



UNIVERSITY OF  
PORTSMOUTH

# MIND & MOVEMENT ISSUE 4

## SCHOOL OF PSYCHOLOGY, SPORT & HEALTH SCIENCES

### WELCOME

HEAD OF SCHOOL - DR MIKE RAYNER

Welcome to the latest newsletter, which highlights the continued momentum and impact across the School. In this edition, you will read about significant research successes, including externally funded projects advancing artificial intelligence, neurodiversity and anxiety research, alongside the real-world contributions of our Extreme Environments Laboratory across sport, health and defence. We also showcase initiatives that enhance student development and industry engagement, including alumni mentoring and expert guest lectures. These stories reflect the strength of research, teaching and partnerships, and our commitment to delivering meaningful impact locally, nationally and internationally.



### CAREER CHAMPIONS: ALUMNI MENTORS GUIDING STUDENTS TOWARDS SUCCESS

The Career Champions programme connects University of Portsmouth alumni with final-year students. Through mentoring, alumni share career insights, advice and encouragement, helping students navigate uncertainty and prepare for employment. The initiative strengthens professional confidence, supports career planning and fosters lasting connections within the university community. In our School, mentors Aaron Patel and Liv Batten supported current students by sharing their journeys from Portsmouth to the successful careers they enjoy today.

Aaron Patel (**pictured top left**), a Sports Management graduate, now works as a Social Media Executive at Crystal Palace FC. He credits his degree for sparking his interest in sports marketing. As a mentor, he encourages students to believe in themselves, work hard and stay resilient, emphasising that persistence is key to breaking into competitive industries.

Liv Batten (**pictured bottom left**), a Forensic Psychology graduate, is a Performance and Research Officer at the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner. After overcoming multiple rejections to secure placements, she values resilience and determination. As a mentor, she supports students facing uncertainty, reassuring them that career paths take time and progress comes step-by-step.

Thank you, Aaron and Liv! We wish you every success in your future endeavours and hope to hear more about your achievements in the years to come.

Our Careers and Employability Service supports students from the moment of registration and for up to five years after they graduate. Students can get help with CVs, applications, interviews and finding job opportunities. Expert advisers, workshops and resources are available to help them take the next step in their career.

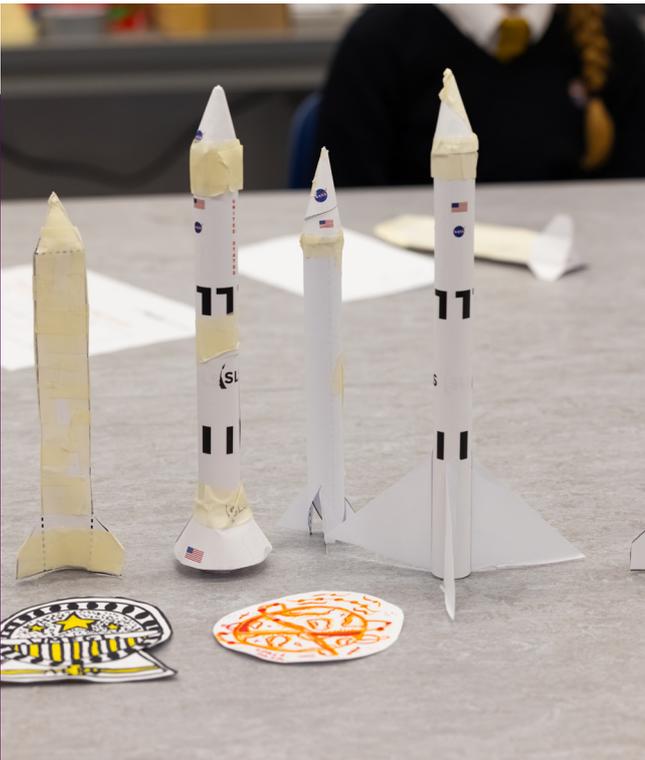
## FREE WORKSHOP ON HYDROGEN FUTURES TO BE HOSTED AT THE UNIVERSITY OF PORTSMOUTH

Professor Chris Jones, Social Theme Lead for the UK HyRES project, will host a free one day workshop at the University of Portsmouth's School of Psychology, Sport and Health Sciences on Thursday 30 April, running from 09:00 to 18:00. UK HyRES is the UK's national hub for research challenges in hydrogen and alternative liquid fuels, bringing together expertise from across academia, industry and policy. The event is organised by Professor Jones' research group, TARG:ET.

