

ANNUAL REPORT 2019-20

CIRW

CENTRE FOR INNOVATION AND RESEARCH IN WELLBEING



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Welcome

Welcome to the Centre for Innovation and Research in Wellbeing Annual Report.

2019/20 was a particularly strange and challenging academic year: many of our key events scheduled for the spring and summer had to be cancelled owing to the impact of the Coronavirus pandemic, and key teaching activities - such as our 'Migrants, Refugees and Wellbeing' module - shifted from face-to-face teaching to online delivery. Research projects had to be reconfigured to ensure they could be delivered without face-to-face meetings and fieldwork. Travel was curtailed - even within the UK. Another major challenge was the cancelling of our annual Summer Symposium; always one of our highlights of the year.

Despite these setbacks, CIRW members have been very active with ongoing research projects, in bidding for new research, and supporting and welcoming doctoral researchers. Several CIRW projects are described in this report, including two new research grants awarded to **Dr Laia Becares** to continue her pioneering work on health inequalities. Laia and I have also worked together on an application with Scandinavian colleagues to explore the wellbeing of Somali migrants. We should know the result of this in the autumn and, if successful, research will begin in late spring 2020. Three ongoing projects have continued to gather steam: **Emma Soye** reports on her Horizon 2020 'RefugeesWellSchool' project. We have also been working on an international project with colleagues in the Institute of Development Studies examining the crosscutting themes of migration, place making and wellbeing. This has provided a unique opportunity to explore migratory contexts in diverse countries, including the UK, India, Norway and Finland.

Another project examines the impact of coastal erosion on the wellbeing of vulnerable communities in coastal areas of Thailand. Following funding success with the South East Network for Social Sciences, we have two new PhD projects: one by our own Research Fellow, **Anna Ridgewell**, is described in this report. Another is being undertaken by **Ella Delaine** who will be examining the relationship between Buddhist ideas on mental health and wellbeing, and mainstream Western conceptions and how these interact in the belief systems and practices of Buddhist communities in the UK.

Besides national and international research links, we continue to nurture and develop local connections. I have been privileged to be part of a forum chaired by Sussex Community Development Association that seeks to expand research partnerships to undertake innovative work on the relationships between nature and wellbeing. Another local initiative relates to art and wellbeing and explores in particular the impact of the art of the Bloomsbury Group in Sussex and how it evokes the landscapes of the South Downs. I have had the opportunity to view the recently restored paintings in Berwick Church and have been commissioned to write an essay on the impact of the paintings on wellbeing.

So, despite ongoing challenges, it has been an exciting and productive year! We are deeply grateful to the participation of colleagues in our Advisory Group who have given us the benefit of their wisdom and experience as we move forward as a centre. One key member, **Professor Kevin Fenton**, has played a central role in the response to the Coronavirus pandemic, not least through leading the investigation and report into the impact of the virus on BAME communities. Kevin's vital work is described in a little more detail in this report.

The lockdown early in 2020 resulted in rapid adjustment to new realities, including addressing the needs of students who often faced isolation and uncertainties regarding their ongoing studies and projects. A lot of rethinking has been required and learning how to adapt to new digital platforms. Now that we are more assured in using new technologies, we are in a position to plan ahead, employing digital platforms if necessary, for new forums for research and knowledge exchange. We anticipate an exciting programme as we move forward into the 2020/21 academic year.

Keep an eye on our website and [Twitter](#) for further news!

Professor Charles Watters
Director of the Centre for Innovation and Research in Wellbeing



Research Highlights

RefugeesWellSchool: Preventive school-based interventions to promote the mental wellbeing of refugee and migrant adolescents

'RefugeesWellSchool' (RWS) is an EU-funded, Horizon-2020 research project on psychosocial support for young people in schools across Europe. The aim of the project is to evaluate the effectiveness of interventions furthering social support and social cohesion for adolescents in contexts of migration and displacement. **Professor Charles Watters** and **Emma Soye** (currently a PhD researcher in Social Work) are implementing and evaluating these interventions in UK secondary schools. These include a classroom drama workshop in a London school which was delivered last year, and the Peer Interaction Enhancement Resource (PIER) programme in a Hove school which was delivered earlier this year.

