



The Cleft Collective

Closing the Gap in Cleft Research

A Scar Free Foundation Initiative

The Underwood Trust

SPRING NEWSLETTER 2026

One of the largest cleft lip and palate research programmes in the world



Investigating the causes of cleft, the best treatments for cleft and the long-term impact of cleft on the family



One of our participants enjoyed receiving her birthday card this year!

We send birthday cards out to all of our child participants so make sure you **keep your address up to date** so they don't miss out. To update your address, email: cleft-collective@bristol.ac.uk




International Cleft Congress , Japan

In October 2025, some members of the team headed to Kyoto, Japan to attend the **15th International Cleft Congress**. The event, known as CLEFT2025, brought together around 1,400 delegates from 96 nations, giving us a great opportunity to share research ideas and promote the Cleft Collective resource. The Cleft Collective Team presented a variety of well-received posters and talks on a range of topics, including **genetics, speech and language and dentistry**.

It was fantastic to have such strong representation from Bristol at this major international event.





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We have moved!

A few months ago we moved to our new office space in the **University of Bristol Dental School**.

We have enjoyed getting to know our new surroundings and our new colleagues!

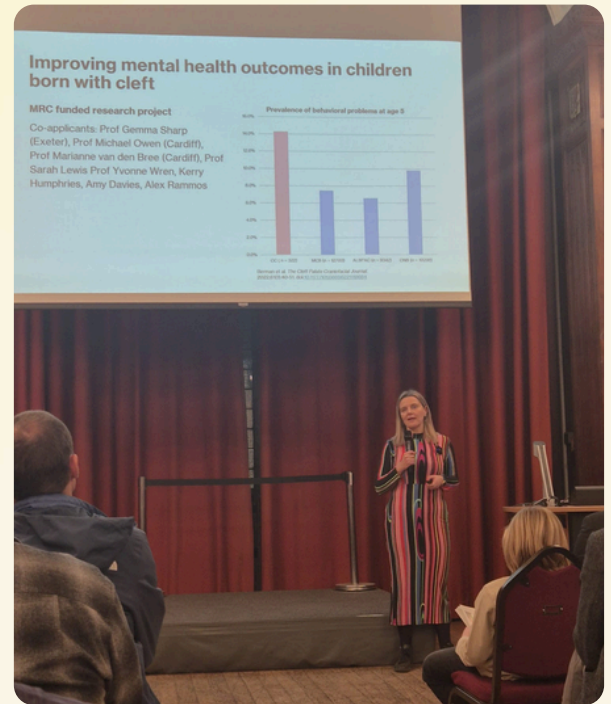


INSPIRE student – Megan Lee



Megan Lee, an undergraduate dental student, recently collaborated with the Cleft Collective to **explore whether the early sounds made by a baby born with a cleft palate (+/- lip) are related to how they communicate in later childhood.** This project is still ongoing as part of the INSPIRE programme,

a national initiative funded by the Wellcome Trust and coordinated by the Academy of Medical Sciences to engage medical, dental, and veterinary undergraduates in research. Megan presented her work to date at the INSPIRE showcase and will continue to collaborate with the Cleft Collective to write up her current findings and engage with future research.



Celebrating Evie Stergiakouli


In February, **Professor Evie Stergiakouli** gave her brilliant inaugural lecture titled **Charting Neurodevelopment (and my academic journey) from birth to adulthood.**


Evie's talk covered her recent research activities on neurodevelopmental and mental health problems in children born with cleft lip and/or palate from the Cleft Collective. She also reflected on her personal journey from arriving as an international student to the UK in 2005 to supporting more than 900 postgraduate research students as part of her current role as Postgraduate Academic Director.

The Cleft Collective are so fortunate to have Evie as part of our genetics team!

HAVE ANY QUESTIONS FOR US? WANT TO CHECK YOUR STATUS IN THE STUDY OR RECENTLY MOVED? GET IN TOUCH:

 : CLEFT-COLLECTIVE@BRISTOL.AC.UK

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New grants

Our Research Coordinator **Amy Davies**, consultant cleft surgeons **Ms Nitisha Narayan** and **Mr Marc Swan** and surgical trainee **Pesh Kangesu** have recently been awarded a grant from Craniofacial Australia to **investigate the best treatment pathways for children born with a wide cleft palate.** The grant will start in October 2026.



Amy has also been awarded funding from Bristol and Weston Hospitals Charity to **explore whether the diversity of participants within the Cleft Collective reflects the broader population of children born with a cleft within the UK.** This grant started in April 2026.

