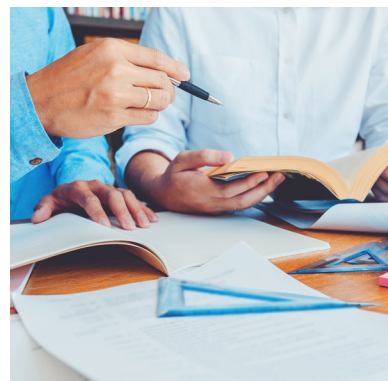
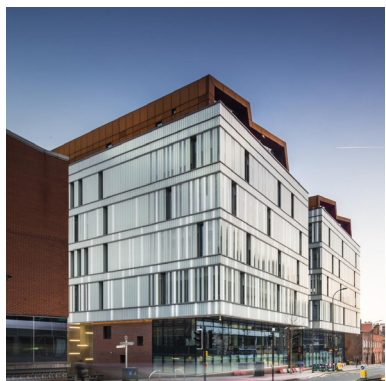
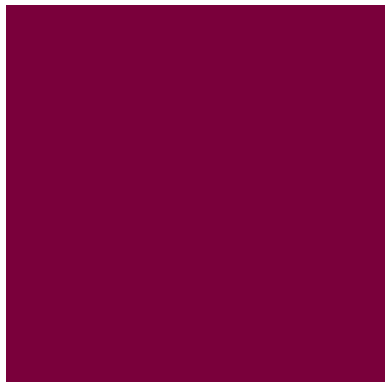


Celebrating Ten Years of Research and Innovation

2013–2023



Acknowledgements

Thank you to all our colleagues in Sheffield Institute of Education, including academic, professional services and technical staff, who have contributed to the development of our research and innovation activity. Special thanks to David Owen and Mike Coldwell for their leadership and support, and to everyone who has contributed to this publication, which represents just a sample of our research and innovation activity. We are also grateful to all the funders, partners and practitioners who have commissioned, supported and participated in our work.

This publication was designed, collated and edited by Eleanor Byrne, Rhys Edwards, Mark Barton and Emily Perry.

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Celebrating ten years of research and innovation

In 2013, the education staff of Sheffield Hallam University were brought together in the Sheffield Institute of Education, to work more closely and develop stronger links between our areas of work. We are now a national centre of education, internationally recognised for our excellence in teaching, learning, professional development, research and evaluation.

From early years through to higher education, we're a hub for innovation and knowledge advancement in childhood and young people's development and learning.

From our unique research-led nursery, through our work with schools and colleges, to our research on widening participation, everything we do aims to improve outcomes for children and young people, and support education professionals.

Our wide-ranging research and innovation deals with the current needs of our society. By developing, delivering and evaluating programmes, policies and innovations to improve education, we aim to increase social justice, develop new ways of educating, enhance curriculums and improve how teachers teach.

We also train more than 2,200 teachers every year. They go on to make an incalculable difference to thousands of children across our region and beyond. Civic partnerships, to support teachers, other educators and others who work with children and young people, are essential to our work.

I am honoured to have led Sheffield Institute of Education for the first ten years since its formation, and to work with a group of staff — including academics, professional services, and technicians — who are dedicated to improving the lives of children and young people.

I look forward to seeing Sheffield Institute of Education's research and innovation activity continue to develop in the coming years.



**Professor Sam
Twiselton OBE**

Director of Sheffield
Institute of Education,
2013-2023

Research and innovation at Sheffield Institute of Education



Emily Perry



Mark Boylan

Co-Heads of Research and Innovation at Sheffield Institute of Education

Our research and innovation responds to four challenges:

- Improving the effectiveness of educational professionals
- Enhancing curriculum, pedagogy and learners' experiences
- Promoting social justice by addressing disadvantage, discrimination and oppression
- Innovating in theory and methodology

We are committed to our research having an impact on the lives of children and young people and the practitioners and educators who work with them. Our civic engagement commitments provide a foundation for our partnerships with the South Yorkshire community and beyond, and the influence of our work stretches through these partnerships to educational leaders, policymakers and governments nationally and internationally.

We are continually building our community of researchers, including those within and outside the university, through partnership-working and strong programmes of support for new and early career researchers and for postgraduate researchers.

For REF2021, which assesses the excellence of research in UK universities, we submitted more than three times as many staff as in the previous REF. This increase in the number of research-active staff, together with the quality of our research, means that education at Sheffield Hallam is now 11th out of 83 university education groups ranked by research power. The research environment in education was recognised as the best in any modern university, with 100% judged world-leading or internationally excellent.

To support our work, we have gained around £2 million of funding each year from charities, national and international governments, businesses, local authorities, schools and others.