Over the last two years, Charles and Emma have worked on designing the PIER programme which aims to improve peer relations among young people by increasing empathy and building understanding, particularly around issues of migration and displacement. Between January and March 2020, Emma conducted the PIER programme with Year 8 students in a Hove secondary school which has a large migrant and refugee population. 108 students took part on a weekly basis during their English class. The PIER programme includes learning and discussion about the experiences of asylum seekers using stories and cartoons, watching video clips from local media, reading comic strips on refugee journeys, and role play. Some of the material is drawn from existing resources developed by NGOs, such as [Amnesty International](#), [PositiveNegatives](#), and the [British Red Cross](#).

The programme design also had input from US-based researcher, Dr Ines Meier, who designed the first session of the programme: a 'Q sort' exercise which gets students thinking about issues of belonging and friendship by sorting their opinions using cards. The content of the cards was based on a focus group conducted last year in which a small group of students at the school discussed these issues. Dr Meier also designed the final session: a 'friendship project' which encouraged students to reflect on what they had learned during the programme and to think about how to carry these learnings forward.

It was not possible to complete the final session of the PIER program due to Covid-19. In collaboration with the school, Charles and Emma are currently considering how to adapt the content of the final session so that the students can reflect on and take forward their learnings from the programme once the school re-opens.

The PIER programme was evaluated using questionnaires and focus groups with students and teachers prior to and following the intervention. The researchers are now analysing the findings in preparation to share these with the schools and with local, national and international policy-makers.



RefugeesWellSchool meeting between partners in Ghent in early 2020

Dr Laia Bécades, CIRW Deputy Director

Laia has been awarded two research grants to continue her work on ethnic inequalities in health and wellbeing.

The first is a three year project funded by the Nuffield Foundation that seeks to understand ethnic inequalities in later life. This study - a collaboration with colleagues at the University of Manchester - will analyse existing census and survey data to document the existence and persistence of inequalities among older people, and identify the underlying causes of these inequalities.

The second, starting in October 2020, is a two year study funded by the Health Foundation that aims to examine ethnic inequalities in health care utilisation and care quality among people with multiple conditions.

She has also started the 'Queerantime Study' with colleagues at University College London (UCL) which aims to understand how the Coronavirus pandemic is impacting on the health, wellbeing, and socioeconomic circumstances of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Queer people (LGBTQ+). The study is currently collecting data using an online survey. Study findings are disseminated weekly using Twitter and the study website, and will be used to engage with relevant stakeholders to mitigate the impact of the pandemic on the lives of LGBTQ+ people.

Laia has written two pieces for [Discover Society](#) on the ethnic inequalities of the Coronavirus pandemic (with [James Nazroo](#)), and on the impact of the Coronavirus pandemic on the LGBTQ+ community (with [Dylan Kneale](#) and [Harri Weeks](#)).



News

CIRW Advisory Group member, Professor Kevin Fenton, leads review into factors impacting health outcomes from COVID-19

Professor Kevin Fenton, Regional Director of Public Health at Public Health England (PHE) and NHS London, and member of the CIRW Advisory Group, led an important review earlier this year into how different factors, including ethnicity, gender and obesity, can impact on people's health outcomes from COVID-19.

Thousands of existing health records for people who have had the virus were examined as part of a major exercise to establish more robust data on the factors impacting the number of cases and health outcomes for different groups within the population, which was part of a rapid review led by PHE. The review matched laboratory records of COVID-19 cases to existing health records to draw down accurate data such as ethnicity and describe the association with COVID-19 cases, alongside other factors such as sex, age and geographical location. It also looked at vulnerable groups such as people experiencing homelessness and rough sleeping to understand how the virus affects them and their health outcomes.

Findings from the review were published in June 2020 and confirmed that "the impact of COVID-19 has replicated existing health inequalities and, in some cases, has increased them."

