



Individual Development Award (IDA) Springboard Award

Aimed at individuals employed by a health or social care organisation who are an [ARC KSS member organisation](#) to undertake activities aimed at developing research skills.

Children and Young People's Mental Health, the benefits of barefoot outdoor group exercise combined with mindfulness and meditation, a health intervention.

Gemma Le Roy, University of Chichester



What did you achieve through this award? Nature Blast (NB) Intervention sessions took place over the summer and autumn months in Bosham, West Sussex. The one-hour session consisted of a group meditation at the start and end, plus a 45-minute exercise circuit. Families were encouraged to take part together while being barefoot outside to experience the benefits of earthing while exercising, afterwards a 1-hour in-person focus group was organised for the young people, 8 years + and a separate focus group was organised for the parents/carers online. Thirteen families took part and data analysis consisted of Interpretive phenomenological analysis (IPA).

Findings: Children enjoyed spending time with their families and bonding. Teenagers experienced no pressure or judgement and had the opportunity to have fun with their families. Children shared their enjoyment of exercising outside in nature. They experienced more energy and clearer minds, one teenager shared how the sessions supported their stress levels at school by using the mindfulness strategies they had learned. One child spoke of feeling tired and once they had taken their shoes off and put their feet on the ground, they gained more energy. The children and teenagers enjoyed mindfulness meditation as a group. One child spoke of the exercise and mindfulness helped reduce their anger. Many families expressed an interest in having NB in schools or colleges as an activity to help with relaxation, concentration, stress reduction and increasing connection among students. Parents shared experiences of connection with their children and feeling more present. All families enjoyed attending the sessions and would return.

What has this award meant for you? What has it enabled you to do? This opportunity has given me valuable experience as a researcher through public engagement, recruitment of research assistants, running focus groups with children, teenagers, and parents, and conducting data analysis with the intention of a future journal publication. This award has allowed me to dedicate focused time each week to support and conduct applied research on children and young people's mental health and has allowed me to collect some valuable data from participants aged 8 - 17 years old. This opportunity has allowed me to be consistent as a researcher enabling me to build further knowledge and understanding of an intervention that could become an option in the future for young people as a social prescription, an alternative to medication or CBT. It has allowed me to engage with local communities within West Sussex and build upon a research network with local charities, schools and organisations. It has allowed me to develop further evidence-based practice with an intervention that has benefited children and their parents/caregivers. This dedicated research time has allowed me to take this research in a direction that will support families of all demographics in the future with their mental health and overall well-being based on positive findings that could be life-changing.

What's next? I am very pleased with the results and would like to progress this research further and aim to apply for a social prescription for NB once I have written up my findings and received a journal publication. I plan to run further NB sessions for families and approach a local school to pilot NB sessions as a morning, pre-lesson, post-lesson or during school day offering. I would also like to set up a not-for-profit or charity to help support local families and communities in offering funded spaces for NB and other such offerings. As an example, I would like to focus on female teenage and pre-teen self-love and further develop NB into a self-love workshop, looking at exercise, meditation, and mindfulness as well as informative workshop talks on nutrition, anxiety, stress, self-love, and journaling to offer teenagers a toolkit of strategies to use to support their mental health and well-being.

What is your experience of receiving mentorship as part of this award? I attended the IDA Drop sessions which I found very helpful, it was great to meet with the other award members and some of the main contacts of ARC KSS, and it was wonderful to hear about other projects and methods being used. All staff are very knowledgeable and supportive, and the sessions felt unpressured allowing us as the award members to take the sessions in a direction that we needed to go. I also attended the embedded researchers in-person meeting on the 11th of September on the Sussex Campus which I thoroughly enjoyed. The day was very engaging and offered me a selection of tools to help me in my project. Devyn and Kathryn were both very helpful. I however did not take advantage of the 1:1 mentoring and used my university supervisor as my main mentor purely down to the time I had available around my business, BSc degree studies and MSc Health studies.