

Kent Research Partnership Newsletter

June 2022



Happy birthday to the Kent Research Partnership!

Ann-Marie Towers
Reader in Social Care
University Of Kent

Georgina Walton
Senior Project Manager
Kent County Council

The Kent Research Partnership, led by Kent Adult Social Care and the University of Kent, is celebrating its first birthday. To mark the occasion, we are pleased to launch our very first Newsletter, updating you on the progress so far and news of things to come.

So much has happened in 12 months. We've held online consultation events, established a working group of people with lived experience, recruited our three amazing Researchers in Residence (Rasa, Wenjing and Lilly), agreed research priorities for our region, set up Communities of Practice, held research clinics and training, and even submitted evidence to the House of Lords Select Committee for Adult Social Care!

None of this would have been possible without the support of our wider team and all of the people who have given their time to attend our events, contribute their ideas and get involved in our Communities of Practice. THANK YOU!

There is much to be excited about as we enter our second year, not least the launch of our prestigious Research and Training Fellowships in September. These will fund up to three people to undertake research training and conduct a project of their own, with support from the wider team. Remember, **you've got to be in it to win it** – so if this sounds like something you would enjoy, sign up to a Community of Practice and get involved!

Update from the lived experience working group

Following a slow start, we are now very much a part of the project. We are very pleased to have identified a representative group of members and are currently working on a focussed training programme to ensure all members are well equipped to play an active and supported role.

Our members are very much involved in the Communities of Practice and ensuring that the voice of those with lived experience is heard and acted upon. We have an interesting group and are always looking to widen our areas of experience.

If you are interested in joining the working group, please email KentResearchPartnership@kent.ac.uk. We are particularly keen to hear from younger people who are currently underrepresented in our working group. You can download the role description [here](#).



John Potts
Public Engagement
Lead

UPCOMING EVENTS

22nd June 2022 (12:30-14:00): **Supporting people with complex needs throughout the lifespan Community of Practice** via Zoom ([register on Eventbrite here](#)).

This Community of Practice will also meet on 17th July, 19th September and 19th October (12:30-14:00).

14th July 2022 (12:30-14:00): **Enhancing, diversifying and sustaining the social care workforce Community of Practice** via Zoom

This Community of Practice will also meet on 14th September and 13th October (12:30-14:00).

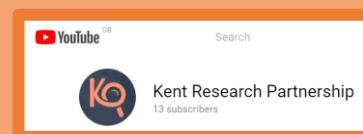
18th July 2022 (13:00-14:30): **Addressing diversity and inclusion in working with people experiencing homelessness** via Zoom

Dr Carin Tunåker will discuss the importance of considering intersectionality in relation to people experiencing homelessness.

The research skills workshop will focus on how to conduct ethnography and observational methods.

Please [email us](#) to be added to the mailing list and receive registration links for our events.

Missed an event? Catch up any time on the [Kent Research Partnership YouTube channel!](#)



An Introduction to Communities of Practice

After months of preparations, we are really looking forward to our Communities of Practice getting underway. However, we appreciate that the term 'community of practice' is used in different contexts and means different things to different people.

Dr Ferhana Hashem has recorded a short video to explain more about what our CoPs are and how you can get involved.



Hover over the image and press Ctrl + click, or follow this link to watch on YouTube: [Join our Communities of Practice](#). A handbook is also available to support participation in Communities of Practice.

Researchers in Residence round-up

The RiRs have been busy laying the groundwork for building research capacity in Kent and spreading the word about how we can help. Watch our video to hear more about what we've been doing and our plans for the project:

[Researchers in Residence - YouTube](#) (hover over the words or image and press Ctrl + click to follow the link)

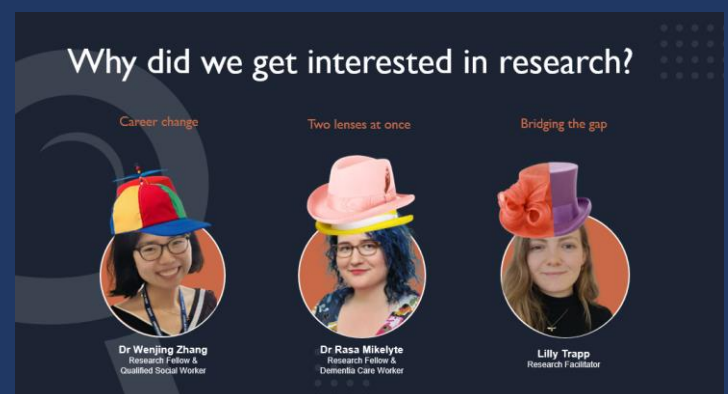


Building a researcher network

We've also been working to understand the current research capacity in Kent County Council by asking staff from adult social care, as well as children's services and public health colleagues, to complete a short survey to tell us about whether they have completed research in the past and/or are interested in future research. We were really pleased with the response to the survey and as a result have set up an online space for those with an interest in research to share ideas and build a network of research-interested practitioners.

Knowledge exchange events

In April, we held our first knowledge exchange session: The 'what', 'why' and 'how' of adult social care research. This was well-received by participants and prompted a flurry of requests for our drop-in research advice clinic. We were keen to make the point that we all wear many hats, and that the lines between researchers, practitioners, and those with lived experience of using care or caring should be blurred. We may have taken the visual metaphor too far, but we like our hats!



Following the introductory session, we began our series of 'two sides of the coin' events, bringing together learning from current research and research skills workshops. In May we were joined by Dr Stacey Rand to hear more about implications for supporting carers ([available to watch on YouTube](#)), and in July Dr Carin Tunåker will discuss intersectionality in relation to people experiencing homelessness.

Research advice clinic

We've really enjoyed meeting people with a wide range of research ideas at various points on their research journey. We are available for 1-to-1 sessions to discuss all things research, from narrowing down ideas into research questions, to funding opportunities and applications. Send us an email to book a session!

Widening our impact

The Kent Research Partnership is one of six research capacity building projects funded by the National Institute of Health and Care Research (NIHR) and we are keen to work with the other five partnerships (as well as the wider NIHR 'family' of projects) to share learning and maximise the impact of our work. We are delighted that we have secured additional funding for this aspect of the project.

Recently the Kent Research Partnership coordinated a cross-partnership response to the House of Lords Adult Social Care Committee's Call for Evidence – [Lifting the veil: removing the invisibility of adult social care](#). Working alongside the other partnerships, we were able to quickly bring together people with lived experience of care and caring, working in the sector, and researchers to gather views through an online focus group, interviews, and survey responses. We look forward to seeing the response of the committee to this important consultation.

Research spotlight: *Sharing progress and findings from recent studies in Kent and beyond which are relevant to our priorities for practice*

Retention and sustainability of social care workforce (RESSCW)

The RESSCW project aims to: identify the particular characteristics of adult social care staff compared with workers in other low-wage service sectors; examine what drives the retention of staff employed in care homes and domiciliary care as well as care workers employed directly by persons using social care services (or so-called Personal Assistants); identify what drives some staff to leave the social care sector, as compared to switching jobs to other social care employers; and assess what impact the COVID-19 pandemic had on social care workforce wellbeing and retention.

Members of the workforce community of practice in particular may want to stay up to date with this project: [Retention and sustainability of social care workforce](#) | [Retention and Sustainability of Social Care Workforce \(pssru.ac.uk\)](#)

Digital inclusion (Research in Practice)

This study was co-produced with women who have learning disabilities, learning difficulties and / or autism. The findings include four tools to use directly with people to assess their digital skills and preferences, barriers to access, and confidence about keeping safe online.

Key messages for practice:

- Digital technologies and the internet are an important part of everyday life, and can have a significant and positive impact on the lives of people with care and support needs
- Adult social care has an important role to play in addressing issues of digital exclusion – practitioners should ensure they have the skills to support digital inclusion and can refer to the [Digital Capabilities Statement](#) to help them identify and address knowledge gaps
- There are positive ways to promote staying safer online, including discussing sharing information online, encouraging people to take screen breaks, and talking confidently with people about risks such as revenge porn or grooming.

Lambell C, Slinn E, Shand S, Wild J & Sutton J. (2022). Digital inclusion - Using digital technology positively and safely: Practice Tool (2022). Dartington: Research in Practice.

Recent blogs

Gina Walton, Senior Project Manager at KCC and Kent Research Partnership co-lead, explains [why research matters to adult social care](#)

Ann-Marie Towers, Principal Investigator, discusses [building capacity in adult social care research](#)

Lilly Trapp, one of the Researchers in Residence, introduces the first [Community of Practice: supporting people with complex needs throughout the lifespan](#)



We would love to hear your feedback!

Please [email us](#) if you have any comments about the content or format of this newsletter, including what you would like to see in future editions.