The largest disparity found was by age, with those aged 80 or older 70 times more likely to die than those under 40. The risk of dying was also higher in males than females, among those living in deprived areas and higher in Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) groups than in White ethnic groups. There was also a high increase in all cause deaths among those born outside the UK and in a range of caring and other occupations including social care, nursing, taxi and minicab drivers and those working in care homes. The analyses did not take into account the existence of comorbidities, which are strongly associated with the risk of death from COVID-19 and which might explain some of the differences.

Professor Fenton said: *"Having an accurate understanding of how diseases affect different groups of people is a really important issue and a fundamental part of PHE's role. Detailed and careful work is being done so that we can better understand this and explore the possible reasons for any disparities. Increasing evidence and concern around the disproportionate impact of COVID-19 on black and minority ethnic groups highlights an important focus of this review. PHE is rapidly building robust data and undertaking detailed analysis to develop our understanding of the impact of this novel coronavirus on different groups which can inform actions to mitigate the risks it presents."*

PHE is engaging a wide range of external experts and independent advisors, representing diverse constituencies including devolved administrations, faith groups, voluntary and community sector organisations, local government, public health, academic, royal colleges and others.

We are committed to hearing voices from a variety of perspectives on the impact of COVID-19 on people of different ethnicities."



CIRW Director, Professor Charles Watters, publishes new book on wellbeing

Professor Charles Watters has recently published a new book: *Mental Health and Wellbeing: Intercultural Perspectives* (Red Globe Press: Macmillan International, 2019).

Part of the Foundations of Mental Health Practice series and co-edited by CIRW Advisory group member, **Thurstine Basset**, *Mental Health and Wellbeing* is a timely new book exploring these increasingly important subjects from an intercultural perspective.

In the contemporary world, it is routine for people in many countries to blend diverse practices drawn from many traditions in seeking wellbeing in their daily lives. For example, individual yoga or meditation practice, or institutions offering their staff lunchtime sessions on mindfulness or tai chi. Despite the fact that these systems and practices are informed by distinctive models of the body and understandings of how mind and body interrelate, in practice people seeking wellbeing navigate seamlessly between them. While different models and practices are derived from different parts of the world, they have adapted and been informed by new environments and cultural contexts, attracting interest from diverse and heterogeneous populations.

This book examines how models and practices of mental health and wellbeing intersect in an age of migration and mobility. It aims to complement an array of recent books that have offered critical overviews of models and theories of mental health and insights into policy and practice, and importantly, looks beyond the Western tradition at dynamic intercultural influences on models of mental health and wellbeing.

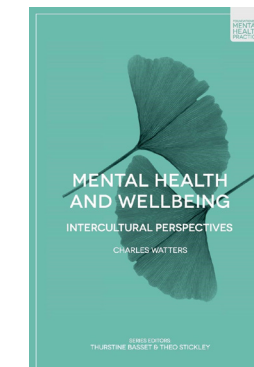
Informed by the recognition that we live in an age of unprecedented human movement that, accompanied by the development of digital technologies, has given rise to an extraordinarily rapid exchange of ideas, the book addresses two important questions:

- 1) how does cultural and ethnic diversity impact on people's mental health and wellbeing
- 2) how is the shape of services and treatments changing in multi-ethnic and multi-cultural environments?

The arguments presented in the book challenge notions of boundedness and national and cultural homogeneity.

Jane Cooper, formerly a senior counsellor at the University of Cambridge, writes that the book provides a "cutting edge overview" and that it provides "much of relevance to our current predicament" (the COVID-19 pandemic) through its argument that "the way in which an illness is represented has consequences for wellbeing" with some sections being particularly relevant to "those confined to their homes in fear and isolation".

Mental Health and Wellbeing: Intercultural Perspectives is essential reading for anyone studying or working in mental health at this time of unprecedented levels of human migration, and when mutual understanding of diverse cultural perspectives is of vital importance.



Experience

**Nurturing or Neglecting Green Minds:
What value is placed on accessing nature
across different state and private educational settings?**
by CIRW Research Fellow and SeNSS Doctoral Researcher,
Anna Ridgewell

Anna Ridgewell successfully applied for funding from the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) via the South East Network for Social Sciences (SeNSS) for her PhD which began in October 2020. Her research will examine the opportunities that young children have to access outdoor environments in different educational settings. With the Covid-19 pandemic forcing schools to close and families to remain at home, this piece of research is more relevant than ever, as children's freedom to access the outdoors has become severely restricted - which may be further affected by their socioeconomic circumstances.

