



ABSW Media Fellows 2024

Association of British
Science Writers
(ABSW)
Media Fellowships
Scheme

absw
ASSOCIATION OF BRITISH
SCIENCE WRITERS

The ABSW Media Fellowships in a Nutshell

The ABSW Media Fellowships provide a unique opportunity for practising scientists, clinicians, and engineers to spend two to six weeks working at the heart of a media outlet such as the Guardian, BBC Radio Science Unit or IFLScience.

The Fellowships:

- **Engage** – give scientists the confidence to engage with the media
- **Foster Trust** – tackle mistrust and misrepresentation
- **Bridge the Gap** – between journalists and scientists
- **Build Understanding** – between science and society

*The British Science Association (BSA) ran the scheme from 1987 – 2020



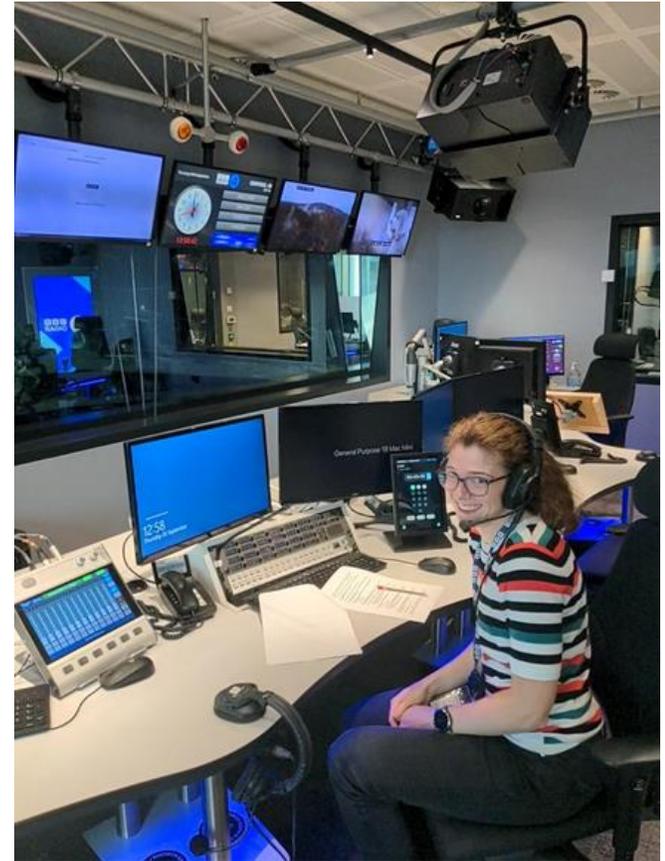
How does the scheme work?

Scientists, clinicians, and engineers apply and are selected through their supporting institution, who fund their Fellowship.

The ABSW identifies media hosts and matches them to the Fellows.

The Fellows receive training from the ABSW prior to taking up their placements and are supported by the ABSW throughout their placement and beyond.

Placements normally take place for 2-6 weeks during the summer to fit with University teaching commitments. There is plenty of flexibility in the scheme to suit home and work commitments.



2024 Fellow, Elizabeth at the BBC Science Unit in Cardiff

Real Impact for Fellows, Supporting Institutions and Media Hosts

Many Fellows have become ambassadors in their supporting institutions, advocating to develop better relationships between science and the media. Some Fellows have gone on to lead institutions, and others have made the move into media. Behind almost every major science story, from black holes to giant squids, there's at least one article written by a Fellow.

Through the Media Fellowships our members have helped develop the narrative of biomedical science news stories at national and regional level and their experience has ensured that more people are aware of our profession and the vital role our members play at the heart of healthcare.

Dan Nimmo, Head of Communications, Institute of Biomedical Science

So far ten academics from The University have participated in the scheme and each one has reaped the benefits of getting behind the scenes of a major media organisation – turning media sceptics into believers.

