



# Research Mindedness in Adult Social Care – Learning Event

Wednesday 16 October 2024  
10am-12noon

directors of  
**adass**  
adult social services  
**West Midlands**



# Welcome to the Event

The aim of this event is to share findings from a WM ADASS research study focusing on 'Research Mindedness in Adult Social Care', the barriers to engagement in research and readiness to undertake research. The event will also:

- Promoting the purchasing of a subscription to British Journal of Social Work, accessible online for all practitioners and other staff working in adult social care in local authorities in the West Midlands to continue to raise awareness and build the momentum for research;
- Hearing from social workers successful in gaining NIHR funding as part of Local Authority Programmes for Research Career Development;
- Sharing examples of how Local Authorities are engaging with research in practice settings;
- Focusing on the next steps, including recruitment to research posts to support research engagement.

This work is part of a WM ADASS programme 'Developing a sustainable research culture and infrastructure for Adult Social Care in across the West Midlands' <https://www.wm-adass.org.uk/improvement/developing-a-research-culture/>



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## Housekeeping:



- We will be recording this event; the video will be made available after the webinar;
- Audience: Please switch **off** your microphone **and** video. Any communication can be submitted via ‘Chat’;
- MST automatically records attendee details i.e. email address. We will use this to identify people who joined. This data will be deleted within 4 weeks after the event;
- We will not sell or share your Data with a 3rd Party. Data will not be used for any purpose other than to share relevant circulars i.e. sharing the PowerPoint or recording.

# Today's Agenda

- Welcome
- Revisiting previous events and updates
- Research Study Findings - Research Mindedness amongst adult social care staff 'Barriers to engagement in research and readiness to undertake research in Adult Social Care'
- Access to the British Journal of Social Work
- Local Authority Research Engagement
- Looking Forward and Next Steps
- Closing Remarks



# Revisiting Previous Events and Updates

- Regional bid to NIHR successful in 2022 and work undertaken over the past two years in partnership with the University of Birmingham
- Progressing a research study in partnership with research colleagues at University of Birmingham 'Research Mindedness amongst ASC staff'
- Produced individual LA Research Engagement plans
- Holding dedicated LA Events in through Summer 2023
- Providing support to fellow practitioners to become research champions and those wishing to further their research career development, event in September 2023
- Developing research and evidence informed practice i.e. a WM resource for front line staff 'How can NICE guidance support evidence informed SW practice' in conjunction with NICE implementation field team
- Producing proof of concept for Communities of Practice to support sharing of best practice, knowledge, learning and identification of research priorities, building on the WM ADASS already established Community of Practice for Learning Disability and Autism
- Engaging with the West Midlands Social Work Teaching Partnership to ensure effective models of research dissemination and learning from research seminars
- Access to the British Journal of Social Work
- Events programme for 2023/24.

<https://www.wm-adass.org.uk/improvement/research/>

- Ongoing journey!

<https://www.coventry.gov.uk/adult-social-care-learning-development/additional-resources/22>



# Research Mindedness in Adult Social Care: A Systematic Review

Developed by:  
Jemma White, Sandra Simpson, Vicky Croft & Dr Jason Schaub  
November 2023

The review **identifies, evaluates**  
and **synthesizes** the existing body  
of research, both published and grey  
literature



directors of  
**adass**  
adult social services

**West Midlands**

## FINDINGS

### **Characteristics of Included Studies:**

- The location was spread amongst the expected Western locations, with the largest group from Australia (n = 8, 42%); four from the United Kingdom (21%), seven remaining countries had one paper each (Sweden, New Zealand, Norway, USA, Germany, Israel, Holland).
- All published in peer reviewed journals, 1 single grey literature document, a research report commissioned by the Welsh Assembly Government.
- Used mixed methods (n=9). 7/9 studies conducted surveys, with qualitative data collected through survey questions. 10 papers were divided between quantitative (n=5) and qualitative (n=5) methods.

# Methodology

## Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria:

(1) addressing research mindedness for social care; (2) empirically researched; (3) in English; (4) published from 2010.

## Sifting

1020 articles were screened across all databases. A librarian performed the initial search and removal of duplicates (955)

83 articles were removed for not meeting the inclusion criteria, and 5 studies were added that were acquired from the references of the articles retrieved from databases searches.

19 identified articles were reviewed against quality criteria (Critical Appraisal Skills Programme, 2018a, 2018b) and were determined to be methodologically sound with valid results, whilst also upholding ethical research standards.



