

# Team ALPHA Newsletter

Welcome to the third issue of the Team ALPHA Newsletter.

Team ALPHA are a group of academics, doctoral students and post-doctoral researchers associated with the 'Co-producing Alcohol, Criminal Justice and Public Health Research' theme of the Centre for Social Innovation in SSSH @ Teesside University

At the heart of the work that Team ALPHA do is co-production with stakeholders and the community.

The team consists of academics and postdoctoral students primarily in SSSH with representation across the University. The ethos of the team is support and working together to achieve results. We work with stakeholders locally, nationally and internationally. There are currently 36 members of the team, of which 17 members are currently studying as doctoral researchers.

This time around, our newsletter will be focusing on some of the great work that is being done by our Early Career Researchers (ECRs) and their experiences of academia at this point in their careers to date. Hopefully, it will show that there are many ways to arrive in academia, and many ways to choose what to do when you get there!

In this issue, we would also like to give a special mention to our 4<sup>th</sup> ECR in the team, Dr Natalie Connor, who will be returning soon after taking some maternity leave with baby George – we look forward to working with you again soon!

## What is your job title, and what do you do in Team ALPHA?

**JEN:** I am a Lecturer in Criminology and also a Senior Research Manager in Team Alpha.

**ANDY:** I'm a Research Associate and senior research manager in Team Alpha. I work over quite a few different projects, mostly with Local Authorities and make sure everything runs as it should (as much as possible!).

**GILLIAN:** I'm also a Research Associate and senior research manager in Team Alpha, but currently on maternity leave- back very soon!

## How did you get here?

**JEN:** Lots(!) of short-term research contracts, a PhD and a bucket load of coffee.



**ANDY:** My PhD was in philosophy at Lancaster University, so I took quite a roundabout trip to get here, via SEN schools as a TA, call centres and labouring jobs. I have worked with Team Alpha for around 18 months now after being rescued at the end of my previous contract with Teesside University.

**GILLIAN:** I applied for a PhD at Teesside with Dot after finishing my MSc in Public Health and working in a Local Authority Public Health team in 2015. I had applied for various PhDs and jobs and hadn't really got anywhere, and I wasn't too sure what I wanted to do. This PhD just seemed to fit, and I felt like I was finally on the right path after a lot of searching! I took on bits and pieces of research work to gain some extra experience (and pennies!) and managed to get a 6-hour research contract throughout my PhD which led to a Research Associate job at the end of my PhD.

### **What's the best thing about what you do?**

**JEN:** If I am not in a prison, I love being able to teach students about my research, giving them the good, the bad and the learning curves.

**ANDY:** Being part of a great team and being able to share and discuss ideas.

**GILLIAN:** My favourite thing is writing- whether that's papers, trial documents, reports or even my PhD thesis (feel like I'm probably the only person in the world to say that!)

### **What do you want to do in future?**

**JEN:** I am probably the only person here able to say, "when I grow up I want to be my Mum". I want to continue my research with women in prison and hopefully change a small part of the landscape for them and who knows, one day share the title of Prof.

**ANDY:** It probably sounds like a cliché, but I really want to continue contributing to the fantastic work that is done across the team where I can and to keep trying to make a difference outside academia. I'd also really like to do some more work in bioethics in future.

**GILLIAN:** This honestly changes depending on the day... I love being a researcher but also ready to take on some new responsibilities and challenges now I've finished having babies ha! I would also love to write a book one day.

### **What do you wish you had known when you started or finished your PhD?**

**JEN:** I wish I had known that even the down time, the slow days, the "wasted time" is learning. You learn during your PhD without knowing. I cannot pinpoint the days I learned what I know now and I always figured I would be able to.

**ANDY:** I started my PhD when I was 25, so I think it's more a case of what *don't* I wish I knew then? When I finished my PhD, I wish I knew how much more there was left to learn – these days at least I know that I know nothing, which is half the battle!

**GILLIAN:** I wish I had known that I would get to the end- it feels never ending at the time, that I would really enjoy my viva (definitely wasn't worth the sleepless nights and anxiety!) and actually that some days I even miss my PhD.

### **What was the title of your PhD thesis?**

**JEN:** Examining the feasibility of carrying out alcohol screening and brief interventions for women in an open prison setting.

**ANDY:** Best Screened and Not Heard: An examination of the impact of genetic research on the autonomy and agency of young people in the U.K.

**GILLIAN:** Exploring the factors affecting the implementation of tobacco and substance use interventions within the secondary school setting.