Lindsay Brooke, Press Officer (Faculty of Science) at the University of Nottingham

As the trustee of a charity, biotech board member or council member of the Medical Research Council, proficiency in science communication has consistently been regarded as an asset.

Dr Ruth McKernan CBE, 1992 Fellow and Former Chief Executive, Innovate UK



Fellowship Alumni

Prof. Nick Petford (1995), Vice Chancellor, University of Northampton

Dr Ruth McKernan CBE (1992), Former Chief Executive, Innovate UK

Dr Helen Czerski (2005), physicist, UCL research fellow and TV presenter (pictured)

Hannah Devlin (2006), Science Correspondent, The Guardian

Prof. Tom Crick MBE (2011), computer scientist, Swansea University

Dr Suzi Gage (2013), psychologist, University of Liverpool

Vicky Forster (2014), TED Global Fellow

Prof. Clare Elwell (2018), medical physicist and charity leader, UCL



Impact on Fellows

- Better understanding of how the media work
- Understanding of how to get research across accurately with minimal 'spin'
- How to pitch a story to news editors
- Improved writing skills
- Ability to work to tight deadlines
- Taking part in press conferences
- Increased confidence
- Wider understanding and appreciation of science beyond personal field
- Network of media contacts
- Ability to match photos with stories
- Experience writing for different audiences
- Develop new technical skills in broadcasting
- Wider appreciation of new media (video content, social media, podcasts etc)



2023 Fellow, Kristina, with new friends and colleagues at the BBC Science Unit, Cardiff

Impact on Fellow's supporting institution

Better promotion of institution through the media; greater links press office and academics, new contacts, greater understanding of the media process

Increase in science communication activity

Higher quality teaching

Improved writing of funding applications

Opportunities for cross-disciplinary work

Impact on media hosts

Kept up to date
with the work of
practising
researchers

Fellows find a new
angle and ask
original questions
about stories

Access to new
science and health
story news

Access to academic
contacts

Help researching
stories, finding
pictures and
writing copy

What does it cost?

Media Fellowships are paid for by the supporting organisation/employer and cost £5,000 plus VAT per Fellow. This covers all expenses necessary for the Fellow (relocation/travel/accommodation), training and the administration of the scheme.

The supporting organisation/employer must also agree to release the Fellow on full pay for the duration of the Fellowship (2-6 weeks). Annual leave may be used for part of the placement.

The ABSW provides full support to institutions/employers in all aspects of advertising the Fellowships, and the application and selection process.

There are no costs for the Media Host or for the individual Fellow.



How do I become a Fellow?

Media Fellowships cannot be offered to freelancers, undergraduate students, PhD students, those who work in PR or communications, those who are based outside the UK, or those who want to change career full time into science communication.

You must apply for the scheme via your employer/funder and cannot apply for the scheme individually as you need the support and funding of your organisation to become a Fellow. Speak to your employer/funder and inform them of the scheme and if they are interested suggest they contact the ABSW.

Media Fellowships eligibility:

- practising scientist, social scientist, clinician or engineer with a minimum of 2 years' experience following highest degree. PhD students are not eligible.
- employed, and based part or full time in the UK
- work at any level in an academic or research institution, industry, civil service, or any other similar organisation

Media Fellowships requirements:

- employer's/funder's support both financially and consent to be released on full pay for the period of the Fellowships
- agree to all the terms and conditions of the Fellowship, including mandatory attendance at the training/development days
- write a short report about the Fellowship



2024 Fellow, Jasmine, placed with IFLScience

Diversity and Inclusion

The ABSW is committed to equality, diversity, and inclusion, and want Media Fellowships to be open to all. There are several ways we are working to support participation in the scheme:

- We collect anonymised diversity data as part of the Media Fellow application process
- We provide guidance for our partners to reduce bias in the promotion, application and shortlisting process
- We work with Fellows to accommodate requests for part-time, remote, and flexible working
- We offer placements in a range of UK locations
- We try to find a varied source of funding for the Fellowships



