

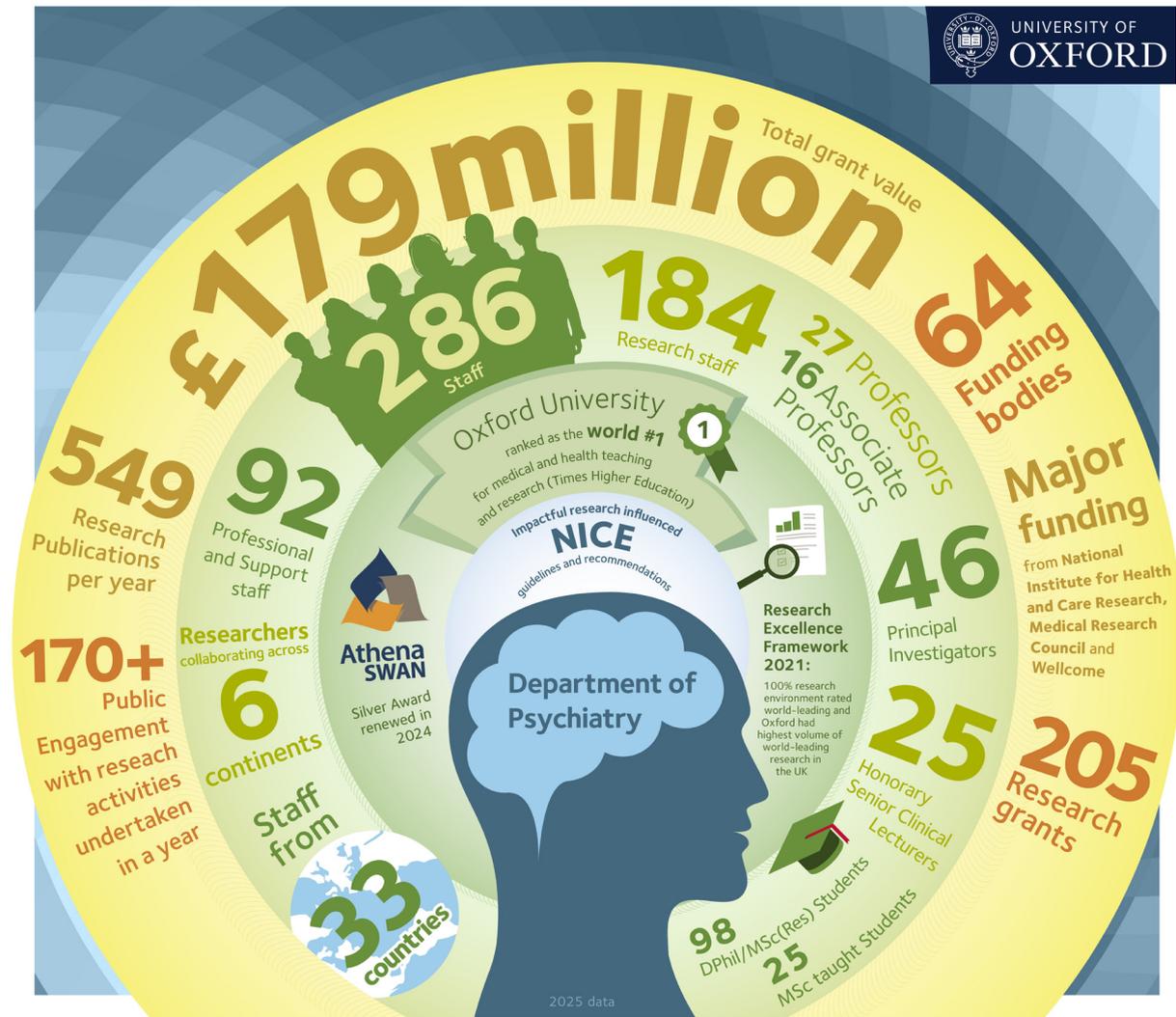


Department of Psychiatry

Annual Report 2025

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- Conducting world-class research
 - Teaching psychiatry
 - Developing future researchers
 - Supporting doctors in training
 - Promoting excellence in clinical practice
 - Developing and providing innovative clinical services
 - Translating scientific discovery into benefits for patients

Facts and figures 2025



Key appointments and staff changes

71 people joined Psychiatry, while 11 transferred to a different role within the department. 50 people left, with 14 moving to another University department.



