

## **Meet our Presenters**

### **SESSION A: Benjamin Lay Suite – Main Room**

#### **Beyond Sponsorship: Collaboration as a catalyst for educational change**

**Dr Marta Almeida-Hill**, University of Kent

Marta is the Deputy Head of Outreach and Widening Participation at the University of Kent. She specializes in rigorous programme evaluation to drive strategic impact. She has a keen interest in policy development, research design and data driven insights. Marta is also a Governor at Chatham Grammar School.

#### **Steps for Success: A Bath Spa University and Southampton Solent University collaboration**

**Laura Johnston**, Bath Spa University and

**Rachel McCulloch**, Southampton Solent University

Laura joined the outreach team at Bath Spa University in January 2023 as a Senior Schools and Colleges Engagement Officer. She hosts campus visits, delivers workshops in primary and secondary schools and supports the careers team at a local college. Prior to working in Higher Education, Laura was a history teacher in schools across the UK and Curriculum Coordinator for Humanities in a school in Auckland, New Zealand.

Rachel joined Southampton Solent University in 2016 working in International Exchanges, Events and Enquiries, Access and Widening Participation and Conversion. In 2020 she moved to the UK Student Recruitment Team as the South West Senior Recruitment Officer. As part of her role, Rachel supports post 16 students and colleges across her region through higher education fairs, workshops, talks and campus visits and taster days.

#### **Learning to look outside the box; the risk and successes of Anglia Ruskin University's outreach programmes**

**Toby Pallatt**, Anglia Ruskin University

Toby is a deaf man who has worked in the education and charity sector for the past nine years. Currently, he is Anglia Ruskin University's Community Outreach Officer. Preferring to work directly with students, Toby uses his experiences with his disability and being the first in his family to go to university to help students envision a future where they feel empowered to advocate for themselves and see opportunities where before they would see barriers.

## **SESSION B: Benjamin Lay Suite – Breakout Room I**

### **‘Hindsight is a wonderful thing’ – using the experience of collaborative working to drive improvements in widening participation practice**

**Dr Julie Vuolo, University of Hertfordshire**

Julie is Deputy Head of Widening Access and Student Success at the University of Hertfordshire. In this role she supports the strategic and operational delivery of the access and participation plan and leads the data and evaluation and student success aspects of the work. Julie has worked in higher education for over 20 years, during which time she has undertaken a variety of academic and professional roles all of which have had the support and success of students at their heart.

### **Peer-Assisted Learning Salford (PALS) and the Salford Evaluation Framework: A Collaborative Model for Widening Participation Impact**

**Dr Chuanyan Zhu, University of Salford**

Chuanyan is the Research and Evaluation Manager at the University of Salford. She has 25 years of experience specialising in cognitive and behavioural change across media, marketing, international development, and education sectors. Driven by her calling and commitment to equity and humanity, her current work champions collaborative approaches to inclusive evaluation. Chuanyan focuses on developing methods and indicators that effectively describe what works, why, and how, aiming to narrow the gaps for marginalised students. She is collaborating with colleagues across the university and beyond to develop innovative interventions and evaluations that benefit students, practitioners, and other stakeholders.

### **Fostering collaborative approaches to evaluation: Establishing an Access and Participation Plan Evaluation Community of Practice**

**Dr Emily Scott and Dr Tamara McNeill, Oxford Brookes University**  
**Mauricio Rivera, University of Sussex**

Emily leads on the development and implementation of impact evaluation approaches across Oxford Brookes University in support of their Access and Participation Plans. Since completing her doctorate at University of Portsmouth she has gained extensive experience in widening participation in further and higher education. Emily leads the Centre for the Evaluation of Access, Participation and Student Success (CEAPSS) at Oxford Brookes and is one of three co-founders of the Evaluation Community of Practice which sits under the FACE APPSIG. She sits on the HEAT Steering Group and is a peer reviewer for the international academic journal Widening Participation and Lifelong Learning.

Tamara is Research Fellow for Access, Participation and Success at Oxford Brookes University and has 20 years' experience of conducting research and evaluation in professional and academic contexts. She has worked in the widening access and student success field as an evaluator and researcher for the last five years having been Impact and Evaluation Manager for Access, Participation and Success with the Open University prior to joining Oxford Brookes.

