



Social Work Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (SWIPA) research network

Network information and news bulletin – No. 2 August 2024

Welcome back to SWIPA research network news

Welcome to the second SWIPA research network bulletin. Please feel free to share with your networks and encourage anyone interested who has not already signed up to our mailing list to do so.



SWIPA summer workshops

SWIPA ran two in-person workshops as part of the launch of events and to strengthen the developing social work IPA research community. The first was held in Edinburgh followed by one in Milton Keynes. These sessions provided a relaxed space to discuss research and participants at different stages of their studies attended to share experiences and learn together. The network will be seeking members' views on development of future events when we come together for the symposium in October.



'I had a lovely day today thinking about the synergy of education and social work research with Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis – thanks to @learnadventurer and @sao_sarah for organising'

'I recently attended this event in Scotland. It was truly very informative and has provided me with more knowledge, structure and direction for my own research'



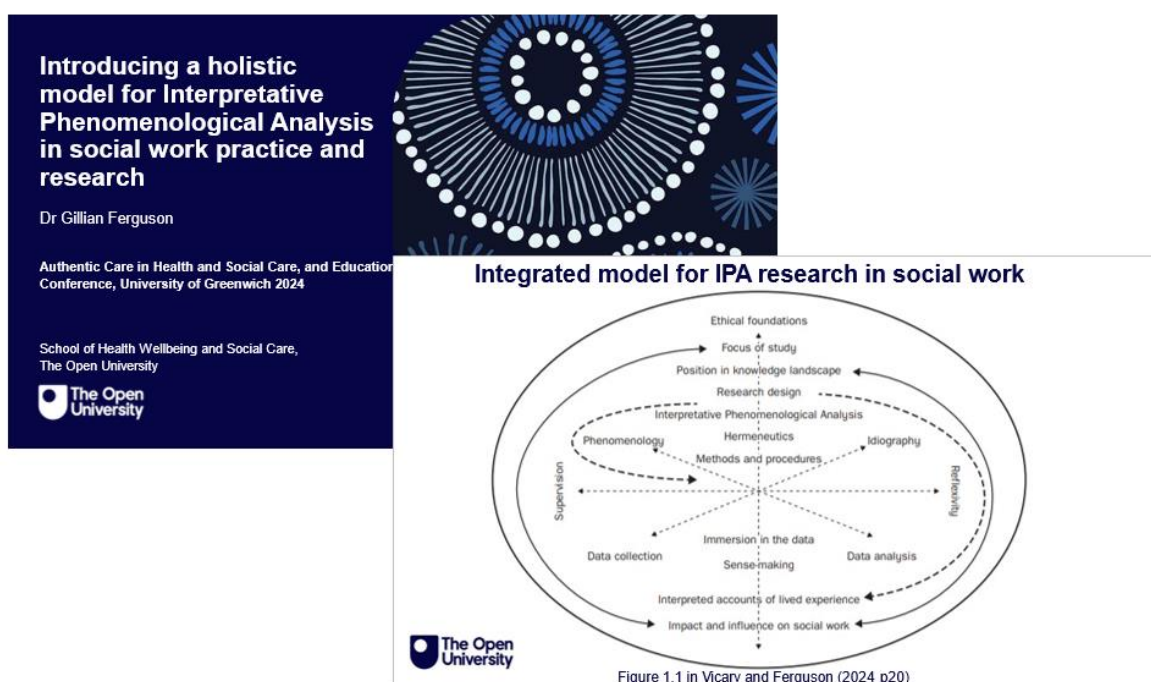
Network members survey

The survey of members interests is now live, it would be great if you can help us profile the experience and interests by participating.

The online survey will be open until 30th September 2024 and can be accessed by clicking on this link: [SWIPA network members survey](#)

SWIPA in Greenwich

Dr Gillian Ferguson presented on *Introducing a holistic model for Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis in social work practice and research* at the Authentic Care in Health and Social Care, and Education Conference, University of Greenwich in June 2024. This was a great chance to discuss the methodology with phenomenologists from across the descriptive-hermeneutic spectrum. Key messages central to the holistic model are about ensuring that the three components of IPA are at the heart of study design and woven through research.



SWIPA in Barcelona

Professor Sarah Vicary and co-researcher Dr Kevin Stone presented on a recent research project using IPA at the *International Academy of Law and Mental Health* at the University of Barcelona in July 2024. Entitled *Pioneers not Guinea Pigs*, the presentation addressed the findings of research into social worker as Approved/Responsible Clinicians, a role introduced into mental health legislation in 2007. Exploring the experience of those who are undertaking this role eliciting data through a Rich Picture drawn by the participant, the presentation was attended by a range of mental health professions internationally.

A write up of the project is to be submitted for publication.



SWIPA Inaugural symposium 11th October 2024

Creating new knowledge and making a difference in social work through IPA

The inaugural symposium from the Social Work and Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) Research Network aims to bring together people interested in the use of IPA for social work research and practice.

