



Dr Sarah Sullivan

B.Sc.(Manc.), M.Sc.(Plym.), CPsychol, PhD

Research Fellow (Quantitative in Primary Care)

Area of research

Social functioning in early psychosis and risk factors for and outcomes of psychotic experiences in healthy populations

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Summary

Biography

Currently I work as a Research Fellow in the Effectiveness Theme at NIHR CLAHRC West. I have investigated the association between duration of untreated psychosis and clinical outcomes as well as the risk factors for violence and self-harm in first episode psychosis. I have also investigated primary care consultations for prodromal symptoms of psychosis in the 5 years before a diagnosis of a psychotic disorder.

Previously I worked as an epidemiologist using data from the Avon Longitudinal Study of Parents and Children. I investigate risk factors for and outcomes of the psychotic experiences detected in a proportion of the cohort. I am also interested in using RCT methodology to investigate new intervention to improve both poor social functioning and other outcomes such as employment and further education and training in people with first episode psychosis.

I have also worked in mental health RCTs as a trial coordinator at the University of Bristol. Before the University of Bristol I was employed at the University of Plymouth in the Research and Development Support Unit

Activities / Findings

Theory of mind deficits in early psychosis are not associated with social functioning outcome either cross-sectionally or longitudinally.

Childhood interpersonal relationship problems precede early adolescent psychotic experiences in a general population sample

A global cognitive attributional style is associated with paranoid psychotic experiences whereas an externalised cognitive attributional style is associated with hallucinatory psychotic experiences in a general population sample of 18 year olds

Reduced circulating maternal Vitamin D is not associated with early adult risk of psychotic experiences or psychotic disorder in a general population sample

Childhood autistic traits and diagnosed autistic spectrum disorder are associated with risk of early adolescent psychotic experiences in a general population sample.

Social cognitive ability in childhood is not associated with risk of psychotic experiences in early adolescence or early adulthood. However an externalised attributional style at 8 and 16 years is associated with risk of psychotic experiences at 18 years in a general population sample

Childhood educational attainment is not associated with early adult psychotic experiences

There is no association between brain hemisphere asymmetry and theory of mind in a general population sample.

Early adolescent psychotic experiences predict early adult depression but early adolescent depression does not predict psychotic experiences after accounting for co-occurrence of psychopathology at each time-point.

Teaching

Course tutor for Clinical Epidemiology for 1st year medical student undergraduates.

Critical appraisal of research on the MRCPsych course for the Royal College of Psychiatry membership examination.

Keywords

- Theory of mind
- social cognition
- social functioning
- autistic traits
- psychotic experiences

Skills

- Psychosis
- schizophrenia

Methodologies

- Epidemiology and statistics

Expertise

I have expertise in psychosis research, in particular using different statistical methods to investigate associations between risk factors and psychosis onset as well as outcomes of psychosis. Methods used include structural equation modelling, longitudinal latent class analysis, instrumental variables analysis. I also work on prediction models to detect risk of psychosis.

- first episode psychosis
- psychosis prediction
- risk factors for psychosis
- outcomes of psychosis
- psychosis continuum
- general population psychotic experiences

Memberships

Organisations

[Bristol Medical School \(PHS\)](#)

Centres, collaborations and units

- [Centre for Child and Adolescent Health](#)
- [Centre for Academic Primary Care](#)
- [Centre for Academic Mental Health](#)

Recent publications

- Evans, B, Marston, L, Lamb, D, Mason, O, Ambler, G, Hunter, R, Sullivan, S, Henderson, C, Onyett, S, Johnston, E, Morant, N, Nolan, F, Kelly, K, Christoforou, M, Fullarton, K, Forsyth, R, Davidson, M, Piotrowski, J, Mundy, E, Bond, G & Johnson, S, 2019, '[The CORE Service Improvement Programme for mental health Crisis Resolution Teams: results from a cluster-randomised trial](#)'. *British Journal of Psychiatry*.
- Abu-Akel, A, Baxendale, L, Mohr, C & Sullivan, S, 2018, '[The association between schizotypal traits and social functioning in adolescents from the general population](#)'. *Journal of Psychiatric Research*, vol 270., pp. 895-900
- Davies, J, Sullivan, S & Zammit, S, 2018, '[Adverse life outcomes associated with adolescent psychotic experiences and depressive symptoms](#)'. *Social Psychiatry and Psychiatric Epidemiology*, vol 53., pp. 497-507
- Thompson, A, Winsper, C, Marwaha, S, Haynes, J, Alvarez-Jimenez, M, Hetrick, S, Realpe, A, Vail, L, Dawson, S & Sullivan, S, 2018, '[Maintenance antipsychotic treatment versus discontinuation strategies following remission from first episode psychosis: a systematic review](#)'. *BJPsych Open*, vol 4., pp. 215-225
- Sullivan, S, Carroll, R, Peters, T, Amos, T, Jones, PB, Marshall, M, Birchwood, M, Fowler, D, Johnson, S, Fisher, HL, Major, B, Rahaman, N, Joyce, J, Chamberlain-Kent, N, Lawrence, J, Moran, P & Tilling, K, 2018, '[Duration of untreated psychosis and clinical outcomes of first episode psychosis – an](#)

[observational and an instrumental variables analysis.: Duration of untreated psychosis and outcomes'. *Early Intervention in Psychiatry*.](#)

- Hameed, MA, Lingam, R, Zammit, S, Salvi, G, Sullivan, S & Lewis, A, 2018, '[Trajectories of early childhood developmental skills and early adolescent psychotic experiences: Findings from the ALSPAC UK birth cohort.](#)'. *Frontiers in Psychology*, vol 8.
- Johnson, S, Lamb, D, Marston, L, Osborn, D, Mason, O, Henderson, C, Ambler, G, Milton, A, Davidson, M, Christoforou, M, Sullivan, S, Hunter, R, Hindle, D, Paterson, B, Levertson, M, Piotrowski, J, Forsyth, R, Mosse, L, Goater, N, Kelly, K, Lean, M, Pilling, S, Morant, N & Lloyd-Evans, B, 2018, '[Peer-supported self-management for people discharged from a mental health crisis team: a randomised controlled trial](#)'. *Lancet*, vol 392., pp. 409-418
- Ijaz, S, Bolea-Alamanac, B, Davies, S, Savovi█, J, Richards, A, Sullivan, S & Moran, P, 2018, '[Antipsychotic polypharmacy and metabolic syndrome in schizophrenia: A review of systematic reviews](#)'. *BMC Psychiatry*, vol 18.
- Sullivan, S, Hamilton, W, Tilling, K, Redaniel, T, Moran, P & Lewis, GH, 2018, '[Association of Primary Care Consultation Patterns With Early Signs and Symptoms of Psychosis](#)'. *JAMA Network Open*, vol 1.
- Sullivan, S, Thompson, A, Kounali, D-Z, Lewis, G & Zammit, S, 2017, '[The longitudinal association between external locus of control, social cognition and adolescent psychopathology](#)'. *Social Psychiatry and Psychiatric Epidemiology*, vol 52., pp. 643-655

[View complete publications list](#) in the University of Bristol publications system

Networks & contacts

- Stanley Zammit Andrew Thompson Daphne Kounali Glyn Lewis Paul Moran

Projects

- [Avon Longitudinal Study of Parents and Children \(ALSPAC\)](#)