

# Impact Report 2025

**cicra**   
better lives for children with crohns and colitis

We are delighted to present the Crohn's in Childhood Research Association (CICRA) 2025 Impact Report containing a review of our activities and achievement. The charity has continued to work tirelessly to support the families of children affected by Crohn's disease and Ulcerative Colitis through the dedication of our volunteers, staff, members and supporters. Based on our recent member survey, our long - term strategy of allocating funds to support parents of children with any type of IBD, while also funding scientific research and specialist IBD training, continues to be regarded by members as a wise use of resources. This approach provides children with the greatest hope for a promising future, even in the face of an incurable condition. We thank our medical advisors for their time and dedication in helping us invest our limited income wisely.

See more from the survey results and how these are going to shape our future plans on [page 2](#)

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Our current main funding of a 3 year Fellowship, and a 3 year PhD studentship are going well. For more information see [pages 3-5](#)

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We've been working hard to reach more people by increasing our social media presence. See more on [page 6](#)



# Members Survey

Our members participated in a survey to help us understand which types of support they value the most. It provided us with fantastic feedback and suggestions for our future initiatives. Here are some of the highlights:

Our **Support Line** is a highly valuable service, which is now open 5 days a week

*I felt like the person on the end of the telephone empathised and listened to my concerns. The helpline staff have always been so lovely and caring.*

The **Can't Wait Cards** and **Radar Keys** issued to members are considered to be very useful for helping to **manage symptoms** when out and about



Our in person **Family Information Days** are thought of as very supportive and informative, especially for the newly diagnosed. We are looking forward to our **upcoming Southampton Family Information Day in April**, with more to come later in the year

The support leaflets for parents and carers are great - the information was all in one place and easy to understand

99% of those who received a **Parent Pack** at diagnosis found it to be helpful or very helpful. Benefits include helping parents **feel less alone**, **reducing anxiety** and **giving practical tools**. **Coming soon** - based on your feedback, in 2026 we will be introducing a pack for parents of children with VEOIBD



**"The packs for teachers are brilliant"**

Our **School Support** leaflets are very popular, with members saying they helped to get the right **exam support** in place, and for **teachers to understand the condition**. **In 2026** we will be **expanding and updating** our school leaflets



# Research

**Dr Zachary Green** is in his second year of the 3 year **CICRA funded Dave Casson Research Fellowship**.

Based at Southampton Children's Hospital, Dr Green is supervised by a multidisciplinary team including **Dr.**

**James Ashton, Dr Alex Kadhim, Professor Mark Beattie, and Professor Sarah Ennis.**



## Fellowship Status & Clinical Focus

Dr. Green has successfully passed his first progression review, confirming his strong performance and trajectory within the three-year fellowship. He dedicates 80% of his time to research and 20% to clinical training. He maintains an active clinical role, including running the clinical paediatric IBD Multidisciplinary Team (MDT), which is crucial for coordinating complex patient care. Furthermore, he has completed JAG certification in upper GI endoscopy.

The focus of Dr. Green's research is titled "Utilisation of big clinical data to characterise, predict and personalise therapy in inflammatory bowel disease (IBD)." His core methodology involves leveraging Large Language Models (LLMs) and Generative AI to structure and analyse vast amounts of unstructured clinical information - such as histology and radiology reports - from Electronic Health Records (EHRs) Crucially , his work is now impacting the clinical interpretation of genetic information within the IBD service. A specific component of his work is exploring how blood tests taken at the point of IBD diagnosis can serve as reliable predictors of future disease severity.

## Noteworthy contributions (2024-2025)

Dr. Green has demonstrated significant academic engagement alongside his clinical and research commitments, contributing to high-impact publications and conference presentations. His research has achieved international recognition including a presentation at the United European Gastroenterology Week (UEGW).

His core fellowship work on leveraging large datasets and AI has resulted in six publications in the last year including two highly impactful 2025 papers.

## Future Research and Collaborative Next Steps

Dr. Green's work is positioned to continue

- Using big clinical data for personalising IBD care
- Assessing the effect of newer, advanced IBD therapies on surgical rates in paediatric patients
- Participating in an ESPGHAN funded research visit with Dr. Stephanie Vuijk to gather and analyse anti-TNF real world outcome data
- Working to develop and standardise improved IBD specific Human Phenotype Ontology (HPO) terms to enhance the precision of IBD research data globally.



### End of Year 1 progress report - Billie Nuth

Billie is in the 2<sup>nd</sup> year of her CICRA funded 3 year PhD studentship under the direction of Supervisors **Dr Mairi McLean** and **Dr Richard Hansen** at the **University of Dundee**.

The title of Billie's project is "Interrogating the proteome of human tissue derived organoid culture to define mechanisms of gastrointestinal epithelial barrier injury in IBD. She has made excellent progress experimentally within the first year of her PhD. She has passed through her thesis monitoring committee reviews and end of year one upgrade review.