The workshop will bring together academics and non-academics interested in the social acceptance of hydrogen and alternative liquid fuels. Through presentations and discussions, participants will explore public perceptions, societal challenges and opportunities linked to the transition to low carbon energy systems. Attendees will also hear about emerging interdisciplinary research shaping future energy policy and practice.

The event aims to encourage knowledge exchange and foster new collaborations among those working toward sustainable energy futures. It will provide valuable networking opportunities for participants from a range of sectors who share an interest in hydrogen futures.

Attendance is free, but advance registration is required due to limited places. To register or request further information, please contact Professor Jones at [chris.jones1@port.ac.uk](mailto:chris.jones1@port.ac.uk)



## FUNDING SUCCESSES FOR PROFESSOR HOPE

Professor Lorraine Hope and colleagues have secured several new research grants supporting innovative work on artificial intelligence, interviewing and security. *Exploring AI and Metacognition in Elicitation Contexts* (Oct 2025 to Mar 2026), funded by the UK Government (£69,620), Led by Professor Hope, Professor Oli Buckley and Dr Jim Sauer examines how AI can support information gathering while accounting for human thinking processes.

A second project, *Responsible AI in Security and Elicitation (RAISE)* (Dec 2025 to Oct 2026), funded by the Network Plus for Analytical Behavioural Science in Security and Defence (£59,310), includes Dr Olivia Brown alongside the team and focuses on the ethical and effective use of AI in security contexts. It aims to identify effective collaboration conditions, helping security professionals use AI while maintaining transparency, accountability and public trust.

Professor Hope has also received HEIF funding (£12,500) for *Who? What? Where? When? NOW! Toward Scalable AI-Driven Avatar Training for Time-Critical Interviewing* (Nov 2025 to Jul 2026). This project explores the development of AI driven avatar systems to support training for professionals who conduct high pressure interviews, with the aim of improving both efficiency and accuracy in time sensitive situations.

Professor Hope recently appeared on BBC Morning Live (**pictured right**) to discuss the Self-Administered Interview (SAI©), an evidence-based tool that helps witnesses produce detailed initial accounts independently. Developed over two decades, it improves accurate recall, supports rapid information gathering in major incidents.



## MAPPING ANXIETY IN THE BRAIN

Researchers at the University of Portsmouth have identified how the brain responds to anxiety during “avoid-avoid conflict,” situations in which a person must choose between two negative outcomes. PhD student Ben Stocker, supervised by Dr Roger Moore and Dr Tom Lockhart in the School of Psychology, Sport and Health Sciences, designed a video game-style task to investigate this process. In the study, 40 young adults used a joystick to avoid threatening objects on a screen, with some trials creating unavoidable no-win scenarios that closely mirror real-life anxiety-provoking decisions. Brain activity was recorded using electroencephalography (EEG), a technique that measures electrical signals from the brain.

When participants encountered high-conflict situations, researchers observed a distinctive pattern of neural activity, including increased theta waves in the right frontal region. Different brain areas were activated depending on whether the situation was manageable or highly stressful. The findings, published in the *International Journal of Psychophysiology*, suggest these patterns may represent a measurable biological “signature” of anxiety-related conflict.

This study is the first to combine EEG with avoid-avoid scenarios, suggesting it captures anxiety in a way that reflects real-world experiences more closely than traditional approaches. The results could support earlier and more accurate diagnosis of anxiety disorders, inform personalised treatments, and contribute to the development of new non-drug interventions for mental health conditions.



## LAUNCH OF ONLINE RESOURCE FOR NEURODIVERGENT COMMUNITY

CARING, a new research website from the Centre for Interaction, Development and Diversity (CIDD) at the University of Portsmouth, was launched this week. The hub brings together academics, people with lived experience, professionals, practitioners and partner organisations to advance inclusive and participatory research on neurodiversity across the life course, from early education through to university and employment. Developed with support from UK Research and Innovation’s Higher Education Innovation Fund, CARING aims to improve understanding of neurodivergent experiences in education, employment, health and social care, and to promote more inclusive systems of support.