There will be two keynote addresses: Professor Sarah Vicary (The Open University) on *An overview of Social Work and IPA*; and Dr Gillian Ferguson (The Open University) on *Ziggy Stardust, extraordinary jobs and a professional learning ecosystem*. We hope that the event provides a great focus for thinking about IPA for social work practice and the real-world impact of phenomenological studies. The online event will also feature presentations from diverse research across the symposium themes: *Making a difference in social work through IPA*; or *Creating new knowledge for social work through IPA*. Participants will also be invited to contribute ideas for the development of the SWIPA network.

This symposium is free to attend, however please book

[SWIPA symposium booking link](#)



Publications produced by the Network

Ferguson, Gillian & Vicary, Sarah (2024) *Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA), social work education and continuing professional learning*, Social Work and IPA (SWIPA) Research Network, The Open University
<https://doi.org/10.21954/ou.ro.00098574>

This [resource](#) has recently been published by Dr Gillian Ferguson and Professor Sarah Vicary for the SWIPA research network with the following aims:

- to discuss IPA in the UK social work education and continuing learning context
- to explore the alignment of IPA with professional and regulatory standards in education and training
- to confirm IPA as an excellent source of research that informs social work practice
- to explore the potential of IPA as active enquiry methodology for social workers across their career

Participants at the SWIPA summer workshops received these hot off the press. If you would like a copy, please email contact swiparesearch@open.ac.uk and we will send this to you. We would be delighted to hear feedback on whether this is useful for colleagues developing their research in line with professional standards.

Publications reviewed by Network

In each Bulletin we will include a short review of chosen publications using IPA in social work. Please let us know if you have any publications of any type that you think would be relevant to network members by emailing swiparesearch@open.ac.uk with details and a short precis. We will aim to include these in future Bulletins, and it is our intention ultimately to collate as a resource.

Hood, R. (2016) Combining phenomenological and critical methodologies in qualitative research *Qualitative Social Work* Vol. 15 (2: 160–174)
<https://doi.org/10.1177/1473325015586248>

In this article the author discusses combining IPA and Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) with an example given of doing this combination in a qualitative study. Different types of research question provided to illustrate the approaches:

- Overall research question: 'What does complexity mean for professionals working together on complex child protection cases?'
- IPA research question: 'How do professionals experience complexity in a child protection case?'
- CDA research question: 'How do professionals talk about complexity in their accounts of casework?'

The author argues that a future direction for IPA in social work might involve this combination.

Simcock, P., Manthorpe, J. and Tinker (2024) Giving voice by doing with not doing through: Collaborating with tactile sign language interpreters in interpretative phenomenological analysis research involving older deafblind people *Qualitative Social Work* <https://doi.org/10.1177/14733250241250140>

Applying IPA to an under-researched population, this article discusses how this methodological approach can explore experience using tactile sign language interpreters. The authors suggest that an IPA study can give voice to deafblind people when undertaken with not through interpreters. To do so, they contend that careful attention is given to the interpreters including their credentials, their role and positionality.

Forthcoming publications

Professor Sarah Vicary and Dr Gillian Ferguson have been invited to contribute to a forthcoming book entitled Elgar Encyclopedia of Social Work. Our entry is entitled interpretative phenomenological analysis in Social Work Research.

A special issue of *Qualitative Social Work* is anticipated which will focus on IPA in social work – watch this space for more details.

Forthcoming presentations

Please let us know if you are involved in any forthcoming presentations, publications or events relating to social work and IPA if you would like us to share this with the network members by emailing swiparesearch@open.ac.uk with details.

Professor Sarah Vicary and Dr Gillian Ferguson have submitted an abstract to the next European Social Work Research Association conference to be held in Munich March 2025 [ECSWR 2025 – 14th European Conference for Social Work Research](#). This is titled *Introducing a holistic model for Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis in social work practice and research*. Submissions are being accepted until 23rd September so hopefully you might also consider doing so.



A reminder about the network

The SWIPA research network is a community of practice open to anyone interested in furthering use and knowledge of IPA for social work research. SWIPA aims:

- To provide a forum to exchange knowledge about IPA and social work.
- To provide a network for researchers of IPA and to explore opportunities for developing collaborative research proposals related to social work.
- To raise awareness and knowledge of emerging ideas and resources about IPA and social work.
- To organise conferences and seminars to exchange knowledge about IPA and social work.

The network officially launched in March 2024 at The British Library in London alongside the launch of a new text on the subject: *Social Work Using Interpretative Analysis: A Methodological Approach for Practice and Research* by Professor Sarah Vicary and Dr Gillian Ferguson.

Full details about the network can be found on the dedicated web space <https://wels.open.ac.uk/research/networks/swipa-social-work-ipa-research-network>

Discount code **OPENUP** for 20% off [Social Work Using Interpretative Analysis: A Methodological Approach for Practice and Research](#) from the publishers.

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