We are proud of the work we do here, and its impact. The case studies in this publication tell just a few of the stories of our research and innovation from the last ten years. There are many others we could have included. If you'd like to know more, or you want to be a part of our life-changing work, get in touch. We'd love to hear from you.

our team

60+
research-active
staff



30+

staff designated as
having **significant
responsibility** for
research

13
professors



4
associate
professors



40+

staff whose research
& innovation activity
was submitted in
REF2021

where we work



research & innovation
activity in over

30

countries, including:

Azerbaijan, Bulgaria, China,
Colombia, Cyprus, England,
Estonia, France, Georgia,
Germany, Ghana, Greece,
India, Ireland, Israel, Italy,
Jordan, Lithuania,
Malaysia, the Netherlands,
Norway, Pakistan,
Romania, Slovakia,
Slovenia, Spain,
Switzerland, Thailand,
Turkey, Vietnam and Wales

our work

we are involved
in around

50

active research
& innovation
projects each year



£2m around **per year**
funding in external funding for research & innovation

from educational settings, schools, colleges and multi-academy trusts

from government departments and government-funded bodies

from local authorities

from charitable trusts and foundations



every year, our staff produce around:



30



peer-reviewed journal articles

30



national and international conference presentations

12



blog posts

10



project reports

7



books and book chapters

Four REF Impact Case Studies in 2021



Shifting the discourse around **LGBT+ lives** through sociological research



Improving the effectiveness of **higher education widening participation** programmes



Improving **teacher professional development** by shaping policy, encouraging investment and developing practice



Influencing debate, design and practice around **toilets and accessibility**

Postgraduate research

At the time of writing we have 29 PhD students and 40 EdD students, all producing world-leading research on pressing issues under the broad umbrella of education.

Their projects extend across the myriad contexts of education research, from early years through primary, secondary, further, higher and vocational education. Participants in the projects include introverted learners, learners with English as a second language, disabled learners, learners from minority ethnic backgrounds, as well as nurses, probation officers and university lecturers.

Here we present two case studies that not only demonstrate the theoretical richness characteristic of high-quality doctoral work, but also exemplify the “knowledge applied” ethos of our university.

Discourses of academic language development

CASE STUDY

Dr Karen Nichols, head of TESOL at the Sheffield Institute of Education, successfully defended her thesis on the topic of students’ academic language development in higher education. In the thesis, Karen demonstrates that one of the reasons for the lack of university-wide approaches to integrated language development is that key stakeholders — university management, English for Academic Purposes lecturers, and lecturers in the disciplines — have different perspectives and different accounts of what the development of effective language use involves.

Karen theorises these perspectives and accounts as discourses of language development in higher education. By highlighting different discourses, Karen reveals concepts, values and beliefs that influence the stakeholders’ stance towards language development.

This matters, because stakeholders need to develop shared understandings if they are to negotiate much-needed institution-wide approaches to integrating academic language development into the curriculum.

By illuminating the discourses of key stakeholders and applying a lens of language as a social semiotic, Karen creates a framework which has the potential to change practice by building shared understandings on which university-wide approaches can be established.

Her findings set an agenda for constructive conversations between stakeholders to negotiate how language development can be integrated into curricula both effectively and sustainably.



How (dis)abled children experience classroom spaces

CASE STUDY

Dr Katharine Terrell's thesis explores how (dis)abled children in one inner-city English primary school experience classroom space in an embodied way.

Her work takes Disabled Children's Childhood Students (DCCS) as a starting point and applies Deleuzo-Guattarian ideas to contribute new knowledge to how classroom space disables and enables.

The study involved 47 children who participated regardless of a label of special educational needs (SEN), disability or impairment. The children shared their experiences through various creative and visual qualitative methods, including photography, drawings and model rooms. These, combined with observations of the whole classroom space, were analysed thematically, paying attention to lines of flight, leading to various significant findings.

Katharine found that the classroom space was saturated by the idea of vertical development: a normative expectation that children grow physically and metaphorically upwards towards adulthood. She also observed resistance from children to this idea.

The study also revealed how certain forms of embodiment in the classroom are encouraged while others are discouraged. These are linked to ideas of crip epistemic insight: a perspective that privileges the experiences of disabled people's embodied experiences of the world.

Katharine also discusses the resistance and joyful potential in "leaks", which challenge the boundaries imposed on children's bodies. As such, this work contributes to the small but growing field of toilet studies in discussing expected behaviour in and around toilets.

The thesis takes ideas from DCCS and assemblage theory and applies them in new ways to (dis)abled children's embodied experiences, making valuable methodological and theoretical contributions.

Katharine is now working as an academic and digital development adviser at the University of Glasgow and has presented her work at the popular online Marxism and Disability Forum, which attracts a global audience.

External engagement networks

Our staff lead a diverse array of networks which engage with practitioners, leaders, researchers and policymakers outside the university. These networks provide opportunities for people to share experiences, disseminate research findings and learn together.

Research-Engaged Practice Network

This is a forum for practitioners to share their research and enquiry with other practitioners and researchers, making links for future research and enquiry, sharing research findings, and engaging in collaborative research.

Effective Flexible Working Practitioner Network

In partnership with South Yorkshire Futures, this network provides an opportunity for school senior leaders and colleagues in education interested in alternative working patterns to network and share expertise around flexible working.