# Themes

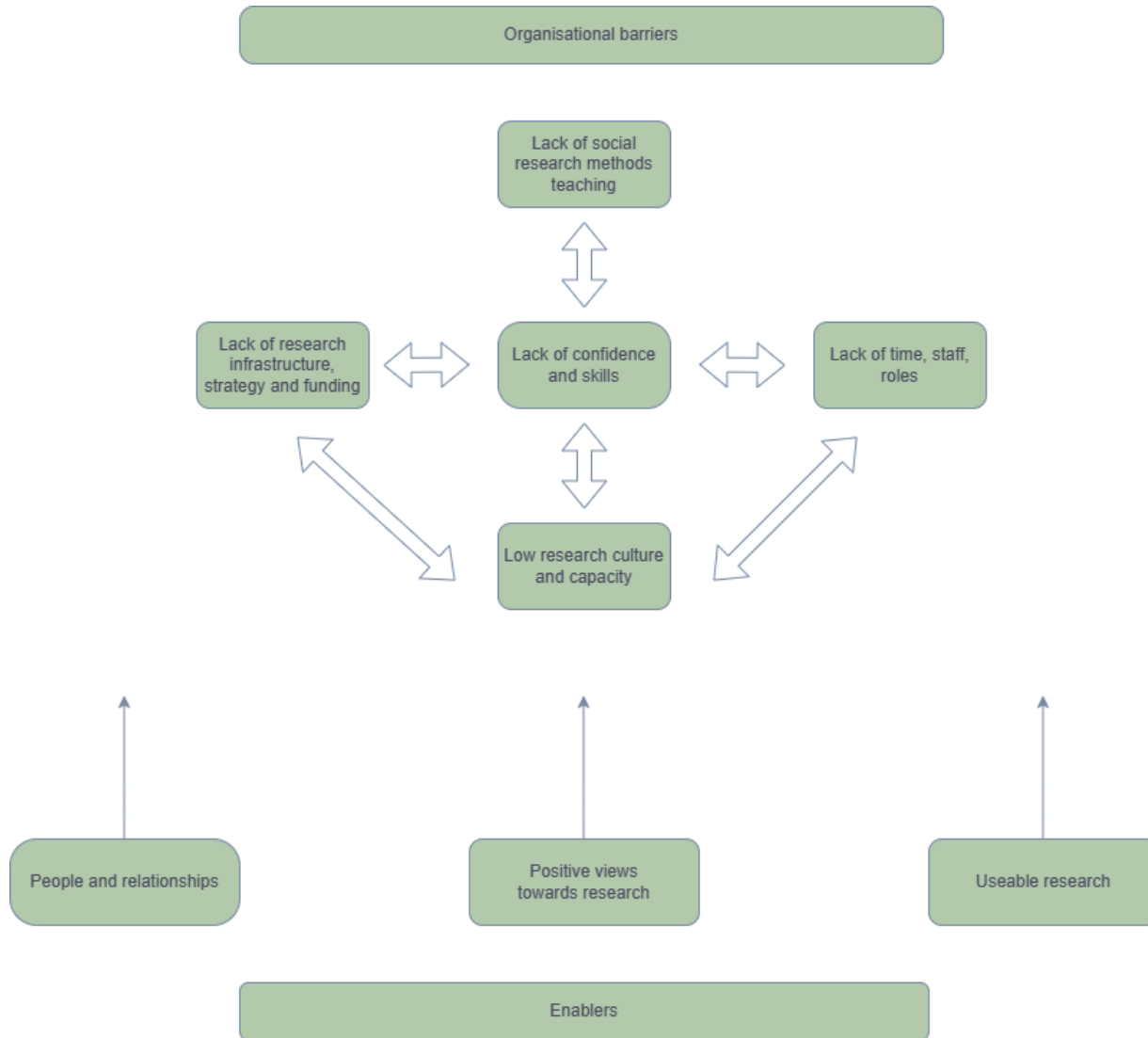


- Positive views towards using evidence
- A lack of research culture and skills
- Time pressures
- Views about what counts as evidence
- People and relationships
- Importance of useable research
- Organisational factors

# Discussion

**This review has found that staff have three types of concerns about using evidence:**

1. that it is not allied to the spirit of adult social care (Beddoe, 2012, Gray et al., 2014, Morago, 2010)
2. the implications of new knowledge on existing ways of working (Wakefield et al., 2019), and
3. the narrowness of definitions of evidence (Gray et al., 2015).



