

MAKING RESEARCH COUNT (UNIVERSITY OF YORK)



THE UNIVERSITY *of York*

Annual Report 2007-2008

Introduction

Making Research Count (University of York) is part of a national initiative to disseminate research and related evidence with the aim of informing and enhancing service planning and delivery in social work and social care contexts. The Making Research Count (University of York) [MRCYork] project has been working in the Yorkshire and Humberside region in the autumn of 2001.

This report covers the academic year 2007/8. We report on our programme for the year, how our work was received and report on staff changes for the forthcoming year.

Making Research Count (MRC) is a consortium of nine regional projects based at the universities of Brighton, Central Lancashire, East Anglia, Keele, Bedfordshire, the Open University, King's College London, Salford and York. These universities have high profiles on the fields of social work and social care research and have come together to work in regional partnerships with local authorities (and health and voluntary sector agencies in some regions) to develop an evidence-based and knowledge-informed approach to service delivery and development. Making Research Count is committed to the development of practice which draws on knowledge from research and related findings, practitioner knowledge, and service users' and carers' experiences and knowledge. Within that overall objective, each project has the flexibility to develop in the way that is most appropriate for its partnership.

National Making Research Count activities

The regional project links into the national network. York staff attend the national steering group meetings and regional project co-ordinators' meetings.

Further issues of the national Research Briefings series for Children's Services have been produced by Making Research Count in conjunction with Research in Practice and the Department for Children, Schools and Families. This work is led for MRC by Professor Mike Stein, University of York.

There are also other national initiatives in which MRC is to play a key role. Firstly, the government announced the establishment of a Centre for Excellence and Outcomes in Children and Young People's Services (C4EO) and invited bids for organisations to run it. MRC is one of the delivery partners who will provide specialist expertise. Core partners include the Social Care Institute for Excellence (SCIE), the National Children's Bureau, the National Foundation for Educational Research and Research in Practice (RIP). Secondly, the Children's Workforce Development Council invited bids to provide supervision and support to its Practitioner Led Research (PLR) Programme and MRC was successful in its tender application. We are delighted at the increasingly high profile played by MRC in such national initiatives.

In addition, MRCYork member agencies continue to receive invitations from time to time to events run by the other MRC projects around the country, and similarly extend invitations on behalf of our programme.

Making Research Count (University of York) regional activities

This was the seventh year that MRCYork has delivered a programme in the Yorkshire & Humberside region and the second time that we have delivered separate programmes to Children's Services and Adults' Services. Last year, we reported that Hull Adult Services had decided not to renew its membership. We are delighted to say that they rejoined part way through this year. However the two regional CSCI offices ceased their membership following the transfer of their Children's teams to OFSTED. We anticipate all our local authority member agencies renewing their membership in respect of both programmes for 2008-9, making a total of sixteen subscriptions across eight agencies.

Our partner agencies for 2007-8 were:

East Riding
Hull
Leeds
North East Lincolnshire
North Lincolnshire
North Yorkshire
York
Wakefield

The project has continued to be co-ordinated by Leslie Hicks and Marilyn Crawshaw and administered by Jane Phythian. As well as delivering the programme, Leslie and Marilyn have dealt with individual queries about research as well as having regular contact with staff working in the field of research dissemination and implementation within and outside the region and overseas.

It is with some sadness that we report that this is the last year that Leslie and Marilyn are to work on the project. Leslie is taking up an appointment at the University of Lincoln based in Hull in September and Marilyn is to spend more time on her own research. Both of us have enjoyed our time with MRCYork, especially the contact with participants at our programme events. However, we are delighted to say that Paul Dyson, whom some of you may know as a former senior manager with East Riding Social Services Department, is providing interim cover until we are able to appoint a replacement co-ordinator.

Programme

As in previous years, our programme of events was based on a number of specific features:

- Aimed at staff with operational or training responsibilities for strategic planning and/or delivery of services.
- Shaped in consultation with member agencies.
- Covered all service user groups with some sessions designed to attract participants from more than one sector.
- Included a variety of types of intervention: subject modules (including two full days), day conferences; two hour research briefings seminars; conferences; research workshops and research consultation sessions.