Child and Adolescent Psychiatrist [Armin Raznahan](#) has been appointed to the [W.A. Handley Professor of Psychiatry](#) post in the Department of Psychiatry and [Merton College](#), University of Oxford, following the retirement of [John Geddes](#). He will join the department in 2027. [Jacinta O'Shea](#) (pictured left) has been awarded the title of Professor of Cognitive Neuroscience through the University's Recognition of Distinction Scheme.

[Maxime Taquet](#), [Louise Johns](#), [Amedeo Minichino](#) and [Lahiru Handunnetthi](#) (pictured right, left to right) were awarded the title of Associate Professor by the Medical Sciences Divisional Board.

[Professor Sir Simon Lovestone](#) rejoined Psychiatry in a new role leading on innovation and development for the department. He previously worked as a Principal Investigator (PI) in Psychiatry for several years, and more recently was with Johnson & Johnson as Global Lead in Neuroscience Discovery and Translation.



Foreword



What a year for the Department of Psychiatry - the scope, ambition and impact of our research continues to blow me away. I am also so impressed and grateful for the commitment of our staff and students to help Psychiatry be a positive and welcoming place to be.

We have delivered some hugely important research this year, as highlighted in this report, and hosted and initiated many cross department and institutional collaborations, not only with other neuroscience departments, but also [Primary Care](#) and the [Department for Women's and Reproductive Health](#), and beyond. We're agile and moving into new areas of research, such as on climate change, hosting a [forum on climate change and mental health](#) (pictured, top right) and boosting our team to conduct more research into that area; as well as playing a key role in [Oxford's first neurodiversity conference](#) and the Oxford women's health conference.

make our department a welcoming and inclusive place to be. There have been so many awards that I don't have space to cover them all, but a special mention to our [Race Equality Working Group](#) and [Race and Psychiatry Journal Club](#) members who won a Vice-Chancellor's Award for Commitment to Equality, Diversity and Inclusion.



We have said a fond farewell to [Professor Klaus Ebmeier](#), Chair of Old Age Psychiatry, who had been in the department 20 years. Klaus led seminal work uncovering factors in mid-life that affect brain structure in later-life, particularly through the unique resource of 30 year follow up data of the Whitehall II study. He has also been a wonderful mentor to a generation of academics.

The Warneford Park redevelopment plans (artists' impression, pictured below right) were submitted over the summer and could have a transformative impact on our ability to turn scientific discovery into benefits for patients. [If given the go-ahead, it could be a critical turning point for brain and mental health research](#). So there are some exciting times ahead in 2026.



Illustration by Eric Parry Architects



We have had a huge amount of success with funding awards and collaborations, with [Cathy Creswell's](#) team being awarded [£27 million from the Paul Foundation](#) and [£7 million from Wellcome](#) to take forward their important work on child

anxiety. [The Bukhman Foundation has awarded Willem Kuyken's Mindfulness Research Centre £1 million](#) to help it achieve its global ambitions.

In terms of People and Culture, we have been continuing to develop and deliver initiatives to

*Professor Belinda Lennox
Head of Department*

Research overview



The Department of Psychiatry has sustained strong research momentum over the past year, with major funding successes, significant philanthropic investment, influential research outputs, and contributions

to national policy and infrastructure that support improvements in mental health.

Research activity across the department remains extensive and internationally impactful. Over the year, department researchers produced 549 peer-reviewed publications, reflecting the breadth of work spanning basic science, clinical research and population mental health. Complementing these outputs, the Psychiatry research support team supported 346 funding applications, and helped 52 new funding awards commence, enabling a wide range of innovative research programmes to progress – and hopefully ensuring our ongoing productivity in the coming years.

