



The Stoneygate Centre for Empathic Healthcare

Annual Report

June 2024

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1. Brief Summary

By establishing the University of Leicester as an internationally recognized epicentre of teaching and learning about empathy in healthcare, the Centre team have achieved or over-achieved all milestones. Among other things, we have implemented a **revolutionary empathy curriculum** for Leicester Medical students, delivered empathy training to over 500 NHS staff, established a formal working relationship with **University Hospitals of Leicester NHS Trust (UHL) maternity services to introduce a culture of empathy**. To underpin this impactful activity, we have **produced high-impact research** in the world's best medical journals; this research has been **picked up by 12 news outlets**. The team has also delivered the **world's first "educating for empathy"** training event which was attended by empathy teachers from the **UK, Brazil, Taiwan, India, Nigeria, Uganda, and Kenya**. Finally, we are implementing a programme to boost existing widening participation activities targeting students under 16 from Leicestershire.

The Centre activity has had a measurable impact on medical students' lives. For example, Maisy is a 2nd year medical student who was attending a meeting at the UK Council on Clinical Communication in Keele (March 2024). Unprompted from anyone at the Centre, Maisy reported:

"The empathy centre at Leicester has had a fantastic input into our pre-clinical teaching. They organise to have patient visitors come into our lectures and speak about their conditions on that session's topic. It really helps us to see the meaning of what we learn, and appreciate the patient stories behind the science – something that is often easy to overlook in pre-clinical years. It is an invaluable way to improve our empathy and communication and provides us with a good insight into patient experiences."

2. Milestones achieved

Delivery of activity as related to agreed milestones for the period June 2023 to June 2024:

- ✓ **Milestone 1: Promotion of enhanced empathy-focused curriculum to open days in October 2022 and in April 2023 to offer holders.** Complete. The Centre has a presence at all open and offer holder days, and we are planning an evaluation of the effectiveness of our presence to start next academic year.
- ✓ **Milestone 2: Begin implementation of empathy enhancements to undergraduate curriculum in October 2022.** Complete. Some of these have been published and we are preparing others for publication.
- ✓ **Milestone 3: Review of selection criteria in progress by December 2022.** Complete. Information included in previous annual report. In summary:
 - At interview stage, applicants are presented with scenarios that assess their ability to show compassion and empathy.
 - Consideration of personal statements and employment history on the UCAS form for borderline cases. Occasionally (mostly with graduates) the team will ask for references from volunteering etc.
 - A situational judgement test is taken as part of the current University Clinical Aptitude Test (UCAT).
 - At offer stage, the Admissions team look at interviewers' comments for any issues with judgmental behaviour.