# Enablers & Barriers



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## Strengths and Limitations of the Study

***Every method has limitations, and systematic reviews have inherent limitations which affect this review.***

- The evidence included can only be as good as the studies gathered for the review – hence the appearance of so-called ‘empty reviews’ which serve to outline where a field has not produced sufficient knowledge to populate a systematic review (Yaffe et al., 2012).
- The sampling methods to recruit participants for the studies are biased towards those with an interest in research, given that many of them sought participants that self-selected to be included. This means that there are likely many similar people that do not hold the views represented in these studies.
- Many of the included studies had relatively small sample sizes, meaning that the samples could be representative of the target population. Consequently, the findings from most studies were not generalizable.



# Recommendations

1. Increase both the quantity and coherence of social research methods teaching on social work/ social care programmes
2. Support research positive staff to develop relationships within and across social care organisations
3. Organisations and universities should encourage greater collaboration between practitioners and researchers
4. Research should produce succinct and clear messages for practice and ensure that these publications are easily accessible for adult social care staff (such as ensuring publications are open access, or that academic articles are synthesised into a practice briefing document that is freely available)
5. Social care organisations should take steps to reduce barriers to engaging with research, including supporting individual and workforce-wide participation
6. Social care leaders and management structures should deliberately foster and communicate an organisational-wide approach to research mindedness



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# Future Research

- There is little research that explores what works to enable research mindedness - identify the effects of implementing enablers, include investigations discussing which is more effective at improving research mindedness: targeting individual members of staff or developing organisational policies.
- Organisational factors need much more evaluation – identify variables and how these interact to support or inhibit research mindedness.
- Few of the included studies mentioned the experience of budgets - investigate the views and experiences of social care service users and carers.
- Absence of rich, qualitative data drawn from interviews and focus groups – use of these methods to gain a deeper understanding of barriers and enablers.

# Research Study

## What are the Barriers and Enablers for Research Mindedness within Adult Social Care in the West Midlands?

### Research study aims:

- To identify the barriers and enablers to adult social care workers engaging in research activity.
- To map the current engagement in research across the region.
- To develop an understanding of research engagement of adult social care staff

# Methods

## Survey

- Professionals
- People who access adult social care



## Online & Face to Face Focus Group Discussions

- X3 Professionals
- X2 People who access adult social care



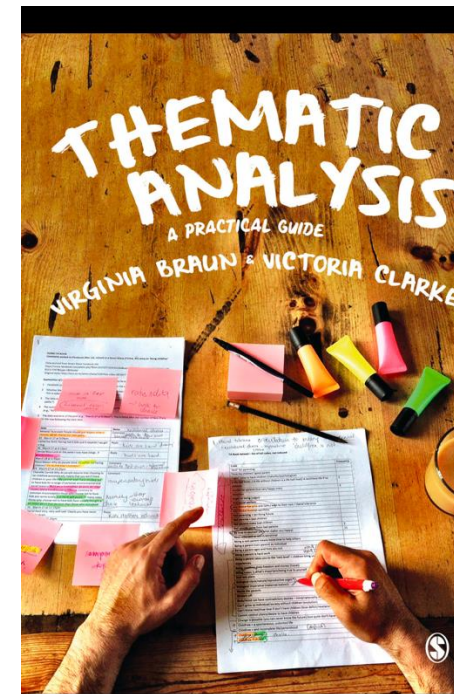


# Analysis

## Descriptive Statistics



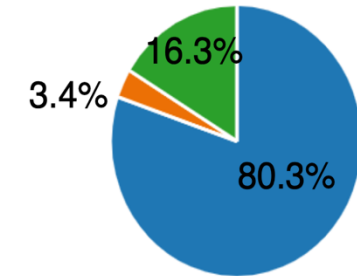
## Thematic Analysis



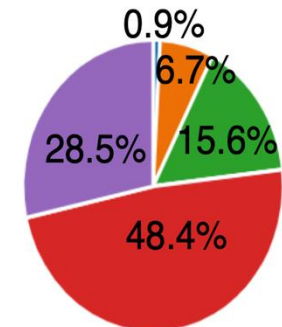
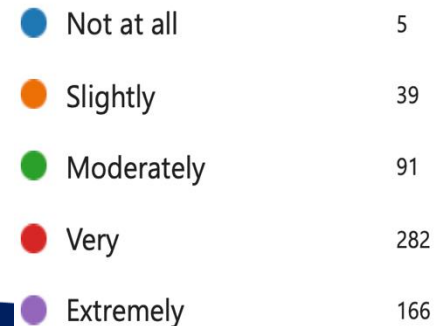
# Professional: Survey Results