Guided by a neurodiversity framework, the initiative emphasises acceptance, inclusion and recognition of diverse strengths and challenges, while acknowledging the role that social environments play in shaping outcomes. A key principle of CARING is conducting research with rather than on neurodivergent people. Its participatory approach involves collaboration with neurodivergent individuals, families, educators, clinicians and community organisations as co-researchers, ensuring that projects address real needs and produce meaningful, accessible outputs. The hub also supports the translation of research into practical guidance for policy, professional practice and everyday settings.



The website provides accessible summaries of research projects and findings designed for both academic and public audiences, along with free tools and resources for researchers, neurodivergent people, educators, employers, clinicians and families. It also highlights current projects, community events and opportunities to contribute to ongoing research. By creating a central platform for knowledge sharing and collaboration, CARING aims to strengthen connections between research, practice and lived experience. Visit the website to learn more or get involved: <https://sites.google.com/port.ac.uk/caring/home>

## EXTREME ENVIRONMENTS LABORATORY SHOWCASES IMPACT ACROSS SPORT, HEALTH AND DEFENCE

Dr Joe Costello and the University of Portsmouth's Extreme Environments Laboratory (EEL) have recently been involved in a range of high-profile activities demonstrating the real-world impact of their research across sport, health and defence. The laboratory supported military veterans Freddy Drummond-Brady and James East as they prepared for the ICE Ultra, a five-day, 230 km Arctic endurance race undertaken to raise funds for the Armed Forces mental health charity Head Up. Motivated by personal loss, the pair have already raised £50,000 and aim to reach £75,000 to support suicide prevention and wellbeing initiatives. Using specialised facilities, EEL researchers simulated harsh Arctic conditions, assessing physiological responses, dexterity and cognitive performance to help them prepare for temperatures as low as -40°C.

The laboratory also contributed to a public engagement event focused on brain health and wellbeing. Dr Costello joined a panel of expert speakers who explored how everyday lifestyle factors, particularly diet and physical activity, influence memory, mood and brain function. Drawing on research from neuroscience, nutrition and exercise science, the session highlighted the connections between physical health and mental wellbeing, and demonstrated how small, evidence-based changes can have meaningful long-term benefits. The event concluded with a panel discussion addressing topics such as gut-brain communication, immune influences on mental health and practical strategies for healthier living.

In addition, Dr Costello welcomed Minister for Defence Readiness and Industry, Luke Pollard MP, to the EEL during a wider ministerial visit to the University (**pictured right**). Portsmouth was chosen to host the national announcement of an £80 million Government investment to boost UK skills for future defence careers, recognising the University's strong partnerships with the Armed Forces, its proximity to HM Naval Base Portsmouth and its track record in developing defence-related expertise. During the visit, the Minister toured several facilities, including the Space Mission Incubator, Robotics and Automation Lab and the EEL, where research supports personnel operating in extreme conditions. The funding will create new student places in defence-related subjects and enhance facilities, helping to strengthen the workforce needed for national security and the defence industry.

## INDUSTRY EXPERTS SHARE INSIGHTS WITH SPORT MANAGEMENT STUDENTS

Sport Management students attended a guest lecture delivered by Peter Drury, one of football's most respected commentators and a leading voice on Sky Sports, and Aaryaman Banerji, Head of Football Governance at Lane Clark & Peacock (LCP), a leading consultancy and advisory firm. Drury spoke about his broadcasting career, the art of commentary and football's worldwide appeal, while Banerji outlined his work advising organisations on governance, regulation and integrity in the sport. The session offered valuable insights into both the media and administrative sides of football, highlighting diverse career opportunities across the modern sports industry.

The University of Portsmouth's Sport Management course combines academic study with real-world industry engagement, preparing students for careers across sport business, media and governance. Guest lectures such as this provide valuable networking opportunities and firsthand insight from leading professionals.



## Contact us

To send in your stories & successes:  
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