- ✓ **Milestone 4: Key aims and timelines confirmed for each research theme by March 2023.** Complete. See current '[Research](#)' status above. The 5 research themes were outlined in the previous annual report:
 - Theme A: Building the evidence base for tools assessing the impact of empathy training and identifying potential for tool development: We have conducted a review of existing tools and are developing our own (first to be completed July 2025).
 - Theme B: Assessment of measurement strategies for assessing the impact of empathic practice on patient care and experience: This is ongoing, and our biggest success this year was a publication in a top-5 medical journal (*Annals of Internal Medicine*).
 - Theme C: Educational intervention design, delivery, and evaluation: We have completed 90% of our curriculum interventions, and are moving to the phase where we are consolidating this in a workbook and website.
 - Theme D: Building the evidence for empathic practice on student and practitioner wellbeing, resilience, recruitment, and retention: We have completed a major review of wellbeing interventions for medical students, conducted an audit of the wellbeing offering at Leicester Medical School, and are targeting interventions where needs have been identified (in Phase II).
 - Theme E: Identifying the barriers and enablers to empathic care and building strategies to mitigate/harness these: This is ongoing, and we have developed a framework to evaluate barriers and facilitators to empathic care (see Howick, de Zulueta, Gray in "Publications" below). We have also implemented this framework at the UHL Emergency Department and are currently doing so for the UHL Maternity Services.
- ✓ **Milestone 5: Training Development Lead and Teaching Lead Posts to begin from August 2022.** Complete.
- ✓ **Milestone 6: Centre Director to be in post by June 2022.** Complete.
- ✓ **Milestone 7: Internal steering group members appointed by July 2022, with first meeting to be held by September 2022.** Complete. The director holds regular meetings with Professor Tom Robinson (Head of the College of Life Sciences) and Professor Simon Gay (Head of the School of Medicine). The internal steering group has been expanded to include the heads of Phase 1, Phase 2 who will contribute starting in the 2024/25 academic year.
- ✓ **Milestone 8: External advisory board members appointed by August 2022, with first meeting to be held by October 2022 to enable the official launch of the Centre.** Complete and meetings take place every 6 months (see '[Feedback from the International Advisory Board](#)' above).
- ✓ **Milestone 9: Promotional and marketing plan to be agreed for 2023 intake by September 2022.** Complete.
- ✓ **Milestone 10: All other Centre posts to be filled by end of September 2023.** See '[Recruitment](#),' below. The team has expanded and may continue to recruit as the Centre continues to grow.
- ✓ **Milestone 11: Complete review of existing empathy training provision across UK medical education by December 2023.** This review was completed early (March 2023) by Dr Rachel Winter.
- ✓ **Milestone 12: Review of current assessment tools completed by February 2024, with decision made regarding need for the development of new measurement tools.** Through our searches we identified the need to develop our own empathy measure and have received ethics approval for the study required to action this (project lead, Dr Amber Bennett-Weston).
- ✓ **Milestone 13: Host inaugural international conference in Autumn 2023.** The inaugural conference took place with the Centre launch in April 2023. The 3-day Educating for Empathy in Healthcare Course (April 2024) included expert international plenary speakers and participants from across the UK and overseas (see '[Courses](#)').
- ✓ **Milestone 14: Communications strategy completed by October 2023.** The strategy was completed by consultant Dan Richards-Doran Ltd. and noted in the first annual report. The Centre is supported by internal



media relations officer, Fiona Dryden, and Orange Juice Communications. The Centre has an active and growing social media presence.

- ✓ **Milestone 15: Key stakeholders identified and initial contact made by December 2023.** The Centre has identified key stakeholders at UHL and in Primary Care, and has delivered external training to over 500 NHS staff.
- ✓ **Milestone 16: Establish patient advisory group by March 2024.** Complete.
- ✓ **Milestone 17: Begin adaptation of curriculum for allied health degree programmes in June 2024.** The School of Healthcare has appointed a deputy to translate findings. In addition, Jemimah Skilling (midwifery student) will join the Centre on a placement from May 2024 to start translating our findings for the Midwifery programme. We have also initiated a collaboration with the Pharmacy programme.
- ✓ **Milestone 18: Begin development of postgraduate empathy training resources in June 2024.** The Centre has developed resources for external training (see [Courses](#)) and will continue to develop and adapt these resources. The Centre is also collaborating with the School of Business.
- ✓ **Milestone 19: Creation of national clinical empathy curriculum website by December 2024.** On track to be completed on time; update to be provided in next report.
- ✓ **Milestone 20: Complete development of empathy-focused undergraduate curriculum by March 2025.** On track to be completed on time; update to be provided in next report.
- ✓ **Milestone 21: Begin dissemination activities to share early impact of empathy-focused curriculum in October 2024.** On track to be completed on time; update to be provided in next report.
- ✓ **Milestone 22: Programme of research into barriers to empathic healthcare defined and started by December 2024.** On track to be completed on time; update to be provided in next report.
- ✓ **Milestone 23: Complete review of existing postgraduate empathy training available in the UK by March 2025.** On track to be completed on time; update to be provided in next report.
- ✓ **Milestone 24: Begin to establish sustainable programme of external funding sources in April 2024.** The Centre team are working on various funding bids and are beginning to deliver fee-paying courses as an additional income stream. See [External Funding](#) above for detail.

Milestones 25-35 cover the period from October 2024 onwards and have therefore not been included here. The full list is available on the main proposal document, or on request.

3. Key Successes

Delivering the revolutionary empathy curriculum to Leicester Medical School

- **Empathy-focused communication skills.** The Centre has designed and implemented the world's first evidence-based empathy-focused communication skills training.
- **Real patients are being embedded within biomedical science lectures.** The Centre has included 50% of Phase 1 modules in this activity and this will expand to 60% by the end of the 2024/25 academic year.
- **Empathy lectures were delivered to all students in years 1 to 5 of Medical School.** All lectures included a real patient and a current student talking about their healthcare experiences.
- **'Walk a mile in your shoes'.** The Centre developed and delivered an extensive student selected component (SSC) curriculum for Year 5 students which offered varied insight into patient experience



through placements and the opportunity for artistic expression with guided learning, studio time and creative writing. An exhibition has been arranged for the students to display their work at the Attenborough Arts Centre. This curriculum stream will vastly expand in the 2024/25 academic year through an **'Understanding patients' initiative**, which will give medical students extended contact with a patient at home from Year 1, and the opportunity to reflect on the experience.

- **Transition course.** This course includes peer mentoring, role model training, and training role models, and eases the transition from the pre-clinical (mostly lecture theatre based), which includes targeted interventions (such as role model training) to positively impact the decline in empathy.

Delivering empathy training to over 500 healthcare practitioners

By the end of this academic year, the Centre will have delivered training to almost 500 NHS staff over the last year, and this is poised to expand over the next three years.

- **September 2023. 'Evidence-based empathy for teams'** for staff from the South Blaby and Lutterworth Primary Care Network (59 participants) and UHL Nursing and Midwifery teams (approx. 125 participants)
- **October 2023. 'Creating empathic systems'** for staff from the LRI Emergency Department (28 participants)
- **October 2023. 'Putting evidence-based empathy into practice'** for postgraduate doctors in training at Leicester Royal Infirmary (approx. 40 participants)
- **April 2024. New 3-day 'Educating for Empathy in Healthcare' course.** A select group of international empathy teachers came to Leicester from the UK, Brazil, India, Uganda, Kenya, Nigeria, and Taiwan. This course put the Stoneygate Centre on the map as the place to come to learn how to teach empathy. Because they are teachers, attendees will cascade their learning to their home institutions. International leading experts delivered plenaries: Professor Jodi Halpern, Distinguished Professor Tracy Levett-Jones; and Professor Stewart Mercer. Lifetime achievement awards were presented to Professors Halpern and Mercer. The feedback from the course was excellent and will be run every two years. See [Appendix F](#) for a summary of participant feedback.
- **July 2024. One-day 'Putting evidence-based empathy for teams into practice' for Maternity Services.** We will deliver this training to UHL Maternity Services staff in all job roles. We anticipate face-to-face and remote workshops will be delivered to approx. 150 staff.
- **August 2024. 'Putting evidence-based empathy into practice' for Maternity Services.** We will deliver this training to UHL Maternity Services staff in all job roles. We anticipate face-to-face and remote workshops will be delivered to approx. 150 staff.
- **September 2024 One-day 'System Empathy' training for Maternity Services.** We will deliver this training to approx. 30 participants. Representatives will be nominated from all stakeholder groups within UHL Maternity Services.
- **October 2024. One-day 'Putting evidence-based empathy into practice' for GPs.** In this one-day workshop we will deliver our evidence-based empathy training to UK GPs.
- **TBC. One-day 'Putting evidence-based empathy for teams into practice'.** Hampshire Hospitals NHS Trust have requested empathy training for teams and we are looking at dates from October.
- **TBC Resilience training for trainee doctors.** Developed in collaboration with Dr Wen Wang and Professor Gregory Maniatopoulos from the University's School of Business.

These courses and others will be offered on a regular basis.

[Appendix B](#) contains a list of plenaries, workshops and presentations that have taken place in the last year.