Job Role	N (%)
Qualified Social Workers	281 (47.1%)
Social Work Apprentice	24 (4.0%)
Occupational Therapist	44 (7.4%)
Nurse	4 (0.7%)
Social Care Practitioner	55 (9.2 %)
Commissioners and Workforce Development	46 (7.7%)
Principal Social Worker	13 (2.2%)
Community Development	8 (1.3%)
Other	108 (18.1%)
<b>Total</b>	<b>583 (100%)</b>

## Do you think research skills should be part of your own professional development?

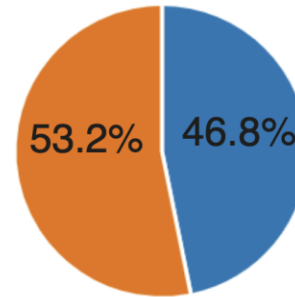


## How relevant do you feel research is to your current field of practice?



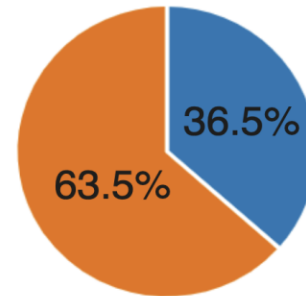
.. **Are there discussions within your team about how research relates to practice?**

● Yes	273
● No	310



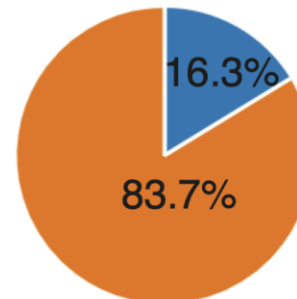
. **Over the past three years have you contributed towards any research activity (either as participant or part of a research team)?**

● Yes	213
● No	370



l. **Over the past three years have you received any research training (either from your organisation or personally)?**

● Yes	95
● No	488



## Other headline results

- 82.7% (n=482.1) of respondents stated direct practice takes priority, with the demands of practice leaving little room to undertake research.
- 54.5% (n=317.7) of respondents, agreed that they do not have funds to undertake research and 50.8% (n=296.2) agreed that there was a lack of suitable backfill.
- There was a near-even split between types of research methods and confidence, with 38.3% (n=223.3) of practitioners stating they felt comfortable undertaking qualitative research, while 32% (n=186.6) were comfortable with quantitative research.

# Professional Results: Focus Group Themes





# Time

“I'm sure practitioners are research-minded in some respects, but I would agree that there's probably not a lot of time allocated for frontline social workers on a team level.” (Respondent, 12).

“There's very little space for reflection or encouraging research, or to that, you know, there's a tiny space that talks about development, right at the end, but by the time you've talked for all your cases and you're fed up and you're probably rush through them because there's not enough time to talk through them”. (Respondent, 11)

# Organisational Barriers



## Culture

“[...]there isn't any focus on research within the team at all. It's not anything that's valued or even discussed a lot of the time. So I'd say that, yeah, that there's, yeah, there's not really a culture of research in the team at all” (Respondent, 10 ).

## Infrastructure

“And again, that is perhaps something that culturally the organisation could support with, because I guess it's about people doing that and then maybe coming up with their five key takeaways from a document or a piece of research that could be incorporated in people's work and kind of making that more accessible. But you've got to have departments, maybe a learning department or whatever, that do that” (Respondent, 12).

# Continued

## Leadership

“If you go further up the hierarchy, you know if you've got senior leadership who aren't particularly research-minded or again are focused on budgets and time scales and KPI's and CQC and so on, then you know it's gonna be really difficult as a practitioner to say, well actually I just really like to do a little bit of research, and I'd like to carve out a bit of time to do that” (Respondent, 12).

“[...]maybe it's kind of left up to individual managers of like, you know, if they have a....if they really value research and they feel it's a priority because you know there's so many time pressures, then they'll try and make the time for it. But it's kind of left up to individuals to whether they wanna put it in place or not at the moment. Even though I think, you know, we're gradually trying to improve it more within the local authority, I think it's still quite early days. So it's whether the manager wants to put it in place enough to be able to kind of commit time to it and make, you know meetings and make opportunities for staff to engage in it”[...] (Respondent, 6)



# Individual interest

“... it's the people who've got the interest in it, who are doing it already outside their working hours. And staff are not going to be able to prioritise it if we continue to say, but you've got, you know, X amount of cases and all these pressures and pick up 10 more on duty tomorrow sort of thing. They're just, why would you if you're not that keen interest to prioritize it, if it's not a mandated part of your role” (Respondent, 4).

