Hub, featuring members of the Agile Sprint (Dr Katrin Wilhelm, Jessica Lorimer, Dr Rodger Caseby and Dr Saba Arshad) and the broader eco-flourishing group (Dr Wendee Zhang). The event brought together 64 educators, researchers, and other interested partners, to discuss the intersection of education and climate, with particular interest in how the team's research can support real-world implementation in schools.



Find out more



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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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