

My journey as a PhD researcher

Alice Tunks, a National Institute for Health and Care Research (NIHR) Applied Research Collaboration Kent, Surrey and Sussex (ARC KSS) PhD student, based at Brighton and Sussex Medical School, talks about her journey as a researcher and her plans for the future.



Name: Alice Tunks

PhD title: Increasing access to psychological interventions through primary care for those experiencing perinatal obsessive-compulsive disorder: a co-produced project.

Age: 29

Where do you live? Hove

Educational background: MRes and BSc both in Psychology

What inspired you to undertake a PhD? How long did it take you to complete? And, how did you fund your studies?

I've wanted to do research since doing my undergraduate degree. It took me 3.5 years to complete with the last -six -months as part-time as I had a Research Fellow role. I found the PhD challenging and enjoyable. It was great to develop many different skills, work with great supervisors and delve into a topic I enjoyed.

How would you describe your journey as a PhD student? The highs? The challenges?

I think my journey has been all about learning how to conduct research. The highs have been conducting interviews, working with experts by experience and gaining confidence in my decisions. The challenges have been balancing additional work that I've done throughout the whole PhD such as teaching and working on other projects, and learning to take criticism as an opportunity for growth.

Tell us about the research that you did as part of your PhD? What were the highlights of your PhD project?

I completed a systematic review, interviews study, survey and workshops all looking into service users and professionals' experiences of accessing support for perinatal obsessive-compulsive disorder.

What advice / tips would you give someone thinking about taking a PhD?

My advice would be to not do one unless you enjoy the simultaneously slow and fast pace of research, and enjoy keeping your own schedule. PhD's are essentially internships, so it can be helpful to view it as learning on the job.

Now that you have graduated, what's next? What are your plans for the future?

I'm continuing my Research Fellow role at the University of Sussex and am about to start a Research Associate role at the University of Cambridge.

[Read more about Alice's PhD project here.](#)