



SIETARUK

AUTUMN ONE-DAY CONFERENCE 2026

Relational Intelligence: Empathy and Trust in Intercultural Practice

SATURDAY 31 OCTOBER 2026

LONDON

09:00–16:55

A day of keynote insight, practical workshops, research-led presentations and shared conversation for people working across cultures.

AT A GLANCE

OPENING KEYNOTE

Professor Helen Spencer-Oatey

Relational intelligence and emotional awareness:
Practical insights from psychology

CLOSING KEYNOTE

Dr Irina Chongarova-Aron

What Interculturalists Do When Nobody's Watching:
Intercultural in Private

TWO CONNECTED THEMES

THEME 1

Trust, Dialogue & Relational Intelligence

Trust, listening, misunderstanding, identity, ambiguity,
power, connection and relationship-building.

THEME 2

Empathy, Compassion & Intercultural Leadership

Empathy, psychological safety, leadership, wellbeing,
cultural complexity and relational responsibility.

FIND YOUR WAY

KIN G04 Large plenary room	KIN 206 Smaller room	COUNCIL ROOM Lunch
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ACCESSIBILITY NOTE

Unfortunately, classroom KIN G04 does not have step-free access as the building is grade 1 listed.

Conference Programme – Morning

TIME	KIN G04 • LARGE PLENARY ROOM	KIN 206 • SMALLER ROOM
09:00	ARRIVAL • KIN G04 Doors open Arrival and welcome	
09:20	OPENING REMARKS • KIN G04 — SIETAR UK Board	
09:30–10:00	OPENING KEYNOTE • KIN G04 Professor Helen Spencer-Oatey Relational intelligence and emotional awareness: Practical insights from psychology	
10:00–11:15	PRESENTATIONS - Relational Intelligence: From Theory to Practice Dr Christa Uehlinger — When the Unknown Kicks In: From Reaction to Relational Intelligence Arsenia Corcoba Santamaría — Empathy and Compassion in Intercultural Leadership Maria Koromila — Leaving the Container: Identity, Belonging and the Space Between 15–20 mins each + open discussion/Q&A	WORKSHOP 1B Cara Cunniff What Does It Feel Like to Work With You? Building empathy, trust and connection across cultures.
11:15–11:35	BREAK — Break & networking	
11:35–12:50	WORKSHOP 2A Joy Wiggins When Culture Isn't the Only Culture: Navigating Legitimacy, Trust, and Power Across Difference	WORKSHOP 2B Andy Pring Writing Across Difference: Storytelling, Trust and Relational Intelligence in Intercultural Practice
12:50–13:45	LUNCH • COUNCIL ROOM — Lunch & networking	

Conference Programme – Afternoon

Parallel sessions are shown side by side. Shared sessions take place in KIN G04.

TIME	KIN G04 • LARGE PLENARY ROOM	KIN 206 • SMALLER ROOM
13:45–15:00	PRESENTATIONS - Trust and Empathy in Context Vandana Das — The Invisible Cost of Cross-Cultural Misreading: When Leadership Intention and Experience Diverge Dr Jane Darvill-Evans — How Intercultural Coaching Stimulates Learning: Exploring the Experiences of Coaches and Coachees in Japanese–Western Dyads Carol McDermott MBE — When Trust Breaks Down: Advocacy, Empathy and Access to Justice Across Institutional Boundaries <i>15–20 mins each + open discussion/Q&A</i>	WORKSHOP 3B Bernd Gibson Building Bridges of Trust
15:00–15:15	BREAK — Break & refreshments	
15:15–16:30	WORKSHOP 4A Neil Payne Mind the Empathy Gap	WORKSHOP 4B Dr Cheryl Forster Using the Wisdom of the Nervous System for Increased Connection in Intercultural Interactions
16:30–16:50	CLOSING KEYNOTE • KIN G04 Dr Irina Chongarova-Aron What Interculturalists Do When Nobody's Watching: Intercultural in Private	
16:50–16:55	CLOSE • KIN G04 Closing remarks Conference team	
17:30 onwards	SOCIAL Pub social Details to follow	

Workshop Spotlight

10:00-11:15 | KIN 206 | Cara Cunniff

What Does It Feel Like to Work With You?

Building empathy, trust and connection across cultures.

WORKSHOP ABSTRACT

What does it feel like to work with you? We often treat connection as chemistry: something that either happens between people or doesn't. Yet we can also build connection with intention, through how we listen, respond and relate.

Someone gives you their full attention and you feel valued; someone talks over you and you feel invisible. These moments matter. Repeated across a team, partnership or organisation, they shape its emotional culture: how it feels to be part of it.

Across cultures, we cannot assume that the same words or behaviours make everyone feel respected, included or understood. Relational intelligence asks us to notice our impact, question our assumptions and remain curious when another person's experience differs from our own.

In this interactive workshop, Cara explores how workplace culture feels, how people want to feel, and the behaviours that build connection. Through reflection and shared dialogue, participants explore the moments that matter in relationships, how they make others feel, and what builds trust and connection across cultures.

Participants leave with a clearer understanding of their impact and practical actions to build empathy, trust and connection in their teams, partnerships and intercultural work.