This project will examine (mal)adaptive social media use in clinical populations or those at risk of a clinical diagnosis, an area of substantial concern where pre-existing theoretical approaches can substantially inform discovery science and translation (RCPsych, 2019).

1) Transdiagnostic approaches: A PhD project could study the influence of social media use in a) predicting adolescents receiving a mental health diagnosis, b) impacting those living with a mental health diagnosis, or c) determining recovery. Of particular interest is how we can approach these questions from a transdiagnostic perspective.

2) Mechanisms: A PhD project could focus on detailed investigations using theoretical and cognitive approaches to understand the mechanisms behind how social media exacerbates mental health problems, especially affective disorders. Experimental or neuroimaging studies could be used to test whether features of social media exacerbate maladaptive cognitive mechanisms prominent in affective disorders, e.g., the influence of prediction errors in social settings and rumination.

3) Clinical Contexts: A project could focus on how social media use is assessed and examined in a clinical context, and how such processes could be improved and supported. A lot of previous work in this research area has relied on examining population averages, however we have made very little progress in helping individuals. A PhD project could focus on how to integrate assessment and adjustment of social media use into clinical treatment or how to develop methodologies to help adolescents on an individual basis.