Disability Research Forum

We foster informal networks of disability scholars by providing researchers with opportunities to present their work in a friendly and encouraging environment. This has become the platform for a virtual network of disability scholars, researchers, disabled people and disability activists from around the world, providing a friendly space, through online events and seminars, for disability scholars at all stages in their studies or career to share their ideas in a supportive and accessible environment.

Early Years and Primary Literacy Network

This network nurtures and promotes the expertise of those interested in early years and primary literacy teaching. It aims to develop a teacher research community that will support teachers' engagement with literacy research from a range of sources, share their own practice, and build supportive networks to enhance literacy provision in schools.

For more information about these networks, please visit:
shu.ac.uk/sheffield-institute-education-research/external-networks

Multimodality in Education Network

Open to all researchers and teachers with an interest in multimodality in education, this forum develops existing international and national relationships with organisations, special interest groups and networks researching multimodality and digital literacies. We hold seminars and presentations, share research, initiate international dialogues and support collaborative research.

Early Years and Childhood Research Centre Professional Development Network

This network supports high-quality early years practice through regular online events, hosted by Sheffield Institute of Education staff and early years experts from the South Yorkshire region and beyond. It supports and motivates early years practitioners working in the maintained and private, voluntary and independent sectors and provides a forum for our staff and partners to share good practice and the latest research findings. We welcome everyone with an interest in early years practice and pedagogy.

Co-Productive Partnerships Network

This is an inclusive space for parents and carers of disabled children and those categorised as having special educational needs (with and without a formal diagnosis), and practitioners in public services (education, health, and social care) to learn from and with each other. It aims to generate diverse reflections on what co-production means to all of us, and develop ideas about partnership working in line with the principles of social justice, humanity, reciprocity and community cohesiveness.

Post-16 Initial Teacher Educators' Network

This is a space for providers of post-16 and further education initial teacher education to share resources and expertise. We are particularly interested in supporting new teachers to develop their pedagogical content knowledge.

Improving the effectiveness of educational professionals

Our work improves the professional lives of education professionals in all phases from early years to further and higher education, and at all career stages.

Our research focuses on:

- the professional lives, careers, practices and experiences of teachers and educational workers
- practitioner professional learning, including the roles and practices of professional development leaders, models and evaluation of professional learning, and mentoring
- the key features of effective professional learning, including evidence-informed practice

Our REF impact case study focused on teacher professional learning can be found at shu.ac.uk/research/in-action/projects/teacher-professional-development

Improving STEM teaching in South Yorkshire

CASE STUDY

Since 2018 we have been leading the Wipro Teacher Fellow and Teacher Mentor Programme. It's an evidence-based, individualised programme of professional learning designed to improve teachers' confidence, motivation and capability in one or more of the STEM subjects — science, technology, engineering and mathematics.

All primary and secondary schools in South Yorkshire and the surrounding region can nominate teachers to become either fellows or mentors on the programme. Teacher fellows are secondary school teachers in the early stage of teaching one of the focus subjects and primary school teachers wanting to develop their specialist knowledge in one or more of the focus subjects.

Over 18 to 24 months, fellows work with mentors to improve their subject and pedagogical knowledge, develop new ways of teaching their subject, deepen their understanding of teaching through curriculum development and research, and carry out a long-term enquiry into their practice.

Along the way, they are mentored by expert, experienced teachers and subject leaders from local schools. These mentors are also supported by us, and themselves have the option to carry out a long-term enquiry into their practice with accreditation at MA level.

Feedback from the most recent cohort of fellows was very positive. They felt the facilitators and wider project team were very supportive and approachable, and what they learned was practical and useful. One fellow said:

"It's definitely made me think about things more critically and have a reason behind why we're doing things. It's given me a big bank of ideas that I could take back into class and actually use."

blogs.shu.ac.uk/wiproteacherfellow

To find out more about our research and innovation activity in this area, please visit:
shu.ac.uk/sheffield-institute-education-research/projects

Meeting the challenge of providing high quality continuing professional development for teachers

CASE STUDY

The Wellcome CPD Challenge, a three-year pilot, was commissioned by Wellcome alongside an external evaluation, to understand whether and how an entitlement to teacher continuing professional development (CPD) could be implemented.

Forty schools in South Yorkshire and Derbyshire were set the challenge of meeting defined criteria related to the quality and quantity of teachers' professional development.

The CPD Challenge criteria were a set of measures for schools to work towards, acting as ambitious but achievable targets, independent of schools' starting points. The intention was that, if schools met the criteria, all teachers would participate in a transformational amount of high-quality professional development directly relevant to their practice and contexts.