“One of my staff I manage, he's doing research you know...spending you know... in his own time..... and it's part-time....he's doing, ..... he's funding himself not funded through the local authority. Yes. So that is something he's aspiring for, that is something he wanted to do it, so that's enough” (Respondent, 7).



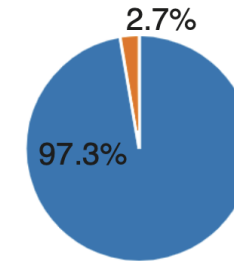
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## Survey Results: People who Access Adult Social Care

- 37 respondents
- 11/14 Local Authorities

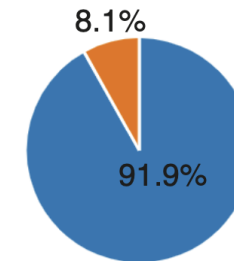
Do you think that research is important for providing good adult social care services?

● Yes	36
● No	1



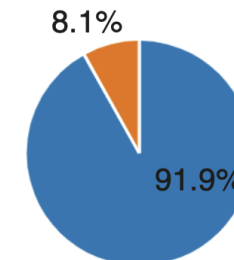
Do you see any value in adult social care workers researching issues that may impact on your care and support?

● Yes	34
● No	3



Would it matter to you if your adult social care worker was not up to date with the latest social care research and evidence?

● Yes	34
● No	3

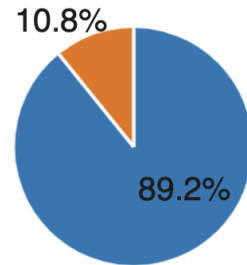




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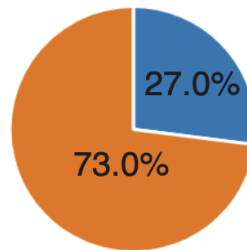
1. Would you like to know the evidence that influences the changes to adult social care services?

