

# Research Festival

12<sup>th</sup> - 16<sup>th</sup> July 2021

**FUJITSU**

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# Welcome

I'm delighted to introduce you to the 2021 Autistica Research Festival. The past year has been extremely difficult for the autistic people and families that we support. It's also presented major challenges for research, and the work that we've been able to do as a charity. But we must continue to drive progress for autistic people. That's why it feels more important than ever to bring everyone together to discuss the latest breakthroughs and how we can all work towards a better future for autistic people.



“...it feels more important than ever to bring everyone together to discuss the latest breakthroughs and how we can all work towards a better future for autistic people.”

This is our second year hosting the Autistica Research Festival online. We hope this makes the event more accessible to more people. We appreciate that there are benefits to meeting in person, which is why we've introduced social sessions this year. These allow for semi-structured networking which we hope will be less daunting than it can be in real-life coffee breaks!

**Let's all be respectful and kind to one another and allow for constructive discussion.**

We know that some of the topic areas we are covering can be challenging and we all bring different experiences, opinions and emotions to these sessions. But it's important to remember that although we may have differences, we all have a common aim: to improve the lives of autistic people across the UK.

You will have seen that we are able to offer free tickets to the festival. This would not be possible if it wasn't for the generous support of Fujitsu –

Autistica's corporate partner. If you are able to secure professional funding for your ticket, or donate towards your ticket, we are so grateful. Thanks to Fujitsu, every pound we raise from festival tickets goes directly towards the vital research and policy change that Autistica carries out on a daily basis.

I hope you enjoy the festival, and end the week feeling educated and empowered. To get involved in the conversations online use the hashtag #AutisticaFestival.

By coming together, we can create breakthroughs that enable every autistic person to live a happy, healthy and long life.

Best wishes,



James  
Dr James Cusack, Autistica CEO

## Any questions, comments or concerns?

Please don't hesitate to get in touch with our events team: [events@autistica.org.uk](mailto:events@autistica.org.uk) at any point.

We want everyone to have a positive experience at the Autistica Festival and hope to continually learn from you. Please share any feedback with us via our survey:

[Take our feedback survey](#)

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# Timetable

	10:00	11:00	12:00	13:00	14:00	15:00	16:00	17:00	18:00
<b>Mon 12<sup>th</sup> July</b>	10:00 - 10:30 <b>Intro</b> James	10:30 - 11:30 <b>Transdiagnostic approaches to understanding neurodevelopment</b>		12:30 - 13:30 <b>Social session</b>		14:00 - 16:30 <b>Mental health</b> 8 Speakers			
<b>Tues 13<sup>th</sup> July</b>		10:30 - 12:30 <b>Fostering positive identity</b> 6 Speakers				15:00 - 16:00 <b>Ethical considerations and working with the community</b>			18:00 - 19:00 <b>Identifying and diagnosing in history possibilities and pitfalls</b>
<b>Wed 14<sup>th</sup> July</b>	10:00 - 11:00 <b>Neurodiversifying autism intervention research and practice</b>			12:30 - 13:30 <b>Social session</b>		14:00 - 16:30 <b>External Support</b> 8 Speakers			
<b>Thu 15<sup>th</sup> July</b>		10:30 - 12:30 <b>Physical health</b> 6 Speakers				15:00 - 16:00 <b>Diversity in autism research</b>			
<b>Fri 16<sup>th</sup> July</b>	10:00 - 11:00 <b>How can mental health services for autistic people be improved?</b>				14:00 - 16:00 <b>Inclusive environments</b> 6 Speakers				

↑  
16:00 - 16:30  
**Closing/Awards**

- Keynote:** invited speakers discussing their research
- Panel sessions:** a group of up to 8 speakers, each presenting a piece of peer reviewed research
- Roundtable/ Other sessions:** Researchers discussing topics relating to their work
- Social sessions**



# Monday 12<sup>th</sup> July:

**Introduction to our festival** from our CEO James Cusack and our festival organisers.

[Click here to register for the: Introduction to our festival](#)

## Transdiagnostic approaches to understanding neurodevelopment

**Keynote Session: 10:30 - 11:30**

[Click here to register for: Transdiagnostic approaches to understanding neurodevelopment](#)



### Duncan Astle

Duncan is a Programme Leader at the Medical Research Council's Cognition and Brain Sciences Unit, and a Fellow of Robinson College, University of Cambridge. Prior to this he completed his training at Durham and Nottingham, and held fellowships at Oxford, Royal Holloway and Cambridge. His research uses multiple methods to explore how brain systems develop through childhood, and how they vary across children and adolescents. This programme of work has been supported by the Royal Society, the British Academy, the Medical Research Council, the Economic and Social Research Council and various charitable foundations.