**Which book or article has been the most useful to you in your career? Why?**

**JEN:** Crewe, B., Hulley, S. & Wright, S. 2017. *The Gendered Pains of Life Imprisonment*. British Journal of Criminology, 57, 1359-1378. This is the first journal article I read that pointed me to approaching my public health work through a criminological lens.

**ANDY:** *Pooh and the Philosophers* by John Tyerman Williams. It reminds me not to take myself too seriously!

**GILLIAN:** Nilsen, P. *Making sense of implementation theories, models and frameworks*. Implementation Sci 10, 53 (2015). This helped me get my head around all things implementation science theory and used it A LOT during my PhD.

**Do you have a favourite book outside research?**

**JEN:** These days I'm living in the world of Biff, Chip and Kipper (if you know, you know) – ask me again when my kids are in high school..

**ANDY:** *Erewhon* by Samuel Butler. Although it was written in 1872, I find it eerily prophetic about modern life.

**GILLIAN:** I have two. *Catcher in the Rye* by J.D. Salinger which started my New York obsession...I was promised if I got an A for my English GCSE (it was my exam text) I could go and visit for the first time. Obviously, I got an A with that motivation! The other is *Noughts and Crosses* by Malorie Blackman. I read it a very long time ago and it has stayed with me ever since. So much so that I named my first daughter after the main character- Sephy who I feel like is the best example of a female protagonist and everything I'd want my daughters to be.

**What is one tip you would give to other people wanting to become researchers?**

**JEN:** Put your hand up for the “rubbish jobs” – the ones people need a hand with that you either haven't done before or don't think are entirely your expertise. You never know where that might lead. For example - Me helping someone out with a little bit of sifting on a systematic review (with zero experience) led me to going on and working on many more and being able to teach others.

**ANDY:** Make yourself available for every opportunity that comes your way – you never know what you'll learn.

**GILLIAN:** Be a team player. Say yes to as many things as you can. By helping others with things, you not only gain experience- something extra for your CV- but it means that you feel like you can ask for help when you need it too.

**What are three research interests you have?**

**JEN:** Systematic reviewing, Women in prison, Alcohol interventions

**ANDY:** Bioethics, Behavioural Genetics and Co-Production

**GILLIAN:** Implementation Science, Substance use and Young People.

**What are three of your non-research interests?**

**JEN:** Being a mum, Exercising, Anything on Netflix

**ANDY:** Boxing, 70's horror and odd musical instruments

**GILLIAN:** New York, handbags, and Hello Kitty

Here is a list of the things we're working on at the moment – if you want to know more, or would like to find out if and how you can get involved just email us using the details below:

<p>Jen – Jennifer.ferguson@tees.ac.uk</p>	<p>The majority of my time is spent as a Lecturer these days, teaching across Criminology modules and passing on my passion for research. I am lucky to still work on projects and they are:</p> <p><b>Your Voice Heard:</b> as detailed below <b>APPRAISE:</b> as detailed below</p> <p><b>ADPH:</b> Case studies ascertaining processes in relation to self harm for young people.</p> <p>I am also working on an NIHR bid (£1.5 million) on furthering my work with women in prison.</p>
<p>Andy – a.divers@tees.ac.uk</p>	<p><b>Middlesbrough Projects:</b> COVID(2) Study Lockdown Babies</p> <p><b>Durham County Council Projects:</b> Approach to Wellbeing Evaluation Social Prescribing Link Worker Evaluation NHS Health Checks United Voice Evaluation</p> <p><b>What's in a Meter?</b></p> <p>I'm also working on a few papers which I hope to finish soon.</p>
<p>Gillian – g.waller@tees.ac.uk</p>	<p>I'm currently on maternity leave but will be returning very soon to be working on these two main projects-</p> <p><b>Your Voice Heard:</b> Developing policy and practice guidelines for working with young people aged 18 and under in relation to self-harm, suicide attempts and deaths by suicide.</p> <p><b>APPRAISE:</b> A two-arm parallel-group individually randomised prison pilot study of a male remand alcohol intervention for self-efficacy enhancement</p>

### **UPCOMING TEAM ALPHA EVENTS:**

#### **October:**

**28<sup>th</sup> 10:00-15:00** – SSSHL PGR Conference (*via Teams*)

#### **November:**

**22<sup>nd</sup> 13:00-15:00** – Systematic Review Training (*Prof. Newbury-Birch, via Teams*)

#### **January:**

**24<sup>th</sup> 12:00-13:00** – Dr Andy Divers in Conversation with Prof. Newbury-Birch (*via Teams*)

#### **February:**

**9<sup>th</sup> 12:00-13:00** – How do we use Experimental Research Methods in Social Science Research? (*via Teams*)