Anna writes: *"There is a large and growing body of evidence that time spent outdoors is good for mental health and wellbeing in children, with a number of studies linking green and open spaces with wellbeing, resilience, improved behaviour and better learning outcomes. Green Mind Theory (Pretty et al, 2017), states that the embedding of a pro-environmental stance in the early years will have profound consequences for the future, with green minds developing greener and more prosocial economies. However, as a society, we are spending more time indoors and less time accessing nature, with children spending on average half as much time playing outside as their parents did, and those from disadvantaged backgrounds and from Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic populations even less likely to engage with nature. Now more than ever, children may be particularly dependent on educational settings to enable their access to open spaces. In England there is an increasingly complex mixed-market education model which encompasses a huge range of state and privately funded settings for children of all ages, with the state education system in particular currently going through a time of great change.*

This research will explore what opportunities children are getting to access nature in primary schools and nurseries across both state and private sectors and across a range of diverse populations. It will examine whether this access is perceived as beneficial to children's subjective wellbeing and learning and what ideas practitioners may have about what the drivers and inhibitors of accessing outdoor spaces at school and nursery might be. National and local policy documents on this subject will be assembled to further understand the ideologies impacting these perceptions. Personal accounts will be gathered from the adults working in these settings and a narrative constructed using thematic analysis. Using the participatory method 'Photovoice', children will be asked to photograph outdoor spaces at school or nursery and to discuss these photos and their meanings in focus groups, with transcripts and creative outputs analysed using a hermeneutic approach. By giving voice to different stakeholders, particularly to the children themselves, I aim to provide a narrative with which to understand the value that is placed on accessing the outdoors across different educational settings and to what extent state or privately funded contexts enable or inhibit that access, thus nurturing or neglecting green minds."



Dissemination and Knowledge Exchange Highlights

On 18 June 2020, **Emma Soye** presented her research on RefugeesWellSchool (see Page 4) at an online symposium entitled 'Young Lives at the Margins'. The symposium was hosted by St. Mary's University London and explored conceptions of social, spatial and generational marginality and how this shapes children and young people's lives. The relationship between the centre and the periphery was explored, in relation to how marginalisation is produced by and through institutional contexts, bureaucratic processes and practice, as well as how it is experienced and embodied within young peoples' lives. Papers examined the borderlands between and within disciplines, focused on exploring childhood and youth at the margins.

The symposium was interdisciplinary and addressed issues of concern to scholars, policymakers, practitioners and young people. Emma took part in the panel 'Youth Cultures and Identities', which addressed topics such as youth subcultures, identity and displacement, disability and inclusion and alternative educational provisions.



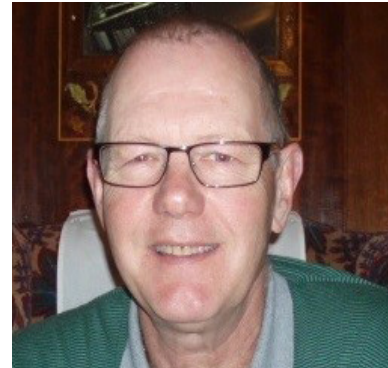
On 17 and 18 September 2020, **Charles Watters** and **Emma Soye** attended a RefugeesWellSchool online consortium, during which issues around quantitative and qualitative data analysis, article writing, and dissemination and communication of findings across the six EU countries were discussed.



CIRW External Advisory Group

Thurstine Basset

Thurstine is Director of Basset Consultancy, specialising in the field of mental health training and education. Thurstine originally trained as a social worker, and has previously worked as a community worker and social work practitioner. He has an MSc in Social Policy and has worked as an Independent Training and Development Consultant for over 25 years.