Billie has now successfully completed, or is working on, the following:

- She is now fully competent in the method of advanced cell organoid cultures, preparing fresh tissue, propagating and passage, and storage.
- Has completed a scoping review of the literature to devise the best method of injury for her epithelial cultures.
- Has completed a study on CaCo2 human gastrointestinal cell line and has optimized the protocol to create an 'injury' cell supernatant and a 'damage' cell supernatant from these epithelial cells. Overall, Billie has demonstrated that injured and damaged epithelial cells impact on the epithelial barrier with increased 'leakiness' and impacts on wound healing.

- This set of experiments demonstrates ‘proof of concept’ of an epithelial cell derived injurious signal in the gut and that is reproducible and scalable model of epithelial barrier disruption. She is currently conducting a proteomic array on this model to characterise changes in secreted inflammatory protein profile. Altogether, this work will form the content of the first chapter in her thesis.
- The next step will be to translate these findings in to patient derived intestinal organoids. Billie is now optimising the methods to create the best epithelial derived injury supernatant that will be the cell stimulant for this part of the project. This will be the focus of the 2<sup>nd</sup> year of her PhD.
- Billie is now working on optimising the protocols for protein/peptide extraction from the organoids to apply to mass spectroscopy for proteomics analysis, working with the team in the University of Dundee core facility at School of Life Sciences. There has been a comparison of cell recovery solution extraction from matrix and freeze as whole organoid cell pellets versus creation of a single cell suspension and cell sorting with the Flow Cytometry core facility, SLS. The handling and processing through cytometric sorting negatively impacts on the organoid cultures and is not the best method to take forward. The alternative method (cell recovery solution extraction from matrix and freeze as whole organoid cell pellet) has been successful - peptides recovered from organoid pellets passed quality control, successfully ran through the mass spectrometer and >4000 proteins were identified. This work confirmed that intestinal organoids faithfully replicate human intestinal tissue and this initial work confirms organoid use for proteomics via mass spectroscopy.

**Our credentials and partnerships** - CICRA is a non commercial partner in the National Institute for Health Research and a member of the Association of Medical Research Charities. We work closely with the British Society of Paediatric Gastroenterology, Hepatology and Nutrition, and were actively involved in the design, printing, and distribution to hospitals across the UK, of the official “Guidelines for Management of IBD in Children”. All the research we fund is rigorously peer reviewed by external referees from the UK and other countries and our Medical Advisory Panel - made up of ten specialists in paediatric IBD.

# Social Media

A key priority in 2025 was to increase our reach and engagement across social media platforms. By **strengthening our online presence, we aimed to connect with more children, young people and families affected by IBD** - particularly those who are not yet registered members - ensuring they can access trusted information and support when they need it. Expanding our digital voice also helped us raise wider awareness of CICRA's work and improve public understanding of inflammatory bowel disease.



Facebook

scan to follow us!



334,000 views

99% increase in post interactions

141,000 visits

20% increase in followers



Instagram

scan to follow us!



63,000 views

100% increase in post interactions

31% increase in visits

275% increase in overall reach



We are always looking for real life inspirational stories to share - if you would like to be featured in our social media, newsletters, or website please get in touch!  
[support@cicra.org](mailto:support@cicra.org)



# In 2025

We supported

**5109 families**

who have a child affected by the condition



**1207 Parent packs and Support Cards**

sent to hospitals in the UK



**67 hospitals**

in the UK gave out CICRA information and literature



**4988 families and medical professionals**

received a copy of our bi-annual 'Insider' newsletter

**395 families** joined the CICRA membership scheme without cost to the family

**258 children** received a Can't Wait card and Radar key to help explain their condition quickly and without questioning if they need to use the toilet urgently

**541 children**

received a Symptom Impact Tracker to keep a record of how they felt between hospital appointments and to feel more confident in managing their condition



**1,820 emails, calls and messages**

seeking guidance, information and support



**46 children**

took part in the e-pal scheme and chatted to other children with IBD

**2,666 school booklets**

were provided for parents, teachers and support staff to explain IBD, school responsibilities and how the school can help

**36,059 support and information leaflets** distributed in total



# Fundraising

2025 has been another well supported year with fundraisers taking on amazing challenges.

We had our 3 amazing medics taking on their South Downs Way walk, Sam who skydived despite her fear of heights, David delivering talks to groups in exchange for donations, Gracie camping out for 6 months, runners taking on events ranging from 5k to marathons to the 3 Peaks Challenge, Arlo striding up York Minster and families taking on Inflatables events, not to forget our Charity of the Year partners - INTRUM, Manchester Builders Golf Society and Kingsdown Ladies Golf Club.

To every one of our fundraisers; **we cannot thank you enough.** Your support allows CICRA to continue funding research and supporting families when they need it the most.



If you would like to join team CICRA and take on a fundraising challenge, scan the QR code below and check out our events!



## Trust Donations

We would like to extend our heartfelt thanks to all Trust and Foundation funders in 2025 for their generous contributions totaling £92,950. This funding has significantly supported CICRA research, our VEOIBD project, parent packs, educational resources, and the creation of our information leaflets.