In partnership with Oxford Health NHS Foundation Trust and Aston University, [the University of Oxford was selected to host a £16.3 million National Institute of Health and Care Research \(NIHR\) Applied Research Collaboration \(ARC\)](#) to support infrastructure that

will improve people's health. Other major new awards include two large Wellcome-funded projects focused on advancing target validation for novel mental health drug discovery, and on applying neuroscience to improve understanding of symptoms in anxiety, depression and psychosis (in collaboration with UCL). As a final example, during the last month, researchers in the department were awarded prestigious Wellcome Accelerator and Mental Health Platform Fellowship awards, recognising leadership in collaborative research designed to accelerate discovery and translation in mental health. The department has also benefited from generous philanthropic support this year.

Supporting the next generation of researchers remains a priority. Our [Broadening Horizons](#) travel grant scheme has continued to enable doctoral students, early career researchers, and others who face barriers to funding, to attend conferences. We made £15k of awards to 21 researchers.

We thank everyone – researchers, students, and support staff – for their contributions to another highly successful year for the department.

Professor Paul Harrison
Associate Head of Department for Research

People and Culture highlights



2025 was an action-packed year for [People and Culture](#) activities. Alongside delivering on our Athena Swan action objectives, we also ran our biannual staff and student surveys.

Our [Athena Swan charter work](#) has continued at pace, with key initiatives implemented and many milestones achieved ahead of schedule. A number of initiatives have grown out of the Athena Swan charter action plan, which focuses on gender as well as wider equality and inclusion amongst staff and students. One example is [the Emerging Leaders programme](#), which provides a support network for researchers transitioning to Principal Investigator (PI) and Associate Professor leadership roles, offering coaching and guidance across essential areas.

Our PI peer-learning lunches also continue to be well attended, offering them valuable space to reflect, share challenges, and exchange best practice. Over the past year, topics for discussion have included understanding cultural differences, supporting grant applications, managing career development, and more. These sessions respond directly to themes raised by PIs and issues identified through surveys and other feedback.

While our department-wide strategic initiatives are crucial, our working groups remain the lifeblood of People and Culture. They lead on events, share information, and take responsibility for key areas of work arising from the staff survey and Athena Swan action plan. We are delighted to have launched three new groups this year: the [Neurodiversity and Disability Working Group](#), the [Student Working Group](#) and the Medical Academic Working Group.

Events coordinated or supported by the working groups include [Black History Month activities](#), career development sessions and the [NIHR Oxford Health Biomedical Research Centre \(BRC\) Neurodiversity Conference](#). This two-day conference brought together researchers, clinicians, local organisations and members of the neurodivergent community. It was a truly inspirational event whose impact continues to grow – one that personally reshaped my understanding of what genuine inclusion in research looks like, and how important it is to ensure we do not inadvertently create barriers.

Professor Catherine Harmer
Associate Head of Department
for People and Culture

World class scientific research

Treating depression

Pramipexole – a drug used for Parkinson’s disease – [has been shown to be effective in reducing the symptoms of difficult to treat depression](#), in a study led by [Michael Browning](#) (pictured being interviewed, right) and team.

[The largest review of antidepressant withdrawal studies to date](#) – co-authored by [Rob McCutcheon](#) and [Philip Cowen](#) – has identified the type and incidence of symptoms experienced by people discontinuing antidepressants, finding most people do not experience severe withdrawal.

A study co-authored by [Andrea Cipriani](#) ranked the side-effects of antidepressants finding notable variations between different drugs. [The findings emphasised the importance of shared decision-making in treatment.](#)



Preventing dementia

A vaccine against respiratory syncytial virus (RSV) [is associated with a 29% reduction in dementia risk](#) in the following 18 months, according to a paper co-authored by [Maxime Taquet](#) and [Paul Harrison](#). The findings suggest a chemical contained in the vaccine might produce this effect.



Developing cardiovascular, mental health and neurological-related illnesses before the age of 70 [is associated with a greater risk of dementia later in life](#), according to a study led by [Sana Suri](#). It was the first to identify how the age of onset of multiple specific health conditions impacts dementia risk.

