

Member profile for QNI Community Nursing Research Forum



Name: Dr Sharin Baldwin QN, FiHV, RN, RM, HV, BSc (Hons), PG Dip, MSc, PhD

Job title: Senior Health Visitor Research Lead

Employing organisation: Institute of Health Visiting, Adjunct Fellow at Western Sydney University

Country of residence: England

How would you describe your current role and research interests?

I joined the iHV and MECOSH UK team in July 2023 as Senior Health Visiting Research Lead. I am a trained nurse, midwife, health visitor with over 26 years of experience working in the NHS. I completed my PhD at King's College London in September 2020 as part of a NIHR Clinical Doctoral Fellowship, and remain the only health visitor in the UK to be awarded this fellowship. I am passionate about increasing research capability and capacity within health visiting. My research interests are perinatal mental health (fathers' mental health in particular) and emotional wellbeing of the workforce.

How did you first get involved in doing clinical research / your own research?

As part of my BSc (Hons) Midwifery, I undertook an observational study exploring the factors that influenced women's place of birth. Following my health visitor training, I conducted research into health visitors' assessment of maternal depression, suicide and self-harm in mothers from South Asian communities, as part of a MSc in Community Health. It was then that I realised there was a huge gap when it came to fathers' mental health during the perinatal period. This led me to exploring first-time fathers' mental health and wellbeing during their transition to fatherhood in the New Dad Study (NEST) for my PhD.

What difference has your research training and experience made to your career / clinical practice / academic practice?

The findings from my MSc research were published, influencing local policy and practice (Baldwin and Griffiths, 2009). My PhD training helped me further my skills in the use of qualitative research methods and evaluation of complex evaluations. I have published several papers from my PhD, with findings disseminated widely reaching an international audience. I have presented my research at several high-profile conferences in the UK, which have provided national recognition of my work as a clinical academic, especially in the field of Health Visiting. I have written online blogs about my work, been interviewed on social media (YouTube), radio (Talk Sport), and for The Guardian newspapers and GQ magazine. I have written several 'Good Practice Points for Health Visitors', contributed to national guidelines and recently participated in a NIHR film to encourage other nurses and health visitors to consider a clinical academic career.

What has been your favourite research experience so far?

During the start of the Covid-19, I was working in an acute hospital, where frontline staff were working under immense physical and mental stress. At the time there was no UK research on nurses, doctors and allied healthcare professionals' experiences of working in such conditions. The research knowledge and skills acquired through my PhD enabled me to address this gap and I carried out a qualitative study of UK health professionals' experiences of working at the point of care during the COVID-19 pandemic. I feel proud of this study as it went on to influence the support mechanisms subsequently offered to staff in that organisation. The study was part of the CNO portfolio of nurse led COVID studies and was also published, contributing the evidence base in that area.

How did you develop your research career?

My research career was developed through my passion of wanting to change things. Once I realised there was such a gap in the evidence surrounding father's mental health, and in the health services offered to men in the perinatal period, I wanted to do something worthwhile to change that. Luckily, I had some excellent mentors who encouraged me to pursue the NIHR Clinical Academic route. With theirs and my supervisors' support I was successful in obtaining a NIHR Clinical Doctoral Fellowship. This however was not an easy journey, and I was successful on my third attempt. My PhD training helped me further my skills in the use of qualitative research methods and evaluation of complex evaluations. I undertook the New Dad Study (NEST) in three phases – 1) qualitative systematic review, 2) qualitative exploratory study, and 3) feasibility study incorporating process evaluation.

Following the completion of my PhD, I applied for and was awarded the NIHR Development and Skills Enhancement (DSE) award. I undertook this award at Warwick Clinical Trials Unit, which gave me the opportunity to be exposed to all aspects and stages of clinical trials through their extensive trials' portfolio. I worked as part of the Warwick Evidence team on a Diagnostic Assessment Report commissioned by the NIHR HTA Programme on behalf of NICE. This helped me to further develop my skills in evidence synthesis, while building new collaborations.

In my new role, I am involved in a number of research studies and I plan to continue of my clinician academic journey, focusing on research in the area of perinatal mental health. You can find out more about my research journey as a Clinical Academic [here](#).

What are your top tips for anyone wanting to become a clinical academic or more research active?

- **Support network:** ensure you have good levels of support around you. You can join a research networking forum which will help you connect with like-minded people, share research ideas and collaborate on future projects. Having mentors that aspire you can help you reach your goals!
- **Be resilient:** if you are applying for research funding or a fellowship then do not give up at the first hurdle. Take the reviewer feedback onboard and try again. I got there on my third attempt and am so glad that I didn't give up after the first!
- **Research can be fun:** research projects can often be quite lengthy and detailed. Therefore, it is important to choose a topic that you are passionate about. This can make the journey even more rewarding and fun!

Where can we access your recent work?

For a full list of my publications, please visit: <https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Sharin-Baldwin>.

- Baldwin S, Insan N, Beauchamp H, et al. Feasibility and acceptability of using the Alarm Distress BaBy (ADBB) scale within universal health visiting practice in England: a mixed-

methods study protocol. *BMJ Open* 2023;13:e078579. doi:10.1136/bmjopen-2023-078579
<https://bmjopen.bmj.com/content/13/11/e078579>

- Baldwin S, Malone M, Sandall J, Bick D. (2022) A process evaluation of Promotional Guides used by health visitors to support men's transition to fatherhood: a qualitative study. *Perspectives in Public Health*. 2022 Sep 8:17579139221118243. doi: 10.1177/17579139221118243. Epub ahead of print. PMID: 36073355.
<https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/36073355/>
- Baldwin S, George J. (2021) Qualitative study of UK health professionals' experiences of working at the point of care during the COVID-19 pandemic. *BMJ Open* 2021;11:e054377. doi: 10.1136/bmjopen-2021-054377. <https://bmjopen.bmj.com/content/11/9/e054377.long>
- Baldwin S, Malone M, Sandall J, et al (2019) A qualitative exploratory study of UK first-time fathers' experiences, mental health and wellbeing needs during their transition to fatherhood. *BMJ Open* 2019;9:e030792. doi: 10.1136/bmjopen-2019-030792.
<https://bmjopen.bmj.com/content/9/9/e030792.info>

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