**Social Session: 12:30 - 13:30**

[Click here to register for the: Social session](#)

The online equivalent of chatting during the lunch break. Drop in to our social session to talk to other researchers and community members.

## Mental health

**Panel Session: 14:00 - 16:30**

[Click here to register for: Mental health](#)

<b>Samuel Brice</b>	Towards personalised healthcare for autistic people
<b>Sarah Cassidy</b>	Development and Validation of the Autistic Depression Assessment Tool – Adult (ADAT-A) in a Community Sample of Autistic Adults.
<b>Audrey Linden</b>	Interventions to improve mental health in Autistic people: a systematic review and network meta-analysis
<b>Jennifer Kirton</b>	Surviving or Thriving Post diagnosis: A Grounded Theory Study
<b>Q&amp;A with above speakers</b>	
10-minute break	
<b>Kana Umagami</b>	Loneliness in autistic adults: a systematic review
<b>Jane Goodwin</b>	Feasibility and acceptability of the parent mediated group intervention Coping with Uncertainty in Everyday Situations (CUES)
<b>Mirabel Pelton</b>	Where next for suicide theory in autistic people? A network analysis of anxiety and depression within the Interpersonal Theory of Suicide in autistic and non-autistic adults
<b>Rebecca Bundy</b>	The Impact of COVID-19 on the Mental Health of Autistic Adults in the UK: A Mixed-Methods Study
<b>Q&amp;A with above speakers</b>	

# Tuesday 13<sup>th</sup> July:

## Fostering positive identity

**Panel Session: 10:30 - 12:30**

[Click here to register for: Fostering positive identity](#)

<b>Amber Dugdale</b>	Intense Connection and Love: The Experiences of Autistic Mothers
<b>Marion Hersh</b>	AnAuternative: Strategies for Autonomy and Empowerment
<b>Eilidh Cage</b>	Identity after an adult autism diagnosis: Relationships with psychological functioning and timing of diagnosis
<b>Q&amp;A with above speakers</b>	
10-minute break	
<b>Louise Kirby</b>	Knowledge of Autism gained by learning from people through a local UK Autism Champion Network – a health and social care professional perspective
<b>Charlotte Huggins</b>	Autistic Thriving and Surviving in the Pandemic: A look at autistic adolescents in TeenCovidLife
<b>Themis Karaminis</b>	Implicit attitudes towards autism in British tabloids between 2011-2020
<b>Q&amp;A with above speakers</b>	

## Ethical considerations and working with the community

**Roundtable Session: 15:00 - 16:00**

[Click here to register for: Ethical considerations and working with the community](#)

This roundtable discussion will explore the importance of working with autistic community members in research, through co-production, involvement or participatory research, and how to do it well, so that it is meaningful for both researchers and participants.

**Chair: Sue Fletcher-Watson**

<b>Eloise Stark</b>	Coproduction with Autistic Adults: Reflections from the Authentistic Research Collective
<b>Hannah Pickard</b>	Participatory autism research: early career and established researchers' views and experiences
<b>Georgia Aitkenhead</b>	Being Heard not Misheard: co-creating an online moderation process by and for autistic people
<b>Susanna Fantoni</b>	What I've gained from working with Autistica and The Alan Turing Institute in participatory science

## Identifying and diagnosing in history possibilities and pitfalls

**Evening session: 18:00 - 19:00**

[Click here to register for: Identifying and diagnosing in history possibilities and pitfalls](#)

Simon Jarret, author of *Those they called Idiots* will be speaking about autism and learning disabilities in history. Simon is an honorary research fellow at Birkbeck, University of London. He is the editor of Community Living Magazine.

# Wednesday 14<sup>th</sup> July:

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## Neurodiversifying autism intervention research and practice

**Keynote Session: 10:00 - 11:00**

[Click here to register for: Neurodiversifying autism intervention research and practice](#)

**Kathy Leadbitter, Leneh Buckle, Ceri Ellis and Martijn Dekker**

The keynote is presented by four individuals who share a keen interest in neurodiversity and early autism interventions. Their informal discussions, shared thinking and diverse experiences resulted in a paper on neurodiversity and autism intervention recently published in *Frontiers in Psychology* [www.frontiersin.org/articles/10.3389/fpsyg.2021.635690/full](http://www.frontiersin.org/articles/10.3389/fpsyg.2021.635690/full)).