Impactful research published in top journals

The Centre has published 17 papers since the last report (see [Appendix C](#)). These include a systematic review of empathy and patient satisfaction in one of the most prestigious medical journals in the world. Additionally, three papers are under peer review, including one paper measuring baseline empathy levels, and a further three papers are near submission stage, including one on the foundational issue of defining empathy.

External Funding

The Centre team is now actively engaged in securing external funding:

- The Centre was costed into a major and successful Wellcome Trust grant, and received funding to hire an additional staff member to develop and deliver a toolkit for empathic, inclusive leadership. Dr Cleo White has been appointed and will commence on 1 July 2024 to investigate the relationship between elements of diversity and empathy.
- JH is the PI for an NIHR Programme Grant for Applied Research with partners at the Diabetes Centre. The amount applied for will be approx. £3 million, and the next deadline for these major grants is 31 July 2024.
- JH is part of the University of Leicester's bid for the NIHR Challenge: Maternity Inequalities collaboration, led by Professor Claire Meek. There is funding available of up to £50m to support the consortium over 5 years, and a decision will be made about core funding between October 2024 and January 2025.
- JH is a co-applicant on a NIHR funding bid with the Universities of Derby and Exeter related to patient involvement in psychiatry teaching. This was submitted in April 2024 with the result expected in late June.
- Dr Amber Bennett-Weston is developing a plan for a major early career fellowship (approx. value £300k).
- Dr Rachel Winter has been costed in for £8000 to an NIHR research project evaluating how the Oliver McGowan Mandatory Training on Learning Disability and Autism is being implemented in practice and the impact the training has on the people involved. Rachel will be advising on the impact of training on clinician empathy and how best to measure this. The total project funding is £800k and is being led by Dr Sam Tromans and Professor Terry Brugha. A decision is expected mid-June.
- Dr Andy Ward is a co-applicant for a grant of £200k from the Medical Protection Society Foundation for a project on 'Investigating empathy in interactions between patients and medical students to enhance empathic communication training in healthcare'. This work will be undertaken with Dr Julie Norton, Professor Pamela Rogerson-Revell and Dr Nick Smith (University of Leicester) and Leigh Andrews (Change Communication).
- We are beginning to deliver fee-paying courses (see [Courses](#) above) which will provide a further income stream for the Centre.



International and national influence

The Centre has founded an '[International Network for Empathy in Healthcare](#)' to connect international academic empathy organisations to share best practice. The first meeting of Network members took place on 21 April 2024 in Leicester. By leading on this initiative, the Centre is playing an international role in setting the agenda for empathy in healthcare.

JH is contributing to a report being produced by Bill Kirkup at the Department of Health and Social Care to improve the quality and safety of maternity care in the NHS by introducing a culture of empathy.

The Centre has originated an 'Empathy Champion' initiative. The award will be presented to medical educators nominated by two people for a contribution to, and positive role-modelling of, empathic healthcare. Dr Sam Adcock was appointed as the first Stoneygate Centre 'Empathy Champion,' nominated for his exceptional work to promote empathic healthcare in the Foundation Year curriculum. Our second champion, Dr Akhilesh Pradhan was nominated by two medical students for "his compassionate approach to patient care, characterized by active listening and genuine connection" and for demonstrating his understanding of the "human experience behind the illness".

As is evident from the list of lectures and workshops led by team members (see [Appendix B](#)), there has been substantial interest in the importance of empathy when working with inclusion healthcare groups (any population group that is marginalised and socially excluded).

The Centre is now working with Orange Juice Communications for media and event promotion. This has led to a substantial increase in social media followers and interest from news outlets ([Appendix E](#)).