Elizabeth Barsotti

Dr Elizabeth Barsotti is a Career Development Fellow in the Neurobiology Division at the MRC Laboratory of Molecular Biology; a visiting postdoctoral research scientist in the Department of Physiology, Development and Neuroscience at the University of Cambridge; and an affiliated postdoc at Clare Hall College at the University of Cambridge. Her PhD is in petroleum engineering from the University of Wyoming. She is a self-taught neuroscientist, focusing on developing new electron microscopy techniques for imaging a variety of animal brains in three-dimensions at nanometer resolution.

Elizabeth's placement was at the BBC Radio Science Unit in Cardiff, but she also visited BBC Broadcasting House in London to work on the All in the Mind podcast.

Whilst on placement she produced, edited, wrote and recorded for the Unexpected Elements podcast. She appeared in two episodes including a producer credit and will appear in a future episode not yet released.

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/sounds/play/w3ct5q2>

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/w3ct5q2b>

Elizabeth also experienced the recording of Inside Science and helped with research on an unreleased show called the Ideas list. She also researched and helped write the pitch for another proposed show.

Commenting on her experience Elizabeth said:

It was a great experience and really cool to see all the work I did editing, inviting guests, writing, and recording get packaged into an episode and released.

Elizabeth's Fellowship was supported by the MRC Laboratory of Molecular Biology.



Linzy Elton

Linzy Elton is a Postdoctoral research associate in the Centre for Clinical Microbiology at University College London. Her research focuses on the use of genomics for diagnostics and surveillance of antimicrobial resistance and infectious disease, working closely with Low- and Middle-Income Countries, especially across Africa.

Linzy worked with the digital content teams in the UK and African offices of SciDev.net.

Read Linzy's article ['Olympics may be transport hub for global disease spread'](#)

She has also worked on a wide range of YouTube podcast audiograms and social media videos for SciDev.Net

Linzy says:

I hope the Fellowship will allow me to gain new skills, especially the use of innovative digital solutions, as well as helping to strengthen communication and trust between scientists and the public in both the Global North and Global South.

Linzy's Fellowship was supported by UCL Global Engagement.



Daniel Giles

Daniel Giles is a Senior Research Fellow in Machine Learning for Weather and Climate Sciences at the Centre for Artificial Intelligence in University College London. His research focuses on the intersection of data-driven approaches and weather/climate modelling.

Daniel joined the New Scientist podcast and visual team in London and was excited to learn about the multitude of ways that science journalism engages with the public.

Daniel contributed to New Scientist's weekly podcast writing the first draft of the script for the segment on The Atlantic Meridional Ocean Circulation (AMOC) system. You can now view media videos that he scripted, recorded and edited and are live on the New Scientist YouTube site and Instagram:

https://www.youtube.com/shorts/X_5B2BweBpl

<https://www.youtube.com/shorts/Lb95H6lqlfA>

He has also contributed his expertise to a technology article: [Google AI slashes computer power needed for weather forecasts article](#)

The placement led to a new collaboration with the Royal Society who are digitising all their meteorological observations, providing a wealth of new information which predates current observational records. The end goal is to use these newly available observations in a study of India's climate.

Daniel's Fellowship was supported by UCL Engineering.



Raphaëlle Haywood

Dr Raphaëlle D. Haywood is a Senior Lecturer in Physics and Astronomy and Assistant Director of the Global Systems Institute at the University of Exeter. She currently holds an Ernest Rutherford Fellowship from the UK's Science and Technologies Facilities Council. She teaches an undergraduate course on Physics of Climate Change and uses her astrophysics research on planets beyond our solar system (exoplanets) to highlight that there is no planet "B".