A team from [Dementias Platform UK](#) have built a detailed brain atlas showing how ageing and biological sex affect deep brain regions. The team, led by [Simeen Tabassi Morfrad](#) (pictured left), [used MRI scans from over 46,000 healthy volunteers](#) from the UK Biobank.

Understanding the brain

[The brain’s networks activate in structured cycles](#), according to a study led by [Mats van Es](#) and [Mark Woolrich](#). Using magnetoencephalography data from more than 800 people, they found that although networks do not activate in a strict order, they tend to activate in a pattern that repeats cyclically every 300–1,000 milliseconds.

A team led by [Ole Jensen](#) used magnetoencephalography co-registered with eye tracking [to investigate how people read ahead](#). The team found that look-ahead processing unfolds in a swift hierarchy – and the strength of the signals predicts individual reading speed.

Child and adolescent mental health



[The ATTUNE project](#) (members pictured left), focused on understanding adolescent mental health and childhood adversities through the use of participatory arts methods, has concluded. The project produced a trauma-informed public health resource, [and culminated in a number of events and a Parliamentary round-table chaired by Dr Simon Opher MP.](#)

Findings from the [OxWell Student Survey](#) helped inform a report by Oxfordshire County Council’s Director of Public Health into children’s mental health locally. Senior Postdoctoral Researchers [Emma Sonesson](#) and [Holly Bear](#) appeared on BBC television discussing the findings.

[A pilot study of more than 15,000 teenagers](#) gives a complex picture of adolescent mental health, finding associations between wellbeing and factors such as sleep, vaping and exercise. The data is from the first phase of the BrainWaves study, a partnership between the University of Oxford, The Day and Swansea University.

A paper co-authored by [Irina Singh](#) has challenged the assumption that [involving young people in mental health research is inherently beneficial to the scientific process](#), the people involved and public health. It recommends funders, researchers and lived experience experts co-create a framework that enables transparent decision-making, and enables genuine and accountable involvement and participation.

Impact and influence

Promoting excellence in clinical practice

Maxime Taquet and **William Petterson-Yeo** contributed to a recent major update of the [National Institute for Health and Care Excellence Real-World Evidence Framework](#), to guide the quality, transparency and trustworthiness of research.

A report on the epidemiology and prevention of [ligature-related deaths in prison](#) by the Independent Advisory Panel on Deaths in Custody (IAPDC) was co-authored by **Seena Fazel** and **Rachel Chow**.

Insights from the [Co-PACT study](#) were shared in a roundtable session on racial inequalities, chaired by Baroness Gillian Merron, at Westminster. Co-PACT aims to improve the experiences of people detained under the Mental Health Act and reduce inequalities in the way the act is used.

A global team, led by members of the Department of Psychiatry, have developed new international guidelines on the treatment of schizophrenia. It is hoped the [International Guidelines for Algorithmic Treatment \(INTEGRATE\)](#) will be used by clinicians, with ambitions they also inform national guidelines.

Graham Blackman and **Andrey Kormilitzin** contributed to [a government POSTnote \(Parliamentary Office for Science and Technology\) on AI and mental health care](#). POSTnotes are flagship informational reports to give impartial information to decision-makers on emerging research areas.



Head of Department **Belinda Lennox** gave evidence at the House of Commons Health and Social Care Select Committee inquiry into community mental health services.

Developing and providing innovative clinical services



[The Oxford Brain Health Clinic](#), part of the NIHR Oxford Health Biomedical Research Centre and co-led by Professor **Clare Mackay**, marked its five year anniversary and more than 500 patients passing through its doors in the summer. It was also used as an impact case study in the UK Biobank's celebration of [reaching its target of scanning 100,000 people](#). The team led work to adapt the UK Biobank protocol and pipelines for memory clinic patients, which has now become part of routine care for patients at 11 NHS memory clinics.

