

## Dr Laura Jenkins

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### **What is your current position?**

Post-Doctoral Research Fellow: Conversation Analyst in Neuroscience, University of Sheffield.

### **Could you say a bit about your career trajectory so far? How did you get to be where you are today?**

During my undergraduate Psychology degree at Aston University I undertook a number of posts including a full-time placement year in NHS psychological services and several short term part-time health psychology research positions.

Immediately after my degree I found it difficult finding Psychology related work, and one year after graduating I decided to return to study at Aston University and did a master's degree in Health Psychology. In addition to developing my theoretical understanding and developing research skills in several methodologies, I became particularly interested in research that tapped into the areas of health, eating, children and families and pain.

I was awarded funding by the ESRC to undertake a PhD (preceded by a master's degree in research methods) at Loughborough University. My research used the tools of conversation analysis to examine children's naturally occurring expressions of pain in family mealtimes.

Having completed my PhD I ran two modules on the Social Psychology degree at Loughborough University (Statistics and Developmental Psychology) before beginning my current research post at the University of Sheffield. This involves delivering and evaluating a conversation analytic communication intervention which seeks to change the way that doctors ask questions in the seizure clinic.

### **When did you decide to be an academic? What was it that prompted this decision?**

I really enjoyed the different research projects I got involved with as an undergraduate, grappling with different methodologies and investigating a range of problems with real life applications. I found the intellectual challenge stimulating, and realised that to progress in research I needed to have a PhD. It was during my doctorate that I gained a taste for lecturing, and decided that I wanted to pursue an academic career.

### **What have been the challenges so far in your career in academia?**

One of the biggest challenges I have faced is confidence. Primarily this relates to skills and ability to undertake projects, conduct analysis, produce quality written work, and to deliver teaching and presentations. Tackling this has involved firstly, simply having a go, and secondly, learning who, how and when to ask for help. Using feedback to shape your work is a vital part of academic life.