



The Open  
University

**PARTNERSHIPS**



# Introduction

## Partnership

**The Open University is unique among UK universities in combining a mission to widen access to higher education with research excellence. We have over 1000 research academics working at the forefront of knowledge in the sciences, social sciences, arts and humanities.**

‘Open’ is not just a name. We are open to the world, open to innovation and open to problem-solving.

We have forged successful partnerships with our community, the third sector, academic institutions, public services and industry. The Open University ranks in the top third of UK universities for research and development. We want our research to be out there. We want it to have an impact in society.

Our partners praise the Open University’s academics for their ground-breaking and creative approach to project management, original thinking and data analysis. We understand that true and practical innovation can only happen when we work with partners who bring their own specific expertise and application to the table. Together, we can make a real difference.

It is through partnership that we have tackled the most challenging problems and we are proud of the real-world impact these positive relationships have had.

# Sylvia Warnecke

## LANGUAGE LEARNING FOR WELLBEING AND BRAIN HEALTH

### **We're leaders in a novel, life-enriching intervention in Scotland's care homes.**

**We've developed the first course...** on how to teach languages for wellbeing. It's focused less on achieving levels of proficiency and more on having a positive impact on brain health and happiness.

We're working with Glasgow-based social enterprise Lingo Flamingo to support their pioneering language teaching to older people with degenerative brain diseases, like dementia.

Our free online course is training their volunteers to teach languages as a non-medical intervention in care homes and day centres across Scotland's Central Belt.

**The benefits of language learning for people with dementia...** are greater than those of any medicines we currently have to treat brain ageing, research suggests.

We've included activities, like singing, gesturing and engaging all five senses, which stimulate different areas of the brain and foster social interaction.

**Next, we're rolling out a 'languages for wellbeing' CPD programme to care home staff...** that builds on our expertise in language learning, online teaching and teaching older people.

We're working with the Care Inspectorate, Scottish Social Services Council and the NHS to introduce language training as a professional development option for care workers.



There's a growing awareness that social care is not just about making people comfortable; they need stimulation. Our work demonstrates how arts and humanities can help society tackle issues of mental health and ageing.



#### **Dr Sylvia Warnecke**

Associate Head of School, Students and Nations, Nation lead, School of Languages and Applied Linguistics, School of Languages and Applied Linguistics, The Open University in Scotland



# Shailey Minocha

## KEEPING EUROPE FIT FOR LIFE

### **We're working with the wearable technology industry to help people across Europe with active and healthy ageing.**

As we age, keeping active is vital for our health. But illness, disability, isolation, safety fears or caring responsibilities lead many people to reduce physical activity.

*We put our expertise in human-computer interaction and ageing to use...* working with local charities Age UK Milton Keynes and Carers MK.

We investigated the role of off-the-shelf, wearable fitness trackers in helping older people and carers to:

- monitor activity
- adopt healthier lifestyles
- manage chronic conditions
- reduce social isolation.

*We teamed up with Samsung UK...* who were developing the ACTIVAGE health monitoring app specifically for older people.

We introduced Samsung to a user-centred design and evaluation process. This resulted in an app addressing the key user concerns of usability, privacy and sharing user data.

*We're at the forefront of research...* into digital health wearables for active and healthy lifestyles that:

- connect older people with others for support and motivation
- monitor biomarkers for early diagnosis of infections
- allow self-monitoring of medical conditions.



*Our user-centred research methodology of involving older people and carers as co-researchers has helped us to develop evidence-based strategies for older people and carers to integrate activity monitors into their daily routines.*

#### **Shailey Minocha**

Professor of Learning Technologies and Social Computing, Faculty of Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics, Digital Health Wearables Research Programme

[www.shaileyminocha.info/digital-health-wearables](http://www.shaileyminocha.info/digital-health-wearables)



# Lesley Hoggart

## BREAKING THE SILENCE AROUND ABORTION

We've translated women's experience of abortion into education, public engagement and support services on a national level.

One in three UK women has an abortion. But the topic remains shrouded in secrecy, leading to misunderstanding, stigma and shame.

*We've broken the silence...* with MyBodyMyLife, an award-winning public engagement project that brings into the open the real-life stories of women who have experienced abortion.

*We've built a consortium...* with key agencies, including Public Health England, Faculty of Sexual and Reproductive Health, British Society of Abortion Care Providers and the Family Planning Association, to inform and educate.

Together, we've created and distributed informative resources that are in use by health professionals, educators and women considering abortion.

Our MyBodyMyLife booklet is supplied to clients of the British Pregnancy Advisory Service and Marie Stopes International clinics.

The MyBodyMyLife travelling exhibition has opened public discussion across the UK, changing attitudes.

*Now, we're supporting sex education...* in UK schools. We've partnered with the young people's charity Brook to create an online course for teachers delivering sex and relationships education.

It's a free resource that supports teachers educating teenagers about abortion and pregnancy prevention.



All our public engagement work and resources are backed up 100% by research and evaluation so we can be sure there is evidence behind our efforts to change attitudes and inform decisions. .



**Dr Lesley Hoggart**

Associate Head (Research), School of Health, Wellbeing and Social Care

**[mybody-mylife.org](http://mybody-mylife.org)**



# Jitka Vseteckova

## WALKING WITH DEMENTIA

**We've teamed up with Milton Keynes Parks Trust to offer 'outdoor therapy' for vulnerable people.**

Residents of the Open University's home town benefit from more than 6000 acres of parkland and green space managed by an independent, self-financing charity, The Parks Trust.

*The Trust wanted to support people with dementia and other vulnerable groups to use the parks...* to enjoy the health benefits of outdoor exercise and contact with nature on a regular basis.

Having secured over £3 million from the National Lottery Heritage Fund to widen access to their green spaces, they needed a partner with the expertise to design a programme that made it possible.

*So, a multidisciplinary team of experts in dementia, ageing and sports therapy...* in our Faculty of Health, Wellbeing and Social Care, worked collaboratively with The Parks Trust to develop the Keep Me Walking study.

This programme of guided walks, combined with a social event, offers people with dementia, and their carers, a safe, but stimulating, environment to enjoy the benefits of walking and spending time outdoors together.

*We're carrying out a rigorous evaluation...* to provide hard scientific evidence of its benefits. This is vital in securing funding to develop similar programmes across the UK.



As well as benefiting from our expertise, our partners leverage our extensive networks. This allows a local organisation, like The Parks Trust, to magnify the reach and impact of its initiatives.

**Dr Jitka Vseteckova**  
Principal Investigator, Faculty WELS,  
'Waking the Park' project



[www.keepmewalking.info](http://www.keepmewalking.info)





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## **FIND OUT MORE**

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