Raphaëlle worked on the science desk at The Times for three weeks in September, publishing four pieces. Her first article, based on research presented at the British Science Association Festival, covered concerns that 6G 'will drain phones in 30 minutes'. Raphaëlle also reported on cave art, bleached coral reef breeding through IVF, and research that suggests polynesians beat Columbus's arrival on Easter Island. She went to editors' meetings on most days during her placement which gave her a unique insight into how the news ecosystem works.

Raphaëlle's Fellowship was supported by a Science and Technology Facilities Council (STFC) Ernest Rutherford Fellowship and the University of Exeter's Department of Physics and Astronomy.



Rebecca Irons

Rebecca Irons is a Medical Anthropologist and Wellcome Trust Senior Research Fellow at the Institute for Global Health at UCL. Her research focuses on reproductive & sexual health and HIV amongst migrants and marginalised populations, and the multispecies effects of climate change and health in Pacific Latin America.

On being awarded the ABSW Media Fellowship Rebecca said:

The wider public are at the heart of what global health academics do, and why we do it, yet academics are rarely taught how to bridge the institution-public/media divide. The ABSW fellowship offers an amazing opportunity to collaborate and learn about wider engagement from media partners, and form lasting networks and links.

Rebecca relocated to Cardiff to work with the BBC Radio Science Unit in late July, where she contributed to the radio programmes 'Unexpected Elements' and 'Health Check'.

Rebecca's Fellowship was supported by UCL Global Engagement.



Abbie Jordan

Abbie Jordan is a Reader in the Department of Psychology and member of the Centre for Pain Research at the University of Bath. Abbie's work focuses on understanding how children, young people and their families make sense of pain and how pain impacts on their lives. Abbie is particularly interested in exploring how pain is represented and understood in broader social settings.

Abbie worked at BBC Science Focus Magazine and you can find all her published work through her profile link at Science Focus Magazine

<https://www.sciencefocus.com/author/abbie-jordan>

Her Fellowship was supported by the University of Bath.



Declan McLaughlin

Declan McLaughlin is a Senior Lecturer (Education) at Queen's University Belfast (QUB). His expertise is in fundamental science education including anatomy, physiology and biomedical science. He has worked in QUB since 2015 having previously studied there at both undergraduate and postgraduate level. Engaging with the media aligns with his commitment to enhancing public understanding of science and contributing to informed decision-making.

Declan worked on video content with BBC Ideas during August, with some of his ideas being taken forward and commissioned. Due to the long-term nature of video production these may not be available for some months.

Declan's Fellowship was supported by the Institute of Biomedical Science



Stephen Morris

I studied Microbiology (B.Sc Hons, Cardiff) and Biophysics (Ph.D Kings College London).

During my career started in biochemistry/cell biology, working for many years on multi-protein complexes, intracellular trafficking machinery and ion channels. This led to my interest in the cell biology of viruses and the generation of new vaccines. I have worked in academic institutions in the UK, Germany and USA, and spent a number of years developing VLP based vaccines in the UK Biotech Industry. I am now part of the UCL Vaccine Manufacturing Research Hubs (VaxHub). Initially as Research Fellow specialising in the use of high throughput methodologies for vaccine bioprocess development and analytics. With an emphasis on the transfer of these technologies for use in Low to Middle Income Countries (LMIC). My teaching activities include lecturing to B.Sc, B.Eng, M,Sc and M.Eng students on Vaccine Bioprocessing. In 2022 I started the VaxHub Schools Outreach program.

Since February 2024 I hold the position of VaxHub Outreach and Public Engagement Manager and Lecturer.

Stephen worked with Research Professional in September 2024.

My time at Research Professional was very useful to me in learning how media organisations work. I made lots of new contacts both there and at the Science Media Centre which I am hoping to maintain in my engagement role for VaxHub. I certainly learnt to be more effective in writing communications.

Stephen is currently putting the finishing touches to an unpublished feature article which should be published in the next few weeks.

Stephen's Fellowship was supported by UCL Engineering.