Recruitment

The Centre has recruited to the following positions since September 2023: Dr Raj Babla, Curriculum Implementation Lead; Dr Jamanda Liddicott, Lecturer; and Dr Josie Solomon, Associate Professor for Student Wellbeing. An experienced statistician, Danielle Bodicoat, started working with the Centre on 1 May 2024, providing expertise in grant writing and income generation. Dr Cleo White has been successfully appointed to the post of I-REACCH Empathy Research Associate and will commence on 1 July 2024. This role is a joint venture with 50% of funding from the Wellcome Trust. Dr William Hunt, Academic Clinical Fellow in Medical Education is due to start in August 2024; JH will act as research supervisor for this role. We will shortly be advertising for an Administrative Assistant to support the day-to-day activity of the team and coordinate the planned pre-16 school outreach activity.

Centre Team Members

Professor Jeremy Howick, Director of the Stoneygate Centre for Empathic Healthcare and Professor of Empathic Healthcare

Catherine Eyres, Centre Manager

Dr Andy Ward, Associate Professor of Medical Education and Honorary Senior Academic GP

Dr Rachel Winter, Stoneygate Associate Professor for Empathic Healthcare and Medical Education; Honorary Consultant Psychiatrist, Leicestershire Partnership Trust

Dr Josie Solomon, Associate Professor for Empathic Healthcare

Dr Amber Bennett-Weston, Research Associate

Dr Leila Keshtkar, Research Associate

Dr Raj Babla, Clinical Implementation Lead

Dr Jamanda Liddicott, Lecturer

Dr Felicity James, Associate Professor in English Literature and Creative Writing

Dr Danielle Bodicoat, Consultant for grant writing and income generation

Patient Involvement

The first National Patient Advisory Board meeting took place on 30 November 2023. Board member's experiences highlighted the need for patient involvement in curriculum development. In the next meeting the panel will present and discuss funding ideas.

From October 2023 Dr Amber Bennett-Weston has represented the Centre at meetings with the General Medical Council and the Doubleday Medical Schools Patient Partnerships Collaboration to begin drafting new standards for patient involvement in medical education. This important work will continue at Leicester in July, when Dr Bennett-Weston will join colleagues in the Medical School to host the Doubleday Collaboration.

International and national collaborations

In addition to the established collaborations (see June 2022 report), the Centre has established or significantly strengthened a number of collaborations:

- **School of Healthcare, University of Leicester:** A senior member of the School (Hannah Richardson, lecturer in nursing) to start to implement the Centre curriculum to healthcare schools. Additionally, Jemima Skilling (final year midwifery student who was part of the foundation year) is doing a 5 week placement with the Centre starting on May 28th.
- **NHS England:** Professor Sheona MacLeod, Professor Em Wilkinson-Brice, Dr Jonathan Corne
- **General Medical Council (GMC):** Professor Sue Carr, Mark Dexter
- **University Hospitals of Leicester NHS Trust:** Richard Mitchell (CEO), Julie Hogg (Chief Nurse), Dr Catherine Nunn (Consultant, Emergency Department), Dr Susan Burton (Deputy Head of Nursing), Danielle Burnett (Director of Midwifery), Laura Power (Midwife), Dan Stendall (Deputy Head of Nursing Alliance)
- **Oxford Empathy Programme:** The Centre collaborates with this partner for the purposes of sending a monthly newsletter for those interested in empathy
- **University of Leicester School of Business:** Dr Wen Wang, Professor Gregory Maniatopoulos
- **European Society for Person Centered Healthcare:** Professor Andrew Miles (Senior Vice-President)
- **LOROS Hospice:** Dr Barbara Powell (Consultant in Palliative Medicine)

Widening Participation for under-16s in Leicestershire

Our research on the demographics of entrants to UK medical schools for entry up to 2020 (<https://edt.gmc-uk.org/progression-reports/entrants>) reveals that 48% of Leicester Medical Students are from ethnic minorities (national average is 38%) and 26% of Leicester Medical Students are from deprived areas (national average is 26%). Our audit confirmed that there are several successful outreach programmes, and that most of this is focused on students in years 12 and 13. We identified a gap when it comes to students in the pre-16 age group. Having identified this gap, we have **designed an outreach programme that targets under 16 widening participation students from Leicestershire**. Working closely with the existing outreach team and MFY Student Ambassadors, we will identify and visit schools in deprived areas of Leicester, speak to potentially interested students, and ensure that they are followed up and supported to submit an application to medical school for the Medical Foundation Year. We acknowledge that changing students' life journeys is challenging, and expect a modest number of students to be recruited via our new scheme. Our ambitious plan is for this programme to be

cascaded via champions drawn from the Foundation Year, and from our future programme to help deliver our outreach programme. We are recruiting an administrator to ensure that the programme is successful.