An innovative digital treatment programme for binge eating, originally developed by the [Centre for Research on Eating Disorders at Oxford \(CREDO\)](#), has shown benefits in multiple pilot studies. Digital CBTe was evaluated in three different settings: in Kent & Medway All Age Eating Disorders Service, Dorset All Age Eating Disorders Service, and with participants recruited from the community.

Four members of the Department of Psychiatry have made it onto the [Clarivate Highly Cited Researchers List 2025](#): **Philip McGuire**, **John Geddes**, **Willem Kuyken** and **Paul Harrison**. The list celebrates researchers who have demonstrated "significant & broad influence" in their fields and have authored multiple highly cited papers.



Awards and prizes



Clinical psychology trainee **Michael Barry** (pictured above) has been awarded the inaugural Valeria Frighi Intellectual Disabilities Research Award. Mr Barry will use the grant to conduct a case series study looking at the Intensive Interaction intervention, which focuses on supporting people with intellectual disabilities to build communications skills and better relationships with other people.

Kam Bhui – Honorary Fellowship, American College of Psychiatrists.

Leonardo Bonetti – British Carnatic Choir Award for Arts & Culture.

Emily Bowman (pictured below right) – Publication of the Year in Perioperative Cognition and Delirium, at the Alzheimer's Association International Conference.



Cathy Creswell – Eric Taylor 'Translational Research Into Practice' Award, Association for Child and Adolescent Mental Health (ACAMH) Awards.

Riccardo De Giorgi and **Angharad De Cates** – Best Scientific Papers, The European Psychiatric Association.

Ludovica Griffanti (pictured below) – Scientific Impact Award, UK Biobank.



Rob McCutcheon – Mid/Senior Career Academic Researcher of the Year, Royal College of Psychiatrists.

Howard Ryland – NIHR Senior Clinical and Practitioner Researcher Award.

Maxime Taquet – Sir Jules Thorn Award for Biomedical Research & British Association for Psychopharmacology (BAP) Clinical Junior Award.

Project led by **Katrin Wilhelm** – Star of Discovery prize, Global Awards for World Heritage Education Innovative Cases.

Naomi Wray – Fellow, Academy of Medical Sciences.

Chloe Yap – Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Psychiatrists (RANZCP) Early Career Psychiatrist Award.

Dementias Platform UK's biomarker pilot project – HSJ Partnership of the Year Award. Dementias Platform UK Cerebral Spinal Fluid (CSF) study – Best Pharmaceutical Partnership with the NHS, HSJ Partnership Awards.

Professor of Psychiatry **Rachel Uptegrove**, Director of the NIHR Oxford Health Biomedical Research Centre, was featured in a new Bodleian Libraries photography campaign with The British Journal of Photography, spotlighting Oxford researchers whose work is reshaping the world.

Student success

Saba Ishrat – St Cross College Research Presentation Prize Competition.

Dishaa Sinha – Research Support Award, Women in Neuroscience Awards.

Pippa Watson – Senior Hulme Scholarship, Brasenose College.

MSc in Clinical and Therapeutic Neuroscience graduates, class of 2024/2025, prizes: **Rachel Lin** – Best Essay; **Krisya Louie** – Best Essay and Best Dissertation; **Phoebe Homer** – Best Poster; **Aleeza Dar** – Most Improved Student.

The Oppenheimer Prize for medical students for essays in old age psychiatry: 1) **Nadia Daniels**; 2) **Vasile Frandes**; 3) **Antoni Krupa**.



Psychiatry was represented in seven nominations in the Vice-Chancellor's Awards, with our **Race Equality Working Group** (**Anutra Guru**, **Maya Ogonah** and **Amy Gillespie** pictured above with some of the other Psychiatry nominees) winning the Commitment to Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Award. The group has led multiple initiatives to improve equity and inclusion for racialised staff and students and formed a Race and Psychiatry Journal Club to promote academic discussion on issues of race and ethnicity in psychiatric research. **Sana Suri** was part of the Oxford Centre for Integrative Neuroimaging Ambassadors Programme which jointly won the Research Culture Award with TORCH's Medical Humanities Research Hub, which Psychiatry's **Kate Saunders** was also part of.



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