Most schools involved in the project increased the quantity and quality of CPD teachers participated in. To achieve these increases, a range of activities, initiatives and practices were trialled, reviewed and revised in the schools. These included

- development of shared understandings of professional development
- new or adapted whole-school approaches for professional development planning, delivery and evaluation
- new approaches to individualised and subject-specific professional development

As an outcome of the project, we recommended that

- all schools should appoint a senior leader with explicit responsibility for leading professional development
- all school staff should participate in building a shared understanding of the purpose and outcomes of sustained high-quality professional development
- school leaders can embed small changes in practice to balance and align school development objectives with teachers' individual learning needs
- the government should implement an entitlement to professional development for teachers at all stages of their careers

shu.ac.uk/sheffield-institute-education-research/projects/wellcome-cpd-challenge



We have been working on how to increase the use of research evidence in English education systems for many years. We have looked at it from the point of view of teachers, teacher educators, school leaders, and the overall systems in which research evidence is produced, mobilised and used.

England has a well-developed infrastructure for supporting research use, including the Education Endowment Foundation (EEF), a very well-established charity acting as the What Works Centre for School Education. Despite this, use of research evidence amongst teachers is low, and this has changed little since the mid-2010s. This is due to a lack of resources, coupled with a strong, politicised accountability system and a hollowed out middle tier to support schools, contributing to a lack of prioritisation amongst school leaders.

We were commissioned by the Department for Education to undertake a two-year study to assess progress towards an evidence-informed teaching system. We reviewed key literature, analysed the websites and social media of 65 teaching schools and 100 randomly chosen schools, and conducted a set of qualitative interviews (82 in all) in primary, secondary and special schools.

For teachers, we found that evidence-informed teaching usually meant drawing on research evidence to integrate and trial in their own practice, rather than directly applying research findings. Most teachers interviewed did not feel confident in engaging with research directly, or feel able to judge its quality, relying on senior leaders and other organisations like the Sutton Trust and the EEF. Despite this, most teachers valued research evidence.

The most strongly research-engaged schools were highly effective, well-led organisations where research evidence was integrated into all aspects of their work as part of an ethos of continual improvement and reflection. In the most highly research-engaged schools, senior leaders played a key role.

While some schools are strongly engaged, many are not, and this study suggests that attention needs to be paid to each part of the school and wider education system, including research quality and accessibility, school processes, cultures and leadership, teachers' skills, motivations and knowledge, and the wider policy environment.

From this study, we recommended that policymakers should

- support continued relevant research into effective evidence-informed practice
- encourage senior school leaders to support evidence-informed teaching
- find ways to strengthen school-university partnerships
- embed research evidence in the professional discourse and practice of teaching
- align policy changes with the best research evidence available

A culture shift is occurring in English education towards widespread engagement with research. This can be supported by aligning policy with research evidence, supporting school leaders, working to explicitly link research to the evidence forms, and supporting research brokerage.

[gov.uk/government/publications/evidence-informed-teaching-evaluation-of-progress-in-england](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/evidence-informed-teaching-evaluation-of-progress-in-england)

Using research to improve science teaching

CASE STUDY

We undertook a study with the National Foundation for Educational Research to look at how training and development programmes can support primary teachers and secondary science teachers to engage with and use research — and ultimately improve their teaching.

The research, commissioned by Wellcome, aimed to find out what impact additional support to help teachers engage with or carry out pedagogical research has on science teaching, and what types of support are most helpful. The study involved over 470 primary teachers and secondary science teachers who took part in four continuing professional development (CPD) projects.

Overall, we demonstrated that supporting teachers to use or undertake pedagogical research can improve the quality of their teaching — the single most important school factor that improves outcomes for children and young people.

Our study found that different types of CPD are needed to support research use, depending on teachers' career stage, phase, role, interests, and available time.

Research was more likely to be used to enhance science teaching in schools where senior leaders supported teachers to share research-informed ideas and resources with colleagues, and provided the time for them to plan how to incorporate research into their lessons.

To maximise the impact of CPD, school leaders need to ensure that teachers have the time to work with school colleagues to plan how to use research-informed ideas and resources in their teaching.

In addition the government and other organisations need to ensure a range of CPD opportunities to support research use are available to teachers.

[shu.ac.uk/news/all-articles/latest-news/science-teacher-research](https://www.shu.ac.uk/news/all-articles/latest-news/science-teacher-research)

Evidence-informed initial teacher education

With over 100 years of experience, Sheffield Institute of Education is one of the largest providers of teacher professional development in the UK. We work with over 600 partners, and we are home to leading academic thinkers and influential school leaders.

As educators and trainers of over 2,200 trainee and student teachers every year, we pride ourselves on our innovative and comprehensive approach to teacher development.

Our work on the initial teacher education curriculum stressed the importance of an evidence-based curriculum, and our school partners seek opportunities to develop further alignment between the taught curriculum and training environments in schools.

Sam Twiselton's three-stage model of curriculum sequencing has strongly influenced our partnerships' developments. This has been operationalised through our School Direct and School-Centred Initial Teacher Training community networks, and our revision of school-based training expectations, intervention and assessment.