NEW FOR 2020:

As Series Editor for *Foundations of Mental Health Practice* (Palgrave/Macmillan/Springer), Thurstine was on the publication team for three books: *Peer Support in Mental Health* by Emma Watson and Sara Meddings; *Supervision for Mental Health Care* by Paul Cassedy and Maureen Anderson and *Mental Health and Wellbeing* by CIRW Director Charles Watters.

Thurstine has also coordinated two local workshops in Hove and Lewes on the psychological and social effects of boarding school, drawing on material in his book: *Trauma, Abandonment and Privilege: A Guide to Therapeutic Work with Boarding School Survivors*, co-written with Nick Duffell (Routledge 2016).

Professor Jo Boyden

Jo is a former Professor of International Development at Oxford University and former Director of Young Lives, which she led from 2005-2019. She has a PhD in Anthropology and a BSc in Social Anthropology from the University of London. Her research has mainly focused on child labour, children and political violence, and childhood poverty – particularly in bringing together academics, practitioners and policymakers to develop effective models and methods for supporting children, their families and their communities in situations of adversity.



NEW FOR 2020:

Jo's latest article titled 'Motherhood in Childhood: Generational Change in Ethiopia' was published in the journal *Feminist Encounters*. The article explores the changing place of 'motherhood' in the lives of girls and young women in Ethiopia, from a generational, life course perspective. It focuses on 'motherhood in childhood' in the context of rapid social change, drawing on multi-generational narratives from young women, their mothers and grandmothers, as part of Young Lives, a fifteen-year study that has traced the life trajectories of a group of girls growing up in poverty.

Professor Kevin Fenton

Professor Kevin Fenton is Regional Director of Public Health at PHE and NHS London. Before taking up the London regional director role, Kevin held a joint position as the Strategic Director of Place and Wellbeing and Director of Public Health (DPH) at London Borough of Southwark and Senior Advisor, PHE. He has previously held executive positions at the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the Health Protection Agency and has over 20 years' experience in public health medicine, infectious disease epidemiology, HIV prevention and sexual health. He is visiting Professor of Epidemiology and Public Health at University College London, with research interests in migration and health.



NEW FOR 2020:

Kevin has recently led an important review for Public Health England into how different factors, including ethnicity, gender and obesity, can impact on people's health outcomes from COVID-19 (see Page 6).

Professor J. Allister McGregor

Allister is a former Professor of Political Economy in the Department of Politics at the University of Sheffield. Previously he was at the Institute of Development Studies (IDS) at the University of Sussex, where he was leader of Vulnerability and Poverty Reduction Team and a member of the Senior Management Group. For many years prior to that he was in the Faculty of Social Sciences at the University of Bath.



NEW FOR 2020:

Allister's latest book *Wellbeing, Resilience and Sustainability: The New Trinity of Governance* is published by Palgrave (2020) and is Part of the 'Building a Sustainable Political Economy: SPERI Research & Policy' book series. The book is unique in bringing the three concepts of wellbeing, resilience and sustainability together as representing a new trinity of governance. It introduces some of the commonalities between the ideas, particularly their concern with distinctive human capacities that shape who we are and that imply a particular relationship to our wider social and natural environments. The book explains what is distinctive about the three ideas and why they are currently popular. In particular, it is concerned with how these ideas contribute to governance 'after the crisis', and how questions of social, political and economic uncertainty influence the ways in which these main arguments are developed.

CIRW People

Director

[Professor Charles Watters](#) (Department of Social Work and Social Care)

Deputy Director

[Dr Laia Bécares](#) (Department of Social Work and Social Care)

Research Fellow

[Anna Ridgewell](#) (Department of Social Work and Social Care)

Co-Directors

[Professor Jackie Cassell](#) (Brighton and Sussex Medical School)

[Professor Paul Statham](#) (School of Global Studies)

Affiliated Faculty

[Professor Gordon Harold](#) (Professor of Child and Adolescent Mental Health, School of Psychology)

[Dr Linda Morrice](#) (Reader in Education and Migration, Department of Education)

[Professor Rupert Brown](#) (Emeritus Professor - Psychology, School of Global Studies)

[Dr Tish Marrable](#) (Senior Lecturer in Social Work and Social Care,
Department of Social Work and Social Care)



CIRW Publications: 2019/20

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