



# Cerebra Network Launch Event

## 3<sup>rd</sup> June 2021



## Family Focus Session

10am-12:15pm BST

This session will introduce our research goals and the teams carrying out the research. It is specifically aimed at parents and carers of people with neurodevelopmental disorders and their families, but anyone is welcome to join.

Talks will cover:

- **Our research** – Who we are and what research we will be doing.
- **Family experiences of research** – Parents' viewpoint of our research and why it's needed.
- **Questions from you to us** – Answering your questions about our research.
- **Questions from us to you** - An opportunity for you share your ideas for our research

## Research Focus Session

1pm-3:45pm BST

This session will focus on the research behind our three main themes. It is specifically aimed at academics and professionals working with people with neurodevelopmental disorders, but anyone is welcome to join. Sessions will include talks by researchers and clinicians in the field with the opportunity for a live Q&A session.

The three panels are:

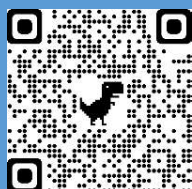
- **Autism (1:15pm-2pm):** Dr Sarah White (UCL), Dr Natali Bozhilova (University of Surrey) & Dr Kat Ellis (University of Surrey)
- **Sleep and behaviour (2pm-2:45pm):** Dr Andy Bagshaw (University of Birmingham), Dr Stacey Bissell (University of Birmingham) & Dr Georgie Agar (University of Birmingham)
- **Mental health (2:45pm-3:45pm):** Prof. Jacqui Rodgers (Newcastle University), Dr Kate Woodcock (University of Birmingham), Dr Rachel Royston (UCL) & Dr Laura Groves (University of Leicester).



UNIVERSITY OF  
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Register your interest and submit questions using the QR code or the link: <https://tinyurl.com/cerebra-network-launch>



# An Introduction to the Cerebra Network for Neurodevelopmental Disorders

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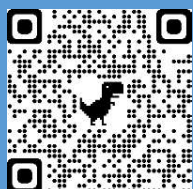
**Dr Caroline Richards**, is a Senior Lecturer in Neurodevelopmental Disorders, a Clinical Psychologist and researcher at the University of Birmingham. Her research focuses on reducing negative clinical outcomes for children. Caroline leads a programme of sleep research in the Cerebra Network for Neurodevelopmental Disorders. This research will help us to understanding why sleep problems occur in children with rare genetic syndromes, and help families to find solutions to these sleep difficulties. Outside of work Caroline enjoys spending time with her family, especially her twin boys, who have helped her to understand the critical importance of sleep!

**Dr Jo Moss** is a Lecturer at the University of Surrey. Through her research, Jo aims to better understand social, emotional and cognitive diversity in individuals with a range of neurodevelopmental conditions. In the Cerebra Network for Neurodevelopmental Disorders Jo leads a programme of research into autism in individuals with genetic syndromes. This research will improve our ability to assess autism and related social-communication difficulties in children with rare genetic syndromes and will support the development of targeted interventions.



**Dr Jane Waite** is a Lecturer in Psychology at Aston University and a Clinical Psychologist. In the Cerebra Network for Neurodevelopmental Disorders Jane leads a programme of research into mental health, with a particular focus on anxiety, in individuals with rare genetic syndromes. She is also currently developing clinical assessment tools to identify anxiety in people with intellectual disabilities, rare genetic syndromes and autism spectrum disorder for use within the NHS. Jane is the lead on the Further Inform Neurogenetic Disorders (FIND) website; [www.findresources.co.uk](http://www.findresources.co.uk)

**Dr Hayley Crawford** is an Assistant Professor at University of Warwick Medical School and co-director of the Cerebra Network for Neurodevelopmental Disorders. Her research focuses on characterising behavioural and mental health outcomes in individuals with neurodevelopmental disorders associated with intellectual disability. Her work to date has primarily focussed on understanding autism, anxiety, ADHD and behaviours that challenge in children and adults with rare genetic syndromes. Hayley is also a Specialist Advisor to the Fragile X Society.



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## Autism Panel

1:15pm-2pm BST

Chair: Dr Jo Moss,  
Network Director



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**Dr Sarah White** is an autism researcher at UCL's Institute of Cognitive Neuroscience, studying cognitive differences in the autistic mind through development, using behavioural and neuroimaging techniques. Sarah's interested in whether mentalizing differences can explain the core behaviours that define autism, and whether implicit mentalizing difficulties can account for the specific profile of differences in other domains too - lying, laughter, smiles, bilingualism, executive function, intergroup bias, mental health... to name a few. The ultimate aim is to understand autism better in order that evidence-based support can be developed that targets the source and makes a real difference.

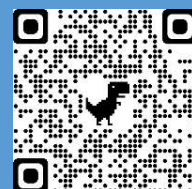
**Dr Natali Bozhilova** is a post-doctoral researcher at the University of Surrey, with the Neurodevelopmental Research lab. In 2016, Natali started her PhD in Developmental Cognitive Neuroscience as part of the MRC DTP 0+4 programme at King's College London with Professor Philip Asherson, Professor Katya Rubia and Dr Giorgia Michelini as supervisors.

Natali has also tutored and delivered behavioural therapies to children with a wide range of neurodevelopmental conditions. Her primary interests involve understanding the cognitive and neural mechanisms associated with mind wandering in individuals with neurodevelopmental conditions, and more recently the development of autistic and ADHD-related traits in individuals with genetic syndromes.