Sam's leadership across our partnerships and the initial teacher education sector, including the Carter Review of Initial Teacher Training, the Expert Behaviour Management Panel, Recruitment and Retention Strategy, and Core Content Framework, means we have shared good practice in coherent curriculum design to benefit all providers and partners in our region.

Enhancing curriculum, pedagogy and learners' experiences

Our work enhances learners' experiences of the curriculum and pedagogy in wide-ranging areas of the curriculum, both in and beyond the classroom.

Our research focuses on:

- language and literacy, reflecting the complexity, diversity and dynamism of communicative practices
- the development and evaluation of curriculum and pedagogical innovations, in all subject areas and especially in mathematics and science
- learners' experiences in settings from early years through primary and secondary schools to further and higher education
- health and wellbeing in educational contexts, including formal and informal learning about gender, sex, sexualities, sexual practices and sexual health

A unique nursery transforming early years education

CASE STUDY

Our Early Years Community Research Centre, also known to parents as the Meadows Nursery, opened in May 2021 and offers up to 40 full-time nursery places.

As well as being an operational nursery and community hub, it is an interdisciplinary research unit, providing opportunities for specialist early years research projects, applied learning for students, and a professional development programme for the sector.

The nursery is based in Shirecliffe, an area of Sheffield which suffers from elevated levels of economic and social deprivation. There had been no local nursery provision in Shirecliffe for children aged 2 to 3 years since the former children's centre nursery closed in 2011.

Sheffield Hallam's social mobility programme South Yorkshire Futures identified a clear need for local early years provision, and a unique partnership — between Sheffield Hallam, Watercliffe Meadow School, Save the Children UK, and Sheffield City Council — was developed to support the opening of a new nursery.

Our university-led partnership model makes it the only nursery of its kind in the UK. Our aim is to be a beacon and blueprint for transformative early years education and care, research and best practice, and community partnerships.

shu.ac.uk/about-us/our-role-in-the-region/civic-university-agreement/education-and-skills/eycrc





The impact of available nursery places on parents and children

CASE STUDY

In June 2021, in partnership with Save the Children UK, we conducted a piece of research with parents to explore the impact of receiving early access to a nursery place for their two-year old child.

In five in-depth qualitative interviews, parents described the positive impacts of nursery on their child's physical development, social skills, independence skills and improvements in communication and language:

“She is more confident. The nursery slide is higher than what she's got at home, and so her confidence with climbing and running and jumping [has improved].”

“Her socialisation has got better and her speech has come on profoundly, so she is just blossoming.”

“She will tell you when she wants something, she will tell you if she needs something, and she has just become an absolute delight.”

The parents also felt positive impacts, on the support and social networks they were able to develop, their mental health, their relationship with their child, and their own aspirations for themselves:

“I don't usually like making friends. I've got social anxiety. But quite a few of the mums here that I talk to go to breakfast club now, so I sit with them.”

“I sit and have a chat with my friends. Thursday mornings I get my breakfast cooked. I get looked after as well.”

The research also revealed how the Covid-19 pandemic had led to feelings of isolation and anxiety in families, and that there were ongoing financial pressures that impacted on parents' wellbeing.

The findings from this project were disseminated at a Festival of Social Sciences event in November 2022 and through a joint report from the centre and Save the Children UK.

Helping more Indian students reach graduation

CASE STUDY

The school education system in India is the largest in the world, with over 200 million students a year. Despite the number of enrolments, particularly from girls, and substantial efforts from state and central governments, there are still issues of retention with significant numbers of young people who do not reach graduation.

In 2020, we designed and conducted a scoping study to gather data to inform strategy and policy development around teaching science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) education and English as a medium of instruction (EMI) in Indian schools.

We evaluated the resources, schemes, systems and infrastructure and other factors such as gender that may have a significant impact on teaching STEM and English. Our study was undertaken collaboratively with the British Council, consolidating a strong relationship which has been built over a number of years across many different countries.

We successfully identified key findings and recommendations both for further study and significant school education initiatives. Our findings provide a much needed and quality addition to existing knowledge about STEM education and EMI in India.

Results of the study were published for each participating state by British Council India.

While it is too early to speculate on the impact of the policy, there are indications that findings from the scoping study are being acted upon. For example, the north-east region funded the development of a teacher professional development framework in early 2021 which is designed to support effective professional development for teachers in all STEM phases.

Language and literacy: how we communicate with each other today

Research in language and literacy education has long been a strength of Sheffield Institute of Education. We are internationally known for our expertise, not least through our impact on English teaching through our involvement in training teachers in the region.

We're all driven by our passion for applied research into understanding how humans communicate with each other, and what this means for people's lives and in education practice.

We investigate language and literacy in real-life contexts, studying how we communicate with each other in our everyday lives, whether in schools from early years to postgraduate study, or in other workplaces.

We believe that understanding human communication in all its forms and in all contexts is central to our experience.

Language is a living thing, constantly changing. We're here to describe how people communicate in their real lives. To us, this is the most valuable form of literacy. Ultimately, we promote a view of human meaning-making that is inclusive, recognising the diverse ways people use literacy — and seeing that as a good thing.