**Kathy Leadbitter** is a Research Fellow at the University of Manchester. Her research interests are developing and evaluating autism interventions for the UK NHS context and in low- and middle-income contexts.

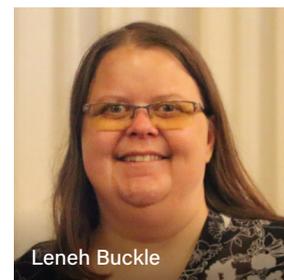
**Leneh Buckle** is a researcher and consultant. She often serves as a 'translator' between autistic experts by experience and neurotypical researchers as she speaks the languages of both communities. She is currently undertaking a PhD at the University of Manchester looking at autistic people's difficulties starting activities (inertia).

**Ceri Ellis** is a Research Associate at the University of Manchester with experience of working on pragmatic research trials which aim to improve the lives of neurodivergent people and their families. Her research interests include language and communication, health, wellbeing, and social advocacy.

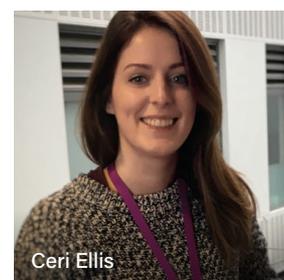
**Martijn Dekker** is a 47 year-old autistic father of three. In 1996, he set up the first entirely self-hosted online autistic community on the internet, witnessing the neurodiversity movement in its infancy.



Kathy Leadbitter



Leneh Buckle



Ceri Ellis



Martijn Dekker

# Wednesday 14<sup>th</sup> July:

## Social Session: 12:30 - 13:30

[Click here to register for the: Social session](#)

The online equivalent of chatting during the lunch break.  
Drop in to our social session to talk to other researchers and community members.

## External support – schools, services and beyond

### Panel Session: 14:00 - 16:30

[Click here to register for: External support – schools, services and beyond](#)

<b>Kathy Leadbitter and Louisa Harrison</b>	EMPOWER-ASD: A new intervention for parents/caregivers of children recently diagnosed with autism: Theory of change, intervention development, and acceptability testing
<b>Shereen Sharaan</b>	Changing how autism is understood through mixed analytic methods: Insights from the cognitive profiles of autistic bilingual children
<b>Mel Romualdez</b>	Autistic adults' experiences of diagnostic disclosure: Decision-making and factors associated with outcomes
<b>Naomi Downes</b>	Couples' Experiences of Parenting a Child After an Autism Diagnosis: A Qualitative Study
<b>Q&amp;A with above speakers</b>	
10-minute break	
<b>Danielle Rudd</b>	"Professionals are not listening to us": autistic parents' experiences of services and support.
<b>Sarah Wigham</b>	UK Childhood Autism Diagnostic Services Survey 2020: Evidence for Challenges and Innovations
<b>Eilidh Cage</b>	Educating the educators: The development and evaluation of online training on Autism and Universal Design for university teaching staff
<b>Sue Fletcher-Watson</b>	What do we need to teach neurodiversity in primary schools? Educators and researchers co-designing a curriculum resource in the Learning About Neurodiversity at School (LEANS) project
<b>Q&amp;A with above speakers</b>	

# Thursday 15<sup>th</sup> July:

## Physical health

**Panel Session: 10:30 – 12:30**

[Click here to register for: Physical health](#)

<b>Daniel Poole</b>	Time and Autism
<b>Keren Maclennan</b>	In our own words: The complex sensory experiences of autistic adults
<b>Marianna Karavidas</b>	<i>"It's not just in my head, and it's not just irrelevant"</i> : autistic negotiations of menopausal transitions
<b>Q&amp;A with above speakers</b>	
10-minute break	
<b>Gavin Stewart</b>	Experiences of social isolation and loneliness in middle-aged and older autistic adults
<b>Helen Taylor</b>	Co-designing a primary care health check for autistic adults
<b>Sara King</b>	How do maternity services support autistic women and birthing people now? What improvements could be made to help the autistic people and the staff who support them?
<b>Q&amp;A with above speakers</b>	

## Diversity in autism research

**Roundtable Session: 15:00 - 16:00**

[Click here to register for: Diversity in autism research](#)

This roundtable discussion will explore how the experience of autism, as an autistic person or a family member/ support of an autistic person can vary between cultures, and why it is important to build in room for diversity within autism research.