**Dr Katherine Ellis** is a post-doctoral researcher at the University of Surrey. Her research aims to understand social and emotional difficulties experienced by individuals with genetic syndromes associated with intellectual disability and autism. To date, her research has focused on how differences in social cognitive development, as well as sensory processing, may underpin differences in social and emotional functioning observed in these groups. She hopes to develop sensitive diagnostic tools and targeted interventions based on detailed descriptions of causal mechanisms between genetic abnormality, to neurobiological and cognitive phenotypes, and behaviour within each syndrome.

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## Sleep & Behaviour Panel 2pm-2:45pm BST

Chair: Dr Caroline Richards,  
Network Director



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**Dr Andy Bagshaw** is Reader in Imaging Neuroscience at the University of Birmingham and co-Director of the Centre for Human Brain Health. His main interest is in developing and applying non-invasive brain imaging methods to questions in clinical and behavioural neuroscience, with a particular emphasis on using EEG-fMRI to understand how the brain is affected by epilepsy and sleep. Andy trained as a physicist at the Universities of Birmingham and Manchester, before moving on to positions at City University, University College London and the Montreal Neurological Institute.

**Dr Georgie Agar** is a post-doctoral research fellow at the Richards Lab, University of Birmingham. Georgie leads work on the Sleep-Impulsivity-Behaviour project, which aims to improve understanding of sleep and executive functioning in relation to self-injurious behavior in children with autism and intellectual disability. Georgie's PhD work was funded by Cerebra, with a focus on developing novel methodologies for assessing poor sleep in individuals with rare genetic syndromes associated with intellectual disability with a particular focus on Smith-Magenis syndrome and Angelman syndrome.



**Dr Stacey Bissell** is a Cerebra-funded post-doctoral research fellow at the Richards Lab and Cerebra Network for Neurodevelopmental Disorders, University of Birmingham. Her research focuses on sleep and behaviour in tuberous sclerosis complex (TSC) and factors associated with poor sleep in children with rare genetic syndromes associated with intellectual disability. She is also the research lead for sleep and eating behaviour as part of the TSC-associated neuropsychiatric disorders (TAND) consortium led by Prof Anna Jansen and Prof Petrus de Vries.

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## Mental Health Panel

2:45pm-3:45pm BST

Chairs: Dr Jane Waite  
& Dr Hayley Crawford,  
Network Directors



**Professor Jacqui Rodgers** is Chair of Psychology Mental Health and an autism researcher based at Newcastle University, UK. Her work focuses on trying to understand the relationships between characteristics of autism (such as sensory issues and restricted and repetitive behaviours) and co-occurring mental health conditions. She has a particular interest in anxiety and suicide in autism. In collaboration with colleagues and the autism community, Jacqui has developed the first anxiety and suicidality questionnaires specifically designed and validated for autistic children and adults. She is also involved in the development and evaluation of a range of mental health focused interventions for autistic children and adults. Some of this work focused on how autistic people respond to uncertainty.

**Dr Laura Groves** is currently completing a doctorate in Clinical Psychology at the University of Leicester, as well as continuing research at the Richards lab, alongside Dr Caroline Richards. This work is focused on the early identification of individuals at risk of showing behaviour that challenges (i-RISC), and the development and delivery of preventative interventions for this (i-KNOW). Laura completed her PhD in 2019, investigating the presentation and development of anxiety and mood in rare genetic syndromes associated with intellectual disability and ASD.



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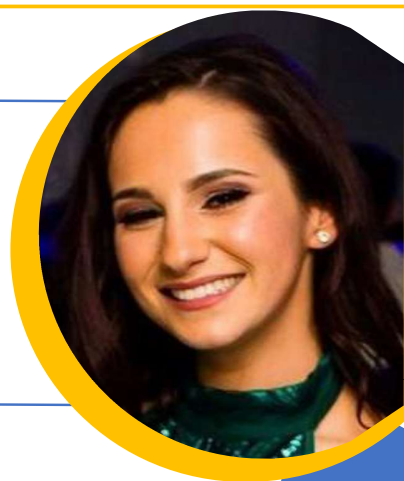
2:45pm-3:45pm BST

Chairs: Dr Jane Waite  
& Dr Hayley Crawford,  
Network Directors



**Dr Kate Anne Woodcock** is a Senior Lecturer at the Centre for Applied Psychology at the University of Birmingham, where she leads a research team. Her team's research focuses on young people who face psychological and behavioural difficulties, often linked to neurodevelopmental disorder. The work has examined factors that come together to precipitate behaviours that can be challenging for people with neurodevelopmental disorders, such as emotional outbursts. Her team is currently engaged in work that applies this knowledge to the development of intervention strategies. For example, caregiver led behavioural support strategies, cognitive training intervention programmes, and early intervention strategies. Kate carried out her PhD research at the University of Birmingham. Two years of her Postdoctoral Research were at Peking University, China. Kate held a lectureship position at the School of Psychology, Queen's University Belfast.

**Dr Rachel Royston** currently works as a Clinical Trial Manager at University College London on a trial evaluating the effectiveness of a parent-mediated intervention in reducing challenging behaviour in children with intellectual disabilities. Her doctoral research focused on anxiety and mental health in adolescents and adults with Williams syndrome (WS). This included describing the anxiety profile in people with WS and exploring causal pathways such as individual factors, environmental triggers and cognitive mechanisms that influence anxiety development and maintenance.



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