Using cognitive science to support learning

CASE STUDY

Frames for Learning (F4L) is an EEF-funded professional development programme for teachers and teaching assistants. It aims to improve science attainment by supporting how teachers and pupils approach working scientifically and other multi-staged tasks in science. The F4L approach has been implemented in multiple schools since 2010, initiated with funding from the Primary Science Teaching Trust.

The programme aims to increase pupils' recall, knowledge and understanding in science. It's designed to help children remain 'on task' and focused on both the intended learning activity and the curriculum learning objectives of the task.

It also supports teachers to develop and deliver lessons which optimise the amount of information children must process at once (cognitive load), while building on pre-existing knowledge and understanding (schema development) to support learning outcomes.

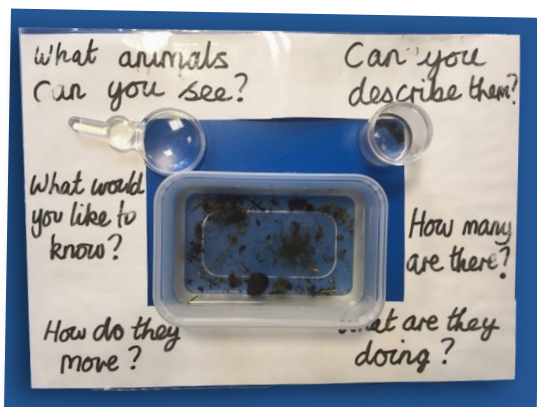
Drawing on cognitive science principles, the programme starts off with worked examples for teachers to apply immediately, culminating in teachers planning and delivering lessons which embed the F4L approach.

The F4L programme supports teachers and teaching assistants to

- understand the theory behind cognitive science approaches
- apply cognitive science theory appropriately in science lessons by implementing a structured and scaffolded approach for learners, using exemplified lessons
- quickly and easily check whether pupils require more scaffolding support or less to stay 'on task' and learn effectively, using an 'cognitive load' tool
- develop their own science lessons which integrate cognitive science principles and embed the F4L approach

The F4L strategy is supported with example materials on topics including living things and their habitats, animals including humans, changes of materials and forces.

f4l.shu.ac.uk



Promoting social justice

Our work centres on the ways in which children and young people, no matter what their background, can be supported by the education practitioners who work with them. We understand that cognitive development occurs in a complex environment which mixes social, psychological and economic contexts, and this complexity must be recognised. Our research focuses on:

- educational practices that foster social justice
- the impact of racism on educational outcomes and experience
- the life-experiences of LGBT+ young people and adults
- analysing higher education policy, participation and student experience
- concepts, constructions and experiences of youth and disability
- the use and understanding of trauma-informed practices, with a sector-leading embedded approach to improving practitioners' knowledge of these approaches

Highlighting the potential for childhood trauma in South Yorkshire schools

CASE STUDY

Childhood trauma can have a profound impact on a person throughout their life. Traumatic experiences can include exposure to domestic violence, poverty, racial discrimination, abuse, bereavement and divorce.

Research shows that children with one or more of these experiences are more likely to struggle in class, find it hard to form healthy relationships, and — through later life — suffer poor physical health, worse economic wellbeing and even early death.

But this doesn't have to be the case. There is growing evidence that having access to an emotionally available adult in a supportive environment can change a young person's trajectory. Properly trained school staff have the potential to prevent mental health problems before they occur — and significantly reduce the damage of trauma both to our children and our society.

So it's vitally important that school staff are trained to identify children and young people who have experienced trauma, and provide them with the support they need.

That's why we have created the Trauma Heatmap. It gives every school in South Yorkshire a score based on how likely the students are to have adverse childhood experiences. It also highlights the geographical areas which have the highest potential for childhood trauma.

We are sharing the heatmap with local authorities, academies, the police and schools in South Yorkshire. We hope it can be used to target resources and training to the schools and communities that need it most — and therefore have the biggest possible impact in improving children's life chances.

tinyurl.com/storymapd544d

Evidencing how the Covid-19 pandemic affected English schools

CASE STUDY

In January 2023 we published the latest findings from our School Recovery Strategies report, conducted in partnership with Ipsos MORI and CfEY. We conducted in-depth interviews with 63 senior leaders in primary and secondary schools in England, including 22 in summer 2022.

Although we were asked to look primarily at how children's academic performance had been affected, the more we spoke to school leaders, the more we realised that the emotional and mental wellbeing of their students was a top priority.

We found that the Covid-19 pandemic, and the related lockdowns and partial school closures, affected teaching and learning in detrimental ways which are still being felt in schools today. For example, even after schools reopened, high rates of teacher and pupil absence caused huge disruption to teaching and learning and hampered recovery efforts.

Many school leaders said their students were less able to sustain concentration, struggling to bounce back after mistakes and setbacks, and giving up more readily than before the pandemic. This was hindering academic recovery, especially for the most disadvantaged pupils.