Mauricio leads the planning and implementation of research and evaluation projects at the University of Sussex, with a focus on quantitative methods. His background is in psychology, research methods and survey development and measurement. With an interest in equity and fair access and participation, Mauricio has worked in the higher education sector in Chile and the UK.

## **SESSION C: The Benjamin Lay Suite – Breakout Room 2**

### **Collaborative Online International Learning (COIL) Within Assessment**

**Fleur Middleborough, University of Salford**

Fleur is Subject Group Head of Accounting and a Senior Lecturer. She has worked in higher education since 2017, first as Foundation Year Programme Leader, then moving on to a private higher education institution as Head of Business and returning to Salford in 2022. Fleur's previous research includes Assertive Mentoring programmes within a secondary setting, Inclusive Education, Enhancing Education through Business Simulations and Internationalisation/COIL projects. Prior to working within Academia, Fleur's corporate experience spanned over 20 years within Credit Risk, for both public and private sector.

### **Inclusive Pedagogy Training: Staff-Student Co-Created Programmes for Racial Equity and Neurodiversity**

**Jade Wigley and Nina Cupric, University of Staffordshire**

Jade is an Educational Enhancement Projects Officer with a strong grounding in research, evaluation, and inclusive education. Her role focuses on delivering strategic enhancement work aligned with the University's Access and Participation Plan (APP), supporting staff to develop their inclusive pedagogic practice to improve equity in outcomes and experiences across the student lifecycle. Jade works closely with academic and professional services staff to embed inclusive teaching approaches and use Theory of Change as a framework for designing, evaluating and enhancing practice.

Prior to joining the University of Staffordshire as an Educational Developer, Nina was Vice President of Education at the University of Derby for two consecutive terms. She is also a reviewer for the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA), engaging with reviews both in England and internationally. Nina was a Student Panel Member for the 2023 round of TEF (Teaching Excellence Framework). In her current role, Jade's focus is on course design and assessment and feedback, as well as coaching and mentoring and widening access.

### **Understanding the Diversity of Further Education Learners: A Collaborative Approach to Segmentation**

**Sarah Dirrane, Cosmos Ltd**

Sarah is the Co-Founder and Research Director at Cosmos, an organisation renowned for its award-winning work with underrepresented students. With over two decades of experience in higher education research, she has led extensive research programmes focused on access, participation, and student outcomes. Passionate about tackling systemic barriers, Sarah works closely with educators to provide actionable insights and drive meaningful change. She also hosts The Student Outcomes Podcast, exploring critical topics in educational equity and inclusion.

As an Advisory Board Member for The Catalyst Collective, Sarah looks forward to supporting the organisation's mission to empower young Black women through year-long mentoring relationships. Sarah is committed to providing strategic guidance on impact evaluation, helping to shape robust measurement frameworks that ensure mentoring initiatives drive lasting, measurable change.

## **SESSION D: Margaret Fell Room**

### **Combatting Maths Anxiety: Working in partnership with Primary Schools in West London**

**Silje Andersen and Dr Ada Mau, Imperial College, London**

Silje Andersen is a Partnerships and Projects Manager and has worked in Outreach and Widening Participation for 20 years as part of the Imperial College London Outreach team. Silje leads and oversees a number of different projects that focus on reaching the under-served audiences, including the new Primary Maths Transitions Programme.

Ada has been working in education research for more than 15 years and her work focuses on issues and discourses around identities, race, gender, social class and social justice in education. Her research interests also include educational inequalities, STEM education, widening participation, informal learning, migration and youth cultures. Ada currently works at Imperial College London as Outreach Research and Evaluation Officer. She has published widely in the fields of sociology of education, science education and ethnic and migration studies. She is also the co-lead for the STEM Working Group at NERUPI.