**Chair: Rosa Hoekstra**

<b>Adejumoke Awosanya</b>	The role of awareness, knowledge, and other theoretical drivers of autism stigma in Nigeria.
<b>Ceri Ellis</b>	Achieving universal health coverage for young children with autism spectrum disorder in low and middle-income countries
<b>Yulin Cheng</b>	Doing neurodiversity and autism research in Hong Kong: challenges and opportunities

# Friday 16<sup>th</sup> July:

## How can mental health services for autistic people be improved? Lessons from the example of anorexia nervosa.

**Keynote Session: 10:00 - 11:00**

[Click here to register for: How can mental health services for autistic people be improved? Lessons from the example of anorexia nervosa.](#)



### Will Mandy

Will Mandy is a clinical psychologist and Professor of Neurodevelopmental Conditions at University College London (UCL), where he is joint director of the clinical psychology training course, the largest of its kind in Europe. His work aims to improve the recognition of autism, and to develop new interventions to help autistic people. He has a particular research interest in improving the identification and care of females on the autism spectrum, who are currently at high risk of going unnoticed and unhelped by clinical and educational services. He also studies sub-diagnostic autistic traits in non-clinical populations, and the role these can play in the development of a range of common childhood, adolescent and adult mental health problems. With colleagues at Great Ormond Street he has developed and trialled interventions to help children with autism transition from primary to secondary school, and to teach children about their autism diagnosis, with an emphasis on fostering their sense of self-worth and pride.

## Inclusive environments

**Panel Session: 14:00 - 16:00**

[Click here to register for: Inclusive environments](#)

<b>Kirsty Macmillan</b>	Online Safety Experiences of Autistic Young People: An Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis
<b>Emma Pritchard</b>	Exploring the experience of autistic play: an interpretative phenomenological analysis
<b>Christine McAuliffe</b>	<i>"My whole life has been a process of finding labels that fit"</i> : A thematic analysis of autistic LGBTQIA+ identity and inclusion in the LGBTQIA+ community
<b>Q&amp;A with above speakers</b>	
10-minute break	
<b>Ketan Parmar</b>	Autism and eye examination accessibility
<b>Wei Song</b>	How autistic adults participated in their communities and how can we facilitate it? – Evidence from a series of cross-sectional studies
<b>Jill Bradshaw</b>	Assessing the sensory needs of autistic adults
<b>Q&amp;A with above speakers</b>	

**Awards and closing session** from our CEO James Cusack.

# Posters:

We've invited researchers to submit posters which summarise their studies in an accessible format with text, pictures and graphs. Some of the researchers have also submitted videos to explain their research. All posters will be available from the first day of the festival by [visiting the poster webpage](#).

<b>Philippa Howard</b>	"Anything but the phone!": Communication Mode Preferences in the Autism Community
<b>Nicholas Chown</b>	Autism research priorities: development of an integrated set of priorities based on a review of the 'key' literature
<b>Natasha Baxter</b>	Clinicians' perspectives on delivering and adapting therapeutic services for individuals with Autism Spectrum Disorder
<b>Afaf Alhusayni</b>	Judgments about autistic university students' academic performance based on brief samples of behaviour
<b>Alexandra Sturrock</b>	In Their Own Words: the Impact of Subtle Language and Communication Difficulties as Described by Autistic Girls and Boys without Intellectual Disability
<b>Catherine Crompton</b>	"Someone like minded in a big place": autistic school leavers attitudes toward autism-specific peer support programs in mainstream secondary education
<b>Alexandra Sturrock</b>	Observation and reported measures of language and pragmatics in young people with autism: a comparison between sex/gender profiles
<b>Marguerite Leoni</b>	A qualitative exploration of autistic adults' health and wellbeing during the COVID-19 pandemic.
<b>Hannah Marcham</b>	Investigating the relationship between sensory reactivity differences and classroom behaviour of autistic children
<b>Laurel Fish</b>	Development of the pupillary light reflex from 9- to 24-months in infants with later diagnosis of Autism
<b>Craig Coffey</b>	Changes in stereotypic behaviors following an integrative neuromuscular training intervention: variations by autistic symptom severity.
<b>Jason He</b>	Region-specific elevations of glutamate + glutamine correlate with the sensory symptoms of autism spectrum disorders
<b>Marija-magdalena Petrinovic</b>	Nutritional and dietary interventions for autism
<b>Rebecca Bundy</b>	The Impact of COVID-19 on the Mental Health of Autistic Adults in the UK: A Mixed-Methods Study
<b>Keren Coney</b>	What can be done to support autistic students to prepare for the workplace? A participatory action research study at Liverpool John Moores University (LJMU)
<b>Michaela Herriett</b>	Travelling to the beat of a different drum: exploring feelings of difference in late-diagnosed autistic women using interpretative phenomenological analysis
<b>Charli Babb and Janina Brede</b>	Sensory aversion, interoceptive difficulties and body shape concerns in autistic women with restrictive eating disorders
<b>Anamarija Veic</b>	Perception of lexical tone and intonation in Mandarin by English speakers with and without autism spectrum disorder (ASD)
<b>Siofra Heraty</b>	Self-discovery in autistic women
<b>Mary Stewart</b>	Autistic Traits, Future Thinking and Suicidality
<b>Karen Leneh Buckle</b>	"No way out except from external intervention": First hand accounts of autistic inertia