Tanya Procyshyn

Tanya Procyshyn is a Postdoctoral research associate at the Department of Psychiatry, University of Cambridge. With a background in neuroscience, her current research focuses on the mental health of autistic people with the aim of informing tailored mental health support services.

Tanya spent July on the Science desk at The Guardian in London.

Her Fellowship was supported by the School of Clinical Medicine, University of Cambridge.

Read her published work for the Guardian:

[UK adolescents get two thirds of daily calories from UPFS says survey](#)
[Chimpanzees communicate in similar quick-fire fashion to humans, study shows](#)
[Scientists propose lunar biorepository as 'backup' for life on Earth](#)



Jasmine Reggiani

Jasmine is a postdoctoral fellow at the Sainsbury Wellcome Centre for Neural Circuits and Behaviour. Her research focuses on understanding how animals navigate and specifically how they remember the way to return to their shelter.

Jasmine's placement with IFLScience took place in July and her Fellowship was supported by Sainsbury Wellcome Centre.

Visit Jasmine's profile page on [IFLScience](#) with links to all her articles - everything from Ozempic to Splooting. She also guested on the [IFLPodcast](#) and has two short pieces coming out in the IFLScience magazine Curious in September. Jasmine also wrote a [blog on her experience](#) as a media fellow for her institution's website.



Tiffany Taylor

Tiffany Taylor is a Royal Society Dorothy Hodgkin Research Fellow and a Professor of Microbial Ecology and Evolution at the University of Bath in the Milner Centre for Evolution. Her research group evolves bacteria in real-time in the lab to explore questions in evolutionary biology such as: how are genes innovated for novel function? What makes evolution (sometimes) predictable? And how do bacteria defend themselves from viruses and other invading DNA? She has also written three children's books on the topics of evolution and genetics.

Tiffany worked at the popular science website LiveScience, which has offices in Bath. Reflecting on her fellowship Tiffany said:

I firmly believe that good science communication is essential for the well-being, health, and economic stability of our society. I've always been passionate about effectively communicating my science in clear and engaging ways, and I'm thrilled that this fellowship will grant me the opportunity to learn from industry leaders and contribute to a dynamic online media platform.

Tiffany's Fellowship was supported by the Life Sciences Department at the University of Bath.

Tiffany produced a wide range of articles whilst on placement at LiveScience all of which can be found through her profile on the LiveScience website:

<https://www.livescience.com/author/tiffany-taylor>



Anna Volkmer

Dr Anna Volkmer is a senior research fellow in the Department of Psychology and Languages Sciences at University College London. She is also an honorary consultant speech and language therapist at the National Hospital for Neurology and Neurosurgery in London where she works with the cognitive disorders service. Dr Volkmer's research has focused on the development of interventions to support people with language led dementias (Primary Progressive Aphasia) and their families. These interventions have relevance to the wider population of people living with dementia and their families, and target areas of communication and relationship that have been identified as priorities by people living with these diagnosis.

Anna worked at the British Medical Journal in September and October where she researched and wrote several news pieces including ['Third of former American football players report CTE symptoms, a study finds'](#)

Anna's Fellowship was supported by UCL Language & Cognition Department and the National Institute for Health and Care Research.



Katherine Wang

Katherine Wang is a Royal Academy of Engineering Enterprise Fellow, based in the Department of Mechanical Engineering at University College London. Her post-doctoral work focuses on developing wearable MedTech devices that help alleviate the pain and swelling caused by lymphoedema. She has a multidisciplinary background that spans Biomedical Science, Biomaterials, and Engineering.

Katherine was based at BBC Future in August. You can read her piece on ancestry, mental health and breaking generational trauma here:

<https://www.bbc.com/future/article/20240829-healing-generational-trauma-and-mental-health-by-understanding-ancestry>

Katherine's Fellowship was supported by UCL Engineering.





For further details of the Fellowships
please contact Sallie Robins,
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