● Yes	33
● No	4

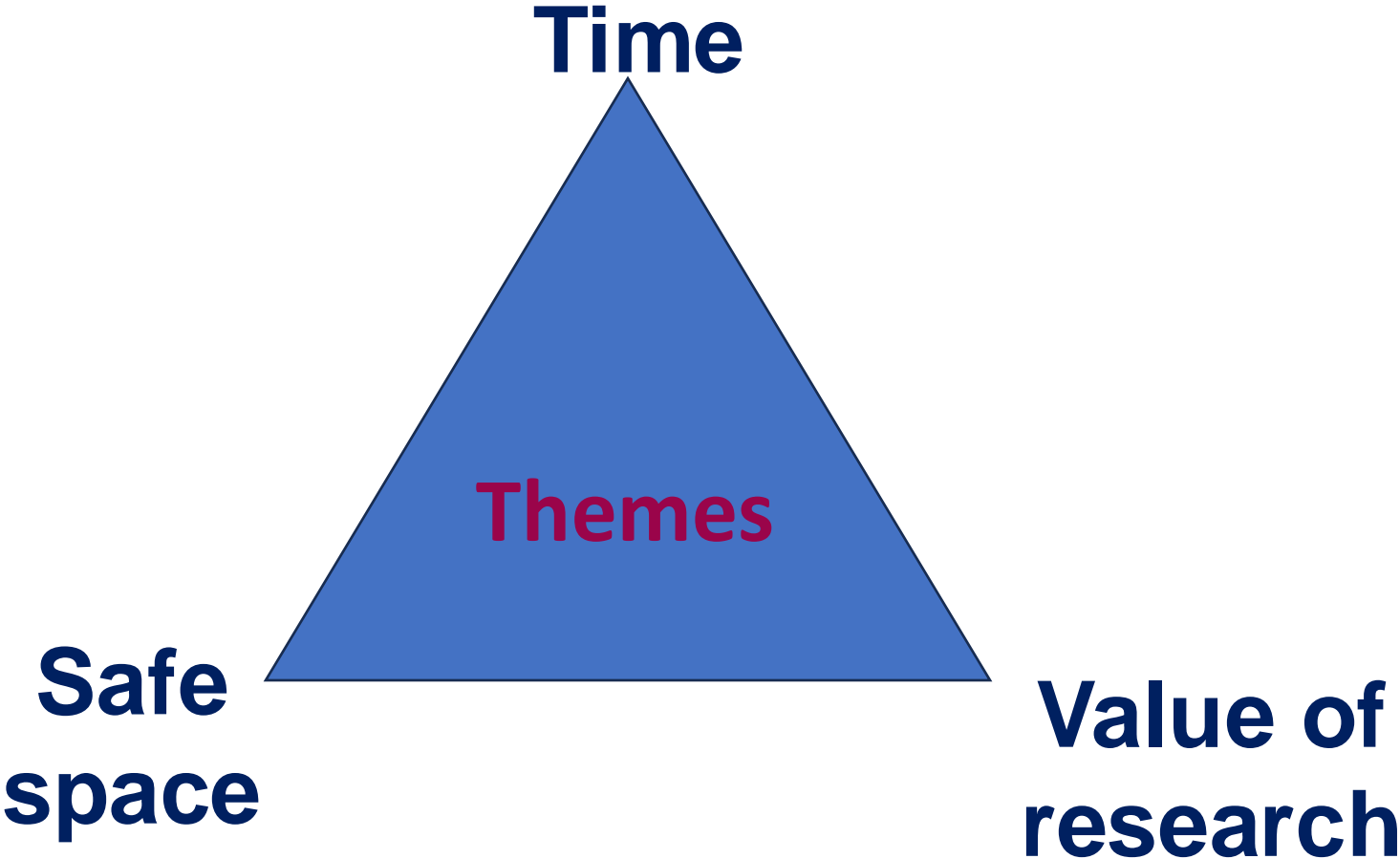


2. Have you been involved in other adult social care research?

● Yes	10
● No	27



# People who use services/carers





## Time

- “that you feel as a user or as a client that you feel undervalued because its like, I’m such a time pressure, you are aware of time pressures, as well as, you could speak to Joe Bloggs on the street, who’s not on the receiving end, because the news covers it all, the news covers the shortage of workers and all the rest of it, that everyone is just generally aware that there is a shortage of social workers, even if you’re not in the system”
- “when I started [using adult social care], my workers seemed that they had a lot more time, I don’t want to say to get educated, but that they had that more time to get more knowledgeable and learn about my condition”

(Respondent, 1)

## Value of research

“A lot of changes within social care is legislation changes, a lot of changes within medical side of things isnt legislation changes, its more trial based and that side of things, and its down to a consultant to make a decision about whether they are going to make that change or not, based on the trials and things like that, where as social care, this is the change we are going to do”

“That’s what person centred care is, you know we are all using the term person centred care but actually what is person centred care? a worker knowing that research can also enable, the user when making them more independent, more knowledgeable about their own condition, which is also a huge part aswell”

“you care about my views to help influence the future and influence your work and that you value me beyond the person in front of you for what Im needing support with”

(Respondent 1 )

“I would say if they did [use research in their work], I wasn’t aware of it”

(Respondent 2)



- “If I was to challenge my worker and say “why are you doing this?” I think it would possibly get my worker’s back up and wrong as it is, I would be scared to get my worker’s back up”
- “It’s making it clear it’s a separate body, it makes a huge difference because then you know...I can be open to them and it will not have affect, that I can turn around and be like, ‘my LA is the worst LA going’ and you know that it definitely wont have an effect on my care, because the two don’t get joined together”
- (Respondent 1)
- “knowing and trusting the practitioner doing the research, that they are fair, they are moral, they have the client’s best interests at heart and that they genuinely want to understand and genuinely empathise to help them, the flip side is having that rapport, working relationship, might actually allow you to be more open”
- (Respondent 3)



# Safe Space



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## Conclusion and Recommendations

- People who access adult social care and adult social care practitioners see the value in adult social care research.
- Adult social care is facing underfunding, recruitment, and retention crises, which is a major barrier to embedding a research culture.
- Until we address these organizational barriers, progress in fostering a research-minded approach within local authorities will be limited.
- To improve this situation, we need to implement a research strategy that includes allocating time for practitioners to consume, take part and lead research activities. It is essential for local authorities to adopt this approach.
- Leadership needs to model a research positive culture.
- LA's need to develop strategies to cultivate confidence in practitioners to undertake research which will need to include working collaboratively with higher education.
- LA's need to consider the benefits of making grant applications for research funding.





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# Break



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# Access to the British Journal of Social Work

## Supporting access to Research – Access to the BJSW

- WM ADASS purchased the British Journal of Social Work, accessible online for all practitioners and other staff working in adult social care in local authorities in the West Midlands to continue to raise awareness and build momentum for research.
- A new Open Athens organisation 'West Midlands Social Care' is now live, and this will be the way you can access the journal.
- You will need to register. To do this go to [openathens.nice.org.uk](https://openathens.nice.org.uk) and search for 'West Midlands Social Care' under the organisation. You will need to apply to register with your local authority email address.
- Journal found in My Resources – search in 'Oxford Academic'
- Just to note your registration may need to await approval (being initially denied) and emails from Open Athens may need you to 'permit' or 'allow' if blocked by councils IT.