### **Enhancing Metacognitive Skills in Primary Learners: The Role of University - Third Sector Partnerships in Addressing Regional Educational Disadvantage and Strengthening Educational Interventions**

**Dr Emily Magrath and Dr Chloe Cheetham, IntoUniversity  
Bilal Hazzouri, Anglia Ruskin University**

Emily is the Director of Programme Development & Impact at IntoUniversity and a member of the organisation's Senior Leadership Team. She has previously held roles managing an IntoUniversity Centre and leading on the organisation's evidence-led practice and staff training on delivery approaches. Emily completed her PhD at the University of Aberdeen.

Chloe is the Impact and Evaluation Manager at IntoUniversity, an education charity providing local learning centres across England and Scotland. Her current projects include evaluating a family learning programme in Edinburgh and Glasgow, and she is working with Emily and Bilal on developing a programme to improve primary school-aged pupils' metacognitive skills.

Bilal is the Impact and Evaluation Manager at Anglia Ruskin University, specialising in designing and delivering impact evaluations. He provides strategic insights to advance higher education and social development programmes, with expertise in culturally responsive evaluation, Theory of Change, and data-driven decision-making across UK and international projects.

### **Aspire to Aston: New innovations for existing pre-16 progressive programmes**

**Amy Slater-McGill, Aston University**

Amy is the Outreach Manager at Aston University, Birmingham, and oversees Aston's WP Access provision. She has more than a decade of experience working with children, young people and mature learners from less advantaged backgrounds. Since September 2023, Amy has also worked as HELOA's Vice-Chair Governance and Policy. Her trustee role focusses on strategic charity governance guidance and policy provision, supporting fellow higher education sector professionals.

## **SESSION E: Abraham Darby Room**

### **Fake or Real News? Engaging prospective adult learners in community settings with critical thinking workshops**

**Laura Bradnam, Birkbeck University, London**

Laura is the Community Engagement Manager at Birkbeck, University of London. Based in the Innovation Support Unit, she has extensive experience designing and delivering collaborative education and training interventions aimed at underrepresented groups in higher education. Her work draws on trauma informed, inclusive and strengths-based approaches. Prior to this role Laura worked at an education equality, diversity and inclusion consultancy.

### **Supporting Young Independent People in Higher Education: Partnerships in Action**

**Katarina Blanco, Manjula Modhwadia and Christine Khalil, University of East London**

Following graduation, Katarina joined a graduate scheme focused on monitoring and improving engagement among vulnerable students. Building on this experience, Katarina worked as a Student Money Advisor, where she led projects supporting financially and holistically vulnerable students. Recently, she was promoted to Senior SMART Advisor, continuing her commitment to empowering students through financial guidance and support.

Manjula is a Student Money Advice and Rights Advisor specialising in supporting vulnerable student groups, particularly young independent students. Her role involves providing financial guidance and advice to those who may be care leavers, estranged students, refugees and young carers to succeed in higher education.

As a Monitoring and Evaluation Officer working within the What Works Team, Christine leads on the evaluation of Access and Participation Plan initiatives. She also supports student services practitioners and strategic project leads to understand, enhance and share the impact of their work. Christine's work not only measures outcomes but also celebrates and amplifies the transformative efforts of practitioners, contributing to a more just and student-centred university environment.

### **Micro-placements: An evaluation of the impact upon neurodivergent students and their employers**

**Isobel Kane, Anna Flatt and Alanna Plaats, University of Suffolk**

Isobel is a Research Assistant in the Centre for Excellence in Learning and Teaching at the University of Suffolk. She supports the implementation and evaluation of the University of Suffolk's Access and Participation Plan, working with colleagues across the institution to reduce gaps in inequalities related to student access, continuation, success and progression.

Anna is an Employability and Careers Consultant at the University of Suffolk. Her role includes a focus on supporting students from underrepresented groups, through one-to-one guidance, workshops and targeted initiatives such as STEP+ micro-placements and the University's Build Your Future scheme. She is passionate about helping students grow in confidence, develop key skills and take positive steps toward their future careers.

Alanna is a Work-Integrated Learning Consultant at the University of Suffolk. She supports students throughout the placement process, from identifying and applying for professional and curriculum-based opportunities to successful completion. Alanna works closely with employers to develop quality placement opportunities and ensures processes meet compliance standards.