



WHO WE ARE

The people of the ACRC

Interviews written and performed by Juliet Shevlin
As part of her Work Experience with the ACRC, June 2023

Dr Sue Lewis

Senior Research Fellow

What do you study at university?

When Sue initially applied to university she wasn't accepted as her A-level grades weren't high enough, however when she later re-applied as a mature student she was accepted. Sue's first degree was in the history of art and architecture which partially focused on the anthropology of art, this allowed her to study anthropology for her Master's degree and PhD.

What does your job involve?

Sue Lewis is a senior researcher and project manager for work package four (understanding the person in context). She focuses on sustaining the project. Her main responsibilities involve facilitating the projects and supporting the staff as well as the finances. She manages research for the Understanding Care Transitions project and makes sure to fulfil promises that were made when the research began.

What is your favourite aspect of your job?

Sue enjoys planning and coming up with new ideas in response to funding calls as it involves collaboration.

What are you hoping to achieve in your job?

Sue is focused on the sustainability of the project. She wants to make sure staff get the opportunity to continue work on this project as well as the confidence to move on to new opportunities should they arise.

How did you find out about ACRC?

Sue was acquaintances with a professor at Durham University who became head of the school of Social and Political science, she then invited Sue to work for her for a few months as a researcher. Sue officially began working at ACRC in August 2020.

What skills do you need in your day to day work?

Skills such as project management, an idea about finance and budgeting as well as a good grounding in research so she can understand what her team is working on are vital for Sue. Making sure the team has the resources and tools to do their jobs so they don't need to be micromanaged are also key skills.

What attracted you to this job?

It gave Sue the opportunity to bring together her research experience as well as other skills like managing projects and working in a team. She was also interested in issues surrounding ageing and care from a personal perspective.

What aspects of your job do you enjoy the least?

Sue's least favourite aspect of her job is the is a great amount of staff turnover as people are looking for more stable jobs – which is understandable – but it takes a lot of time for their positions to be filled.

Was it challenging to reach your position?

Sue's biggest challenge was dealing with the constraints of being a contract researcher, this makes it difficult to build a career and earn promotions. She thinks it's important to build up networks and earn a reputation to deliver.

Has your career been building up to this or is it an opportunity that wouldn't have occurred to you?

The role of Senior Researcher and Project Manager, was an opportunity Sue was looking for but never hoped to find. It gave Sue the chance to use the skill set she had accumulated.

What achievement in your career are you most proud of?

Sue was a significant part of developing the project Healthier Working Lives, which brought together a large variety of different professions, such as academics, entrepreneurs and frontline care workers, to look at how we can improve care workers lives.

Do you see yourself in this career in the future?

By growing and sustaining the project Sue aims to create a career she can create a shorter work week for herself or have the opportunity to work online in the future.



Dr Imane Guellil

Research Fellow in Clinical Natural Language Processing

What did you study at university?

Imane has a Bachelor's degree in computer science as well as a masters and a PhD in Computer science

What does your job involve?

Imane is a researcher and is working on automatically extracting useful medical information from text using natural language processing as well as artificial intelligence. She currently extracts information related to disease as well as the side effects of medical drugs from GP notes, discharge summaries and social media.

What is your favourite aspect of your job?

Imane enjoys the flexibility her job allows her to have.

What are you hoping to achieve in your career?

Imane hopes to achieve a fellowship allowing her to obtain funding to develop her own ideas.

How long have you been working at ACRC?

Imane has been working there since the April 1st 2022.

What attracted you to this job?

Imane enjoys the multidisciplinary aspect of AIM CISC. She was also looking for a job opportunity that combined natural language processing and medical research which her current job provides.

What aspect of your job do you enjoy the least?

Imane dislikes the repetitive aspects of her job and the administrative tasks.

Was it challenging to reach your position?

Imane finds the competition to be the most challenging aspect of her job as lots of people apply for funding with the same qualifications so Imane needs to work extremely hard to make sure she stands out.

Has your career been building up to this or is it an opportunity that wouldn't have occurred to you?

Imane has always been passionate about numbers and knew she wanted to be a computer scientist at the age of 16. Imane has also always had an interest in writing which her job allows her to explore when writing research papers.