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# Local Authority Research Engagement



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# Local Authority Research Engagement – Coventry City Council

- In 2023 worked with PSW colleagues to look at development of local engagement plans for research. Extracts from Coventry’s plan .....
- *To develop an Adult Services Learning Hub – SharePoint site to host learning, development, and research materials*
- *To encourage all team leaders and supervisors to subscribe to knowledge and learning resources available in support of research engagement, professional curiosity, and delivery of critically reflective supervision*
- *To work with key groups of practitioners i.e., Apprentices, NQSWs and Practice Educators in support of using research and evidence informed practice*
- *To raise profile of career development awards/support for research activity on offer from NIHR and encourage practitioner uptake*
- *To engage with relevant research and disseminate research findings*



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**Liza Armstrong, Social Work Team leader in an integrated mental health social work team in Coventry City Council**

**Pre-doctoral Local Authority Academic Fellowship (PLAF) Awardee**



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## My Background

- I always had an interest in research to advance knowledge about practice or to advance knowledge within practice since came to the UK to study social work.
- There is so much practical knowledge on the frontline, but the pressures of work, turnover of staff and the lack of a clear career pathway meant that there have not previously been opportunities to capitalise on this knowledge.
- This award has taken away all the barriers that previously stopped me returning to academia after completing an MA in leadership and management in Social Work 10 years ago.



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## NIHR and Benefits of the Award

- I did not know about NIHR until I had a chat with WM ADASS Research champion Sandra Simpson (Coventry City Council). At that time, I was only interested to learn about her role, and my interest on research. I came to know about NIHR. Journey for PLAF process start from there.
- PSW advice and sign posting has been incredible.
- Benefits of Award?
- One of the benefits of the award – **funding** covers 100% and its flexibility ( part time or full time).
- Able to stay in job whilst continuing with further study and research.
- Local Authority get 20% of my time continue working for the council and I can keep up to date with my mandatory CPD.
- Most importantly this award gives me an opportunity develop my Practice Academic career and channel further opportunities





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# Success comes with challenges

- I am the 1<sup>st</sup> person to gain this award in my service area.
- Lack of understanding about the NIHR funding process and criteria
- I had to educate myself to educate others.
- Challenges helped me become more successful by helping me to develop new skills, demonstrate commitment, and dedication helped me to build resilience, and become more creative.
- I am in a fortunate position to be around with some supportive managers and colleagues.
- The PLAF is an opportunity for me to develop my research and leadership skills as a practitioner academic. I aim to submit a competitive doctorate application (PhD) on completion of the PLAF



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## NIHR Career Development

- Interested to know more, have a look at WM ADASS research pages and events held in 2023?

<https://www.wm-adass.org.uk/improvement/developing-a-research-culture/research-engagement-events-2023/>

- Access the NIHR slide deck - considering a Practitioner Academic Career – Opportunities with the NIHR

<https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/1MymQeYeHx9w0r03WmMUDuds4cS9kBXRhnd73yKvlozU/edit#slide=id.p1>



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# Ayesha Rahaman, Practice Development Social Worker, Adult Social Care, Coventry City Council ‘Research Circles’



## Introduction and Context

- For most of us, the last time we probably engaged in Research was when we completed our university training.
- Previous Adults Chief Social Worker, Lynn Romeo (February 2023), supported and encouraged social workers to bridge the gap between research and practice and make research the *centre* of social work practice.



## Research Circles – an approach

- As part of embedding the culture and value of research as an integral part of social work and social care practice, research circles are a potential way of making use of research and embedding its learning in practice.
- A research circle brings together practitioners and academics to attend a reflective session to read and review a piece of research which has been recently published.
- Developed from approach started by Wolverhampton CC



## Expertise and Partnership

- Samena Rashid, Tutor at Coventry University
- Passionate about research and currently undertaking research doctorate. Agreed to support and share her expertise on research.
- Provided the use of ‘Padlet’ – online post it wall
- Support with identifying research and constructing questions.
- Co- chair and facilitate discussion





# Resources

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## The British Journal of **SOCIAL WORK**



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*Tracey Peckham, Area 1000, South West London*