The pandemic slowed down many students' emotional development, and their lack of maturity was reflected by their behaviour in class. This was particularly felt in age groups who missed key transition activities due to lockdowns, which had impacts on their social development and readiness for learning.

Some leaders we spoke to estimated that it would take students at least three years to recover from the effects of the pandemic, with others predicting that it would follow children throughout their school careers, potentially creating a 'lost' generation.

During this research, we picked up a huge sense of anxiety about the future of schools in England. Our report was a snapshot of a school system in crisis, and was accompanied by a call to policymakers to take immediate action to avert a generation-long calamity for young people in this country.

shu.ac.uk/sheffield-institute-education-research/projects/school-recovery-strategies



One-to-one support for thousands of local schoolchildren

CASE STUDY

Our GROW Mentoring Programme places graduate mentors in schools in our region, providing one-to-one support for pupils who have additional needs.

Set up with the Northern Powerhouse Partnership, the programme was launched as a pilot scheme in July 2020. It was initially designed to support year 10 and year 11 pupils who had had their education disrupted by the Covid-19 pandemic. Mentors receive intensive training before being deployed into schools and colleges to work closely with pupils and teachers.

Since then, the programme has been expanded across the region, supporting over 1,000 Year 10–13 pupils in schools and colleges with one-to-one support to help them focus on their exams, achieve personal goals and plan for their future.

In January 2022 the GROW Programme received more than £700,000 funding through the government's Community Renewal Fund, the South Yorkshire Mayoral Combined Authority and Sheffield Hallam University. This is providing one-to-one support for another 1,400 pupils across 50 schools and colleges, delivered by 150 specially trained mentors.

Our graduate mentors are now working with young people with special educational needs as well as those aged 16-24 classed as NEET (not in education, employment or training) for the first time. An adapted programme for 66 young people with special educational needs in Sheffield and 24 young people who are NEET in Barnsley started in April 2022.

The GROW Programme has been praised by then universities minister Michelle Donelan, who said, 'I am pleased universities like Sheffield Hallam are stepping up and supporting their communities.'

Graduate mentor Abby Wensley said:

'There are so many benefits to you as a mentor — you get transferable skills and you're building confidence and trust. My pupils were great. We were all nervous when we started but by the end, we were confident and speaking easily.'

shu.ac.uk/about-us/our-role-in-the-region/civic-university-agreement/education-and-skills/grow





Examining LGBT+ experiences of intimacy

CASE STUDY

Research undertaken with over 600 lesbian, gay, bisexual, and trans (LGBT+) people explored understanding and experiences of LGBT+ 'community'.

It examined the ways in which intimacy is regulated and shaped by and within social interaction, which were apparent in three main ways.

First, the research identified how for some people the very concept of 'LGBT+ community' was linked to intimacy.

Second, there was strong evidence to suggest that some LGBT+ people self-regulate their practices of intimacy (such as holding hands or kissing in public) so as not to be recognised as enacting a same-gender relationship. This was understood as a form of self-protection or hate crime prevention, though degrees of habit and professed concern for other people's feelings were also contributing factors.

Third, experiences of intimate relations were shaped by intersectional dynamics, particularly relating to various forms of discrimination, including ageism, biphobia, classism, (dis)ableism, racism, and transphobia from and among LGBT+ people.

Whilst LGBT+ 'communities' were thought to enable opportunities to seek sexual and/or intimate encounters, this is not without its complexities. Although there have been improvements in relation to legislation and wider social attitudes, there are, for some, persistent apprehension and self-regulation which, whether necessary or not, are significant.

LGBT+ people's experiences thus suggest that intimacy can be shaped by multiple inequalities both within and without LGBT+ 'communities'.

Making university accessible for all

CASE STUDY

Applications to higher education (HE) from the most disadvantaged backgrounds are at record levels. But in the most selective universities, the gap between the most and least represented groups remains high, and is not expected to close until 2038–39.

Determining how we can widen access to and participation in higher education has long been a strength of Sheffield Institute of Education. It reflects a longstanding interest in widening participation among HE providers, governmental agencies and other sector organisations alike.

Our current commissioned work in this area is becoming more focused on widening access to postgraduate education, with a particular emphasis on improving progression to doctoral study among those from Black, Asian and minority ethnic backgrounds.

The Yorkshire Consortium for Equity in Doctoral Education (YCEDE) is a collaboration between five universities in Yorkshire, 12 UKRI-funded doctoral training partnerships and centres for doctoral training, plus several external partners dedicated to equity at doctoral level.

The project has **four main elements** (*see right*).

Here at Sheffield Institute of Education, we are leading the fourth strand, collecting a wide variety of data on the project, including institution-level applicant and Post-Graduate Researcher (PGR) data, monitoring data, and pre- and post-surveys, as well as carrying out interviews and employing the Listening Rooms approach. We have also incorporated a co-creation approach via the use of a PGR student panel.

