

RESEARCHER'S WORK TO IMPROVE NEUROINCLUSIVE DESIGN IN WALES BOOSTED BY LIVERY COMPANY AWARD

PhD researcher Zoe Alderson will present her pioneering neuroinclusive design research at a leading international psychology conference



A Swansea University researcher whose work could help create more inclusive icons and symbols for neurodivergent people has been awarded a prestigious scholarship to present her findings at a leading international psychology conference.

PhD researcher Zoe Alderson, from Swansea University's [School of Psychology](#), has received funding through a **Worshipful Livery Company of Wales Travel Scholarship** to attend the 2026 Psychonomic Society Annual Meeting in San Diego.

Zoe's research explores how neurodivergent people understand and process the icons and symbols used in everyday life, from public signage and transport systems to websites, apps and digital communications.

These visual symbols are increasingly relied upon to convey information without the need for text, yet relatively little is known about whether they work equally well for neurodivergent and neurotypical users.

Her latest findings revealed that neurodivergent participants responded to visual symbols more quickly and more accurately than neurotypical participants, highlighting important differences in cognitive processing that could help inform more inclusive design practices. The findings have growing relevance in Wales, where organisations and public bodies are increasingly seeking ways to improve accessibility and create more neuroinclusive environments and services.

Zoe said: "As someone with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) and attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), I am passionate about improving understanding of how neurodivergent people experience the world around them. Icons and symbols are used every day to communicate meaning, yet our understanding of how different groups process them remains limited. "Thanks to this award from The Worshipful Livery Company of Wales, I will

be able to share my findings with leading international experts, gain valuable feedback and develop collaborations that will strengthen my future research.” The research is already attracting interest beyond academia. Following a previous conference presentation, Zoe was invited to discuss her findings with representatives from the Welsh Government and how they might help shape future accessibility initiatives in Wales.

Zoe was selected for the scholarship through a competitive process open to Swansea University researchers at an early stage of their careers.

Sylvia Robert-Sargeant, a member of The Worshipful Livery Company of Wales Awards Committee, said: “One of The Company's aims is to encourage and support students to progress with a specific project. This timely opportunity for Zoe illustrates how such valuable work can make a vital contribution to organisations and public bodies in Wales who are increasingly seeking ways to improve accessibility and create more neuroinclusive environments for the community.

“We raise funds through various charitable events and also by reaching out, not only to our Liverymen for financial support, but also to the wider community in Wales. We encourage like-minded Welsh organisations interested in promoting education, science, technology and the arts in Wales to support our activities. We are delighted to be able to support Zoe in taking this project forward and sharing her important research work with a wider international and influential audience.”

Founded in 1993, The Worshipful Livery Company of Wales promotes education, science, technology and the arts across Wales. Through its annual awards programme, it supports young people in developing their talents and skills by offering scholarships and bursaries to students, apprentices and members of the armed forces.