## Planning and Approach

- **Audience** Social workers, occupational therapists, support workers, commissioning and service providers.
- **Research** Topic-relevant and interesting
- **Frequency**- Every second month
- **Time** 1.5 hour
- **Method** Virtual by MS Teams
- **Research Method** Qualitative versus quantitative





## How do they work?

- A journal article is selected for example from the British Journal of Social Work (access provided by WM ADASS) or journals available via Care Knowledge or any other accessible knowledge and learning source. This is shared with the circle 2 weeks in advance of any planned session for reading.
- Framework for the sessions - 5 key questions used to frame the discussion



# Group Discussion and Reflections

1. Your thoughts on the article, was it an easy read/difficult article to get into and understand?
2. Having read the article what were the challenges, if any you faced in your role in supporting carer breaks?
  - a. Were they the same as those reported in the article?
  - b. Were there any other challenges if so, what were they?
3. Any thoughts on the approach or research method taken for this research?
4. If you were to do this research in your area of social work, what approach would you take and why?
5. What is the key learning for you take away from this article?



# An Example of Padlet-The Value of Carers

██████████ 6/3/24 12:32PM

sometimes carers reluctant to accept support, often info left for them and revisited to undertake seperate carers assessment and found this crucial, sometimes it requires some persuasion. Experience of couples who felt marriages was about caring and looking after each other and that was their commitment similiar to findings of the research

██████████ 6/3/24 12:34PM

Cares coming forward and coming for the break and finding services tailored to their needs may be generally reason behind that - having loved one in a care home doesn't always fit everyone, eg in Coventry what is out there- is reluctancy because it doesn't meet the needs. Having people in their own home is found intrusive - so building relationships over time

██████████ 6/3/24 12:36PM

carers may value break - example of an Asian lady went for respite in home, dementia - lady held her stomach but staff were not aware and interpreted this as maybe has pain whereas it was her way of saying she was not happy there



## Progress Thus Far.....

- 4 Sessions using articles from British Journal of SW:
- **Session1**- 20 February 24 -Covid Experience of Frontline Workers in the West Midlands Region
- **Session2**- 29 April 24 -Strengths-based Approaches— Perspectives from Practitioners
- **Session3**- 3 June 24 - Understanding Carer Breaks
- **Summer Break**
- **Session 4**- 16 September 24 - Applying Dyadic outcomes Approach to supporting elderly carers
- **Next session 5** – 4 November 24 - TBC



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# Looking Forward and Next Steps - 3-year strategic plan for research and Adult Social Care in the West Midlands



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# Developing a 3-year strategic research plan

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BIRMINGHAM

- Jointly recruited an Embedded Research Fellow (bid by WM ARC to NIHR Social Care Capacity Grant) commences 21 October
  - working with WM ADASS to develop an infrastructure, governance, identifying research priorities, supporting practitioners, submitting funding bids and undertaking research with practitioners.
- Recruiting a Research Engagement Lead(s) (funding from NIHR and WM ADASS) – advert out now
  - leading and developing communities of practice, raising awareness and identifying priorities
  - continuing to develop relationships with academic institutions
  - encouraging and supporting practitioners to undertake research study
- We have an identified WM ADASS Research Associate – Andrew Errington
  - working with Principal Social Workers to take the lead for research in their authority
  - working with Principal Occupational Therapists Network and Co-Production Advisory Group
  - supporting Research Engagement Lead(s)
- Establishing a virtual regional research team to deliver all of the the above



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## Next steps - 3-year strategic plan for research and adult social care in the West Midlands

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- Encouraging, supporting and mentoring practitioners to undertake research study and establishing a pool of research ready practitioners
  - NIHR programmes, Local A Fellowships, Prof doc, MA, PhD
- Developing and establishing joint governance for research across the 14 local authorities/regional Ethics Committee to approve and oversee research studies
  - a place where all ‘research’ is considered and overseen
  - what might this look like?
- Encouraging and supporting people with lived experience to engage in research, and ensuring the voice of people with lived experience is at the heart of research
- Identifying research priorities for the region
- Collaborating with developments in the Voluntary Sector, including Birmingham and Solihull Research and Community Engagement Hub and Research Champion for Black and Minority Ethnic Communities





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## Next steps - 3-year strategic plan for research and adult social care in the West Midlands

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- Submitting bids for national funding for research
  - Research Fellow to lead
- Jointly commencing/delivering one/two/three research studies to meet regional research priorities
  - practitioners jointly engaged in the research
  - supports learning and improving practice in the region and contributing nationally
  - recognition as undertaking research and a region committed to being more professionally curious
  - having research on the NIHR portfolio



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# Closing Remarks