What achievement in your career are you most proud of?

Imane was endorsed by the Academy of Engineering which allowed her to get a global talent visa to live in the UK.

Do you see yourself in this career in the future?

Imane wants to become a head of department or start her own business. She is interested in having many different careers.

Jenny Sharma

Patient and Public Involvement and Engagement Co-ordinator

What did you study at university?

Jenny has an undergraduate degree in psychology as well as a master's degree in health psychology which allowed Jenny to develop a greater understanding about what people with health conditions go through.

What does your job involve?

Jenny is a Patient and Public Involvement and Engagement Co-ordinator. This involves working with older adults or informal carers of older adults and including them in research as they have lived experiences of the challenges of ageing. This allows researchers to gain a greater understanding about the types of questions they should be asking allowing them to design more relevant research.

What is your favourite aspect of your work?

Jenny enjoys the broad focus of her work, the ability to work with a number of different research teams as well as getting to know members of the public.

What are you hoping to achieve in your job?

Jenny aims for public involvement to be integrated into all research so the researchers have a better understanding of the impact of their research.

What skills do you need in your day to day work?

Jenny needs to be able to quickly learn about new research so that she can effectively communicate it to members of the general public by making academic language more accessible. As well as time management skills so she can prioritise projects and work out what is feasible for her to achieve. Jenny has needs to have good communication skills so that members of the public feel comfortable sharing their thoughts and experiences with researchers.

How long have you been working at ACRC?

Jenny has been working there for just over 2 years.

What attracted you to this job?

The diversity of the projects and the different research methodology attracted Jenny to ACRC. She also felt it was important that the research being carried out is accessible to the general public and is published in places people trust.

What aspect of your job do you enjoy the least?

Jenny finds some research projects more interesting than others.

Was it challenging to reach your position?

It was challenging for Jenny as there isn't a natural career progression for many professional services roles and there are limited opportunities for full time jobs in Jenny's field.

Has your career been building up to this or is it an opportunity that wouldn't have occurred to you?

Before Jenny worked in public involvement she was a research assistant. Completing a PhD was the natural next step in her career, however she wasn't sure that this was a route that she wanted to take.. She discovered the field of a patient and public involvement through a job advertisement, previously having no idea that it existed.

What achievement are you most proud of?

In Jenny's last workplace she felt that she was taking on excess responsibility for her position. She raised this with her manager and got promoted to management level which she didn't know was an option. This gave Jenny more confidence in her ability and in the future of public involvement within the organisation.

Do you see yourself in this career in the future?

Jenny really enjoys her job and plans to stay in the professional services side of research in the future.

Dr Rose Penfold

Wellcome Trust Multimorbidity PhD Programme

What does your job involve?

Rose is a senior doctor in geriatrics, doing a PhD fellowship where she is looking at different multimorbidities using two big data sets.

What is your favourite aspect of your job?

Rose enjoys the ability to research more in depth about multimorbidity, which is an opportunity she didn't get when doing full time clinical work. She also enjoys the multidisciplinary aspect of ACRC.

What are you hoping to achieve in your job?

Rose hopes to complete her PhD and discover new questions for future research, she was also like to her research to have an impact on clinical practice.



What skills do you need in your day to day work?

Rose needs to be persistent and patient as getting access to data sets can be challenging. She also needs to be able to identify if the data is trustworthy and be able to question why it isn't. The PhD also gave Rose the chance to develop new skills, which she wouldn't have been able to do without her supervisor or having access to ACRC.

What aspect of your job do you enjoy the least?

Waiting for things that's are out of her control such as data sets is Rose's least favourite aspect.

Has your career been building up to this or is it an opportunity that wouldn't have occurred to you?

Before her PhD Rose had already done some research into multimorbidity and was interested in exploring it in more depth so when Rose was given funding for her PhD she was grateful for the opportunity.

What achievement are you most proud of?

During the Covid-19 pandemic Rose's research about delirium in older adults with covid lead to changes in the national guidelines. She was also involved in setting up a park run in the US from scratch which was a challenging process.

Do you see yourself in this career in the future?

Rose hopes her PhD helps to build opportunities for her to have both a clinical and academic role.