Together we have developed theories of change with measurable mechanisms, outputs and targets to ensure the evaluation is measured robustly and effectively.

ycede.ac.uk

- 1 Nurturing the pipeline to widen opportunities and ensure equity of access to and participation in research.
- 2 Reforming Post-Graduate Researcher (PGR) recruitment and selection for equity and diversity, to change institutional practices and culture and reduce inequality in offer rates.
- 3 Enhancing the on-course PGR experience, ensuring an excellent experience for PGRs of Colour by developing institutions in which they feel a valued part of the wider scholarly community.
- 4 Evaluating and disseminating our activities to provide an evidence base for interventions to share widely across the HE sector and beyond.

An outstanding impact on widening participation programmes

Our work on widening participation programmes was judged to have ‘outstanding impact’ by the Research Excellence Framework 2021. The summary of impact statement noted that,

‘Research carried out by Sheffield Hallam University has improved the effectiveness of universities’ widening participation programmes, directly influencing national policy in this area and driving changes in institutional policy and practice across the higher education sector.’

Firstly, we investigated whether financial support bursaries make a difference to students on lower incomes. We developed a set of evaluation tools — used by over 90 universities — to help determine the effectiveness of bursaries.

The evaluation involves tracking students from different income groups and watching their progress through university and beyond. We also ask students a standard set of questions about how they spend the money, allowing us to compare data between different universities across the UK.

Our research demonstrated that bursaries have a positive impact on achievement, and can be the difference between students continuing their studies or dropping out.

The second research programme focused on collaborative outreach programmes, where HE institutions, colleges, schools, employers and others work together to deliver focused activity to pupils living in areas with low levels of HE participation.

Our research specifically involved examining the effectiveness of the design and implementation of collaborative approaches to outreach, and contributed to a fuller understanding of what worked, in what context, and why.

A key recommendation of our work was that collaborative outreach was demonstrating valuable benefits and should be further funded.

It subsequently was, in the form of the *National Collaborative Outreach Programme* — rebranded as *Uni Connect* in 2020 — with funding committed to at least 2025.

shu.ac.uk/research/in-action/projects/widening-participation



A new intervention for young people at risk of suspension

CASE STUDY

The Reach Programme is a targeted intervention aimed at 11 to 16 year olds who are at risk of suspension or who are persistently absent from school, and where there are concerns about future involvement in anti-social behaviour and crime as either a victim or perpetrator.

The programme provides an opportunity to explore the 'teachable moment' component in a school context. These make use of points in people's lives where they may be more inclined to seek help and support as a result of hitting a low point, or a significant event.

We carried out a feasibility study into the programme for the Youth Endowment Fund (YEF) and the Home Office. 73 trained youth workers in Leicestershire received the programme.

We concluded that there was an identified need for the programme, with a gap in support for young people at risk who are suspended from school. Schools and families were on board with the implementation of the programme, with schools noting the gap that Reach filled.

The programme was perceived to work best when delivered at 'teachable moments', and the evaluators observed generally high quality delivery. Young people perceived their youth workers as non-judgemental and receptive listeners and spoke very positively about the mentoring.

School leads identified that Reach has benefits beyond usual practice — it could work with young people while they were in the community, outside of term-time. Youth workers were viewed as someone young people could relate to outside of the school and home context.

Given the positive findings outlined in the feasibility study, the YEF is proceeding with a pilot trial of the Reach Programme.





Calling for full and meaningful inclusive education for disabled children and young people

CASE STUDY

Our research documents the failings of the current system for disabled young people and autistic young people's experiences of education during the Covid-19 pandemic. While some disabled young people no doubt have happy and successful educations, our research shows that significant numbers have poor experiences.

National statistics show some of the highest rates of school exclusion are within the population of young people with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND). Alongside this, persistent absence from school has increased sharply since the pandemic, with the recent government figures showing nearly 36% of young people with Education Health Care Plans currently long term absent, compared to 21.5 % of school pupils without an EHCP.

The broad failings of the SEND system are well documented, and the recent government SEND Improvement Plan sets out a roadmap for reforming and improving the current system. However, as evidenced in our analysis of the government's

SEND Review, both the ideological underpinning of inclusion and policy directives towards inclusive practice are noticeably absent in the current direction of travel.

Having come under international scrutiny from the UN Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in 2017, it is imperative that future government policy seeks to reverse and redress the increased marginalisation of disabled citizens within education — and their trajectories beyond education. This requires a cultural shift enacted through educational policy.

Our studies provide evidence of the distance between young people's current experiences of education and a meaningful, inclusive education for all. Reducing this distance begins with an ideological, political, and policy commitment premised on the international right for a meaningful and full education for all.

shura.shu.ac.uk/31796



Sheffield Institute of Education at Sheffield Hallam University is a national centre of education, recognised for our excellence and innovation in teaching and learning. From early years through to higher education, we are a hub for knowledge advancement in childhood and young people's development and learning.

Find out more at shu.ac.uk/sioe

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