

# NCPS REGIONAL CONNECTIONS

**Belfast – 11<sup>th</sup> March 2026**

## **Speaker Spotlight**



### **CLAIRE THOMPSON**

Claire Thompson is a Doctoral Researcher in Psychology at Ulster University. Her DfE-funded project investigates how political murals in Northern Ireland's deprived neighbourhoods convey identity, symbolism and inter-generational trauma, employing GIS mapping, visual-ethnographic analysis and phenomenological.

Claire is a counsellor, a HCPC registered art therapist and the Neurodiversity Ambassador for the NCPS, championing affirmative, strengths-based practice for neurodivergent clients

She brings experience in trauma informed therapy, ACEs education and community based resilience work across the province.

## **MAPPING THE TRAUMA–MEMORY–IDENTITY CYCLE IN SECTARIAN MURALS**

Claire will outline the central aims and findings of her PhD. The study examines the "Trauma-Memory-Identity" (TMI) cycle that sustains the visual landscape of sectarian murals and how these public artworks act as both cultural memory and a barrier to reconciliation. Using mixed methods, spatial GIS analysis of mural locations, thematic coding of interviews, and visual-art analysis, she maps the relationship between mural imagery, community identity and exposure to adverse childhood experiences (ACEs). Preliminary results show that participatory psychotherapy sessions, which invite young people to co-author alternative narratives, reduce hyper-vigilance, improve peer-trust and foster a sense of agency. The talk will highlight implications for NCPS counsellors and psychotherapists: integrating community-based visual interventions and trauma-informed assessment approaches to support children and young people living in post-conflict settings.

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### **SIMON CARMICHAEL**

Simon Carmichael (they/them) is an Integrative Psychotherapist and the Co-cultural Counselling Manager of The Rainbow Project, and has been recognised as an Attitude Magazine LGBTQ+ Third Sector & Community Trailblazer 2026.

Since 1994, the Rainbow Project has been working for a better Northern Ireland for LGBTQIA+ people and their families. They change lives through their service provision which mitigates the impact of discrimination, and they change society through their training, campaigning and policy work, which seeks to eliminate the root causes of that discrimination and deliver full social and legal equality for LGBTQIA+ people.

## **ISSUES IN LGBTQIA+ COUNSELLING IN NORTHERN IRELAND**

This presentation will explore a range of the historical and contemporary issues affecting LGBTQIA+ individuals living in Northern Ireland, and use examples to explore how some of these issues can manifest into the counselling room and examine how we might respond to them as counsellors.