# Acknowledgements:

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As always, I want to start by thanking everyone in our Insight Group. Despite a trying year (plus!) you have filled out numerous surveys, sharing your thoughts and priorities and helping to shape the festival. You are crucial to the work we do here at Autistica.

This festival could not have happened without our Scientific Committee, made up of researchers and Insight Group members, who reviewed and scored all the abstracts we received for our panel sessions. Their feedback has allowed us to put together the fantastic programme we have.

Jacqui Rodgers	Anne-Marie Gregory	Kathy Leadbitter
Hannah Pickard	Shoshanah Cohen	Debbie Spain
Rachel Moseley	Cathy Manning	Jorik Mol
Klara Eke	Fern Adams	Sara King
Sarah Cassidy	Malcolm Osborne	Hannah Turner
Lisa Quadt	Suzanne Iwai	Elizabeth Weir
Emma Nielsen	Annalise Ayre	Caroline Richards
Anna Remington	Emma Parncutt	Rebecca Charlton
Sarah Wigham	Abi Chippindale	Stephen Humphreys
Catherine Crompton	Lydia Hill	Sarah Douglas
Teresa Tavasolli	Claudia Klaver	Helen Rust
Jane Goodwin	Nelya Koteyko	Susanna Fantoni
Nicky McGuinness	Laura Hull	Lucy Henry
Leneh Buckle	Alyssa Alcorn	Tanja Conway-Grim
Denise Odell	Laura Crane	Philip Heslop

I would also like to thank all of our external session chairs, community members who have offered to share their personal experience with us and everyone who has offered ideas, time and advice as I have been planning the festival. This includes everyone who has filled out a post event feedback form after previous Autistica events – your feedback is very much heard and acted upon and allows us to keep evolving (and hopefully improving!)

Finally, I would like to recognise the work of all our speakers and poster presenters, and of everyone who submitted an abstract. Our festival is here to celebrate you and autism research designed to improve autistic lives – without you there would be no festival!

Thank you,



Bethan  
Engagement and Events Manager at Autistica

# A word from our sponsor:

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We are thrilled to once again support the Autistica Research Festival. Our support allows Autistica to offer free tickets to those who are unable to seek professional funding. It means the event is accessible and inclusive to all. As an accredited Disability Confident Employer, this is important to us.



We have worked in partnership with Autistica since 2019. What started out as a two year partnership, has developed into a four year relationship, given our staff's commitment to help the charity through the Covid-19 pandemic. As a company we've donated over £220K to support Autistica's vital research. But we're proud to be able to go further, we've also supported the charity with skills and technology.

## Support beyond fundraising

We've supported Autistica on a number of important projects that help them to serve their community better:

- We've provided tech equipment to help the charity work effectively in the office and at home
- We've helped them to scope a digital citizen science platform to help gather autistic people's experience of the sensory world
- We've run workshops to help them to scope the future development of the Autistica Network – which will give members a more personalised experience.

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Whether it's banks, manufacturers, energy companies or the government, we're proud to deliver the behind the scenes technology that you use every day. Whether that's in your leisure time or during the working day.

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## We can't make breakthroughs without you.

If you can support our work with a one-off or a  
monthly donation, we'd be so grateful.

Together we can enable every autistic person to  
live a happy, healthy, long life.

Thank you.

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