Dr Janice Murray

Partnership and Communication Manager

What did you study at university?

Janice started off doing HND in Biological Sciences then transferred to a BSc in Biotechnology. She has a PhD in Molecular Parasitology.

What does your job involve?

Janice is a partnerships and communications manager. She is responsible for relationships with internal and external stakeholders like Age Scotland, making sure that she maintains a two way relationship as well as setting up new relationships outside ACRC. The communications aspect of Janice's job involves increasing the ACRC's visibility by making sure they are communicating to people in the correct ways as different audiences respond to different things. Janice also makes sure that researchers are aware of their research impact, this involves making sure researchers are aware of the effect their research will have outside of the university.

What is your favourite aspect of your job?

Janice enjoys the variety of her job as well as being a part of an amazing team.

What are you hoping to achieve in your job?

Janice wants to make sure the partnerships benefits everyone involved. She also hopes that the work she's doing will strengthen the ACRC and make it easier for the funding to be extended.

What skills do you need in your day to day work?

Janice needs to be able to communicate with a number of different people in different ways and needs to approach new partnerships with tact and diplomacy. She also needs good project management skills so she knows her priorities and responsibilities as well as the responsibilities she can share with others.

How long have you been working at ACRC?

Janice has been working there for around seven months.

What attracted you to this job?

Janice felt she achieved a lot in her last jobs but that there were still gaps in her knowledge. Her current job gives her more responsibilities and introduced the aspect of partnerships and communications as well as being a promotion within the university.

What aspect of your job do you enjoy the least?

Janice's least favourite aspect is organising meetings and other people's diaries.

Has your career been building up to this or is it an opportunity that wouldn't have occurred to you?

It was a mixture for Janice, as everything went in the right direction for her to do her current job however it wasn't something she had initially considered. Before becoming a partnerships and communications manager Janice worked in a lab as an academic researcher and a lab manager.

Was it challenging to reach your position?

Janice found it challenging as she hadn't planned to become a partnerships and communications manager. When she worked in a lab her university job grade remained stationary however it allowed her more freedom in her personal life to bring up a young family.

What achievement are you most proud of?

Janice's PhD is the achievement she is most proud of.

Do you see yourself in this career in the future?

Janice see herself remaining in the academic sphere. Before Janice's previous job she spent decades on short term contracts working within the university.

Dr Lucy McCloughan

Programme Manager

What does your job involve?

As Programme Manager for the ACRC, Lucy's job is to make sure the centre runs efficiently – making sure that money is spent appropriately and human resources are running well, with the right person in the right job and that they are well looked after. She also ensures that each WP produces the results.

What is your favourite aspect of your job?

Lucy's favourite aspect is running workshops with researchers, pulling them away from their screens, getting them to work together and bounce ideas off one another. She enjoys encouraging them to challenge themselves and each other, with interaction getting results, with a positive end result.

What are you hoping to achieve in your job?

In line with the vision for the centre, Lucy hopes that her work allows for a really big difference to be made for older people with care needs.

How did you find out about ACRC?

Lucy saw a standard email update indicating that Bruce Guthrie had secured funding for a new research centre so she sent him an email congratulating him and then they had a chat about the Centre.

What skills do you need in your day to day work?

Lucy says there are really two main sets of skills. On paper, the most important is financial management and understand of different research methodologies. In reality, it is also about relationships, managing difficult situations and striving for positive outcomes with everybody smiling at the end.

What attracted you to this job?

The focus of the centre. In previous roles Lucy, had worked with research around aspects of later life, and some with regards to technology, so it was a good fit

What aspect of your job do you enjoy the least?

There is nothing Lucy dreads, but the most problematic thing is making sure that there is enough funding to keep all the members of the team on fixed term contracts together.

Was it challenging to reach your position?

Lucy has been involved in research management for 20 years, and prior to that she was a researcher. The challenge has been knitting all the experience together to make a career.

What achievement are you most proud of?

Her PhD is the achievement she is most proud of.

Do you see yourself in this career in the future?

Lucy would really like to carry on doing what she is doing now for the rest of her career.

What did you study at university?

Lucy studied Psychology at University.