4. Challenges

Most challenges and efforts to overcome these remain as per the first annual report. All the challenges are being addressed and none are preventing the Centre from achieving its KPIs. In summary:

- Measuring empathy as a criterion for medical school admission could be discriminatory. We agreed to focus on effective empathy training throughout the course rather than entry criteria.
- Getting embedded in the NHS is slow. We have taken advice from the advisory board to address this and have started to overcome it (see '[Teaching Empathy to UHL Staff](#),' above).
- Structural barriers to empathy in the NHS workplace. To address this, we have developed and delivered (to UHL) a system empathy training course; JH is developing a funding bid to explore this further.
- A proposed intervention which would arrange for students to undertake clinical examinations on each other to experience what it is like to be examined and to deepen their understanding of the patient experience will not go ahead in 2023-24 due to potential for student opposition. A questionnaire has been prepared to survey all students which will inform plans for implementation in 2024-25.
- The student uptake for the 2023-24 student selected component (SSC) was low and the Year 3 SSC will not go ahead this year. There are many SSCs available and students are likely to choose an established and recommended option. The team are planning a student focus group and robust marketing strategy to address this for the next intake.

5. Feedback from the International Advisory Board

At the meeting of 28 November 2023, Board members were unanimously impressed by achievements and progress, and praised the level of partnership with the NHS.

The Board has recommended an increase to international representation in the 'International Network for Empathy in Healthcare' and will be making relevant introductions to attain this.

Discussions in the last meeting included collaborative research and funding opportunities on the topics of empathy and AI, ethnicity and empathic culture.

At the meeting of 30 May 2024, Board members reiterated their congratulations on the many successes. They recommended that we create CPD courses that were collaborations with existing MSc's at Leicester and beyond. They also suggested that we take advantage of the opportunity arising from many new medical schools are opening; many of the teachers will appreciate the need to train the new teachers in research-inspired education.



6. Summary of planned Activity Over Next 12 Months

Teaching and education

- a. Have the empathy curriculum fully approved as a longitudinal theme.
- b. Develop empathy curriculum website that can be partly monetized.
- c. Create course book that can be used by other medical schools.
- d. Publish results of longitudinal study of the effect of the empathy curriculum.
- e. Deliver empathy training to medical professionals.
- f. Continue supporting University Open Days.

Research

- a. Develop new empathy measurement scale.
- b. Conduct study of empathy definitions, develop empathy definition.
- c. Conduct high-quality and high-impact studies that deliver on all Centre research priorities.
- d. Work towards and submit major and medium-sized grants.
- e. Support new PIs to become confident independent PIs and mid-career researchers to become co-PIs.

Publication and dissemination

- a. Support all team members to ensure that they are producing the expected number of international-quality empirical papers with an eye on the next Research Excellence Framework (REF2029).
- b. Continue to provide support for early-career researchers to develop writing skills.

Influence

- a. Continue working with GMC, local, regional, and national commissioners and policy-makers to promote empathic healthcare.
- b. Develop suite of CPD training that can be adapted for diplomas and certificates.
- c. Publish International Empathy Network Statement; organise next meeting.

Staff support and development

- a. Attract funding for core posts in research and teaching to reflect the extent to which we contribute substantially to the work, income and achievements of the Leicester Medical School.
- b. Support early and mid-career researchers to develop fellowship applications, work towards promotion, gain leadership experience, find external placements and develop their careers.
- c. Ensure all staff who supervise graduate and undergraduate students are confident and supported to deliver a world-leading experience for their students.
- d. Actively support professional development for administrative and support staff.