The 2007-8 annual programme of events consisted of:

Regional Conferences:

- 'Working with Teenagers: support, participation and resilience'
- 'Mental Health: It's Everybody's Business'

Subject Modules:

- 'User led organisations and the development of Centres for Independent Living'
Sue Bott, National Centre for Independent Living, London

A planned module on 'Transitions into adult services for young disabled people' had to be cancelled at short notice due to the illhealth of the key presenter. It was too late in the year for the event to be re-scheduled,

Research Briefings Seminars:

- 'Reuniting looked after children with their families: an overview of research on patterns and outcomes'
Nina Biehal, Professor of Social Work and Assistant Director, Social Policy Research Unit, University of York
- 'Becoming and being parents: the experiences of disabled young people and adults when exercising reproductive choice'
Harriet Clarke, Lecturer in Social Work, University of Birmingham
Marilyn Crawshaw, Lecturer in Social Work and Research Fellow, Department of Social Policy and Social Work, University of York
- 'Developing outcomes-focused services for older people'
Caroline Glendinning, Professor of Social Policy and Assistant Director, Social Policy Research Unit, University of York
- 'Inclusive Extra Care Housing: supporting people with dementia and promoting social well-being'
Sarah Vallyelly, Research Manager, Housing 21
- 'The integrated Children's System: managers, practitioners and service users' experiences of its early implementation'
Margaret Bell, Senior Lecturer in Social Work and Paul Dyson, Research Fellow, Department of Social Policy and Social Work, University of York
- 'Individual Budgets and self-directed support for people with learning difficulties'
Ralph Edwards, Deputy Head of Learning Disability Services, City of York Council and Ian Buchanan, Lecturer in Social Work, Department of Social Policy and Social Work, University of York
- 'Recent Developments in social work with unaccompanied asylum seeking children'
Jim Wade, Senior Research Fellow, Social Policy Research Unit, University of York
- 'The 'Group Filial Therapy' and 'Incredible Years' Parenting Programmes: Findings from a comparative pilot research study'
Virginia Ryan, Senior Lecturer, Department of Social Policy and Social Work, University of York
- 'Ways of working with bullying: what does the evidence tell us?'
Bryony Beresford, Senior Research Fellow, Social Policy Research Unit, University of York
- 'Working in partnership: possibilities and pitfalls'
Helen Dickinson, Lecturer, Health Services Management Centre, University of Birmingham
- 'A university-agency partnership to develop the use of research in improving quality in service delivery'

Jess McEwen and Angie Liversedge, Wakefield MDC Family Services together with Greta Bradley and Marilyn Crawshaw, Department of Social Policy and Social Work, University of York

A session on 'Saying hello everyday: combating loneliness and isolation among older people by Steven Shardlow, Professor of Social Work and Director of the Institute of Health and Social Care Research, University of Salford had to be cancelled on grounds of illhealth and will be run in the autumn

Research workshop

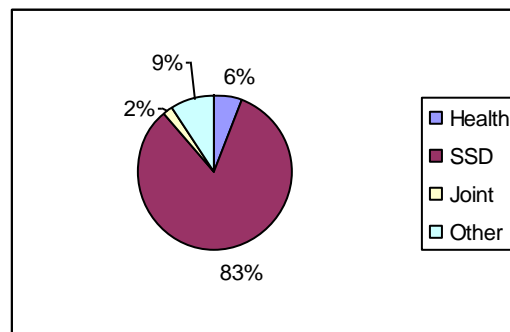
- 'Research for busy practitioners'
Robert Gunn, Lecturer in Social Work, Department of Social Policy and Social Work, University of York

Attendance

The attendance distribution by agency has remained largely similar this year (see figure 1). Not surprisingly, most of our participants come from Children's and Adults' Services with relatively few from Health, Education or other statutory services despite advertising.

The trend in recent years for increasingly small numbers identifying themselves as holding joint appointments has continued.

Figure 1: Attendance rates by agency



We are pleased to report that the dip in attendance rates (i.e. the numbers who came as a percentage of those registered) reported last year has not been repeated. Overall, our attendance rate was 87%. When looked at according to the type of intervention, the Research Briefings sessions achieved the lowest attendance at 85% with the highest being for the subject module at 92%. Perhaps our new policy of notifying contacts as to which staff have failed to attend has contributed to this improvement.

Programme Evaluation

Evaluation forms were collected at the end of all the events in the MRCYork programme and response rates were high.

(i) Conferences

We again provided two day conferences this year – one for Children's and one primarily for Adult

Services which was opened up to include Children's Services.

In February, we ran a day conference on '*Working with Teenagers: support, participation and resilience*' and in July on '*Mental Health: It's Everybody's Business*'. Both were heavily subscribed and well received. Building on our experience from last year as reported in our Annual Report, we made some free places available at both conferences to service users as well as involving them as platform speakers. This reflects the commitment of MRC to draw on the 'triangle of evidence' from service users' and carers' experiences and practice wisdom as well as academic research. In another new departure, we included the 'performing arts' in both conferences. In February, a group of teenagers from Hull did drama sketches and performed songs to reflect their experiences within or on the edges of the 'looked after' system.

In our July conference, we hosted a Drum Circle with facilitator Steve Hill in which almost the entire audience experienced at first hand the power of communicating through a different sort of sound. Already enthused by reference by one of the speakers to the Glasgow Arts Festival set up to combat stigma around mental health, this latter experience led to a spin-off group getting together to explore the possibility of similar Arts Festivals being run locally.

Comments included:

February conference

'Opportunity to network and bounce ideas generated from presentations of others, excellent mix of researchers and practitioners'

'Gave food for thought, to implement into practice'

'Sharing ideas and experiences, involvement of [the young person's group] was a brilliant way of getting the young person's views across'

July conference



'Good variety of content ranging from more academic to practice based, and drumming was great to have after lunch'

'Practical elements from clinicians explaining services, found the 'mental well-being and creative arts' fantastic, thought inspiring and extremely effective'

'Much better than I thought, fresher, punchier, focussed, varied and interesting'

While evidence suggests that conferences have limited impact in increasing the use of research-based knowledge, their value in providing a reflective space and the opportunity to network persuades us that they should remain a valuable part of our programme.

(ii) Two-day Subject Modules

Subject modules have three elements:

- a day on the dissemination of research by researchers with extensive knowledge in the area concerned;
- a 6-8 week period for reporting back to agencies, forming a working group, choosing a relevant goal for service development informed by the research and related evidence and

liaising with MRCYork staff;

- a second day facilitated by MRCYork staff, with the researchers available as consultants to the planning process, in which the working groups move through a structured sequence of steps towards developing an implementation strategy for service change or development.

We delivered one subject module to Adults' Services and were disappointed at having to postpone that for Children's Services following the illness of the presenter (she has since recovered).

It is with great sadness that we report the untimely death of Sue Maynard Campbell who had been due to deliver the Adults' Services module alongside Sue Bott. Sue had worked with MRCYork before and we were very much looking forward to her involvement again. She was a tireless and highly effective campaigner in the disability field. She will be sorely missed.

Staff attending the first day on User Led Organisations went away to disseminate findings, convene a working group, agree on specific goal and return to work on the development of an implementation strategy 6 to 8 weeks. We were particularly pleased that the working groups on the second day included service user led organisations and service users. We understand that the implementation strategies developed that way are already underway and we wish those involved every success.

The sessions themselves maintained the high ratings seen in previous years. Content and clarity of presentations were rated highly but, as ever, the encouraging results were those that showed that participants gained confidence in how to make use of the research and related evidence by the end of the module as seen in Figures 2 and 3 below).

Figure 2: Clarity about next actions at end of Day One

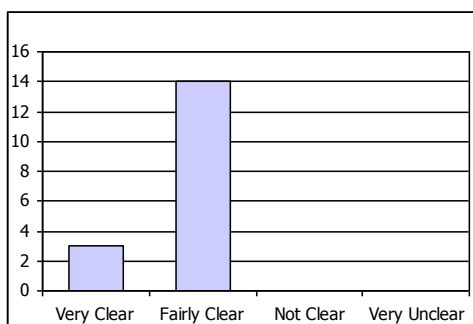
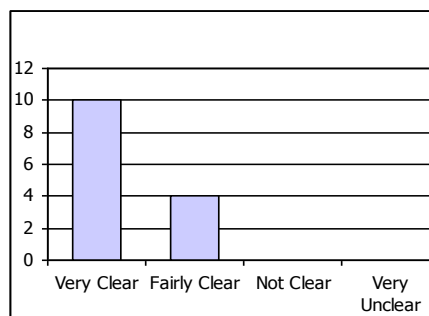


Figure 3: Clarity about next actions at end of Day Two



Individual comments included:

'Research into practice at its best'

'Extremely helpful; it's been a really good day'

'An opportunity to come to an in depth workshop on making research count and user led organisations has been excellent'

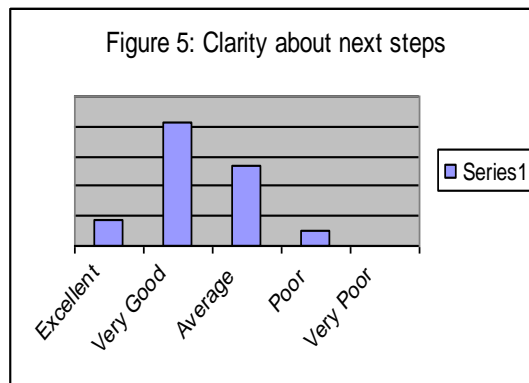
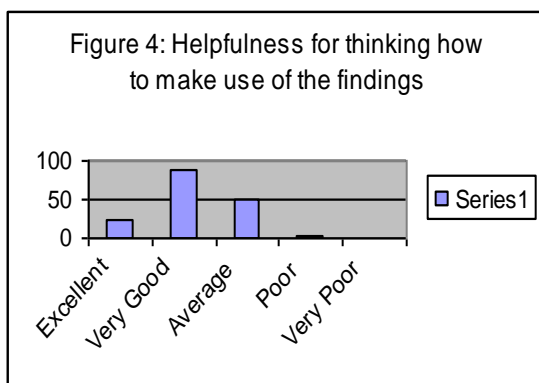
(iii) Research Briefings Seminars

As usual, we ran a series of short research briefings seminars throughout the year – mainly in two hour sessions. These seminars include research presentations, whole group and locality based discussion time. Some were directed specifically at Children's or Adults' Services and some were

aimed at both (for example the one on disabled parents). Additionally, some seminars drew on material from one sector (for example, working in partnerships) that carried transferable messages and hence we advertised them across sectors. We will continue to include in our programme some sessions that will be relevant across sectors and welcome the use of MRC in bringing staff together in this way.

The sessions appeared to work well, on the whole. Occasionally, participants realised that they were in posts that restricted the usefulness of the information provided. For some others, their interpretation of the advertising flyer meant that their expectations were not realised. Finally, some of the small group discussions worked better than others. Much more commonly, participants welcome these shorter sessions, even with the inherent limitations on the opportunity to explore implementation issues and resulting lower ratings of clarity about 'next steps' than in the longer subject modules. Nevertheless, the attention that we *do* give to implementation is well received and provides at least some reflective space to capture thoughts and ideas before returning to busy work spaces.

In response to some feedback from last year that some participants would have welcomed a longer time for networking, we booked the seminar room over lunchtime and encouraged participants to bring a sandwich lunch. However take up proved minimal and hence we have dropped this idea.



Individual comments included:

'A thought provoking and informative presentation with the advantage of the opportunity to discuss with others. Will certainly be used to enhance discussions/practices in my workplace'

'Got to the heart of it; realistic and informative'

'Very useful, well done, clear, helpfully simple'

'Very useful for my whole organisation'

'I am currently reviewing our own children's homes and will use info from this session in my plan for future services for LAC in them'

'Discussion in small groups gave me clear ideas about how to look at implementing research findings etc and clear ideas of barriers'

'It has confirmed what I felt I already knew but has given me the confidence to move forward with our work...'

(iv) Research Briefings Seminars

We repeated our highly successful 'Research for Busy Practitioners' workshop in this year's programme in which practitioners get the opportunity to learn about undertaking research themselves. It again received highly positive feedback including:

'Good handouts; so pleased I came'

'Spurred me on to start my research soon! Excellent, I really enjoyed it'

'Excellent presenter' very accessible style, altogether very interesting and useful'

Pilot of Research Consultation Surgeries

During the course of this year, we ran a pilot Research Consultation service for four months, after discussion with members. Posters were circulated throughout member agencies to invite anyone who was contemplating undertaking research or who was already designing or running a research study to book a consultation appointment (either telephone or face to face) with a researcher at the university. In the event, we received only a handful of enquiries, most of whom came from one agency only. We therefore discontinued the service, though would be willing to pilot it again in the future if demand appears likely to be more robust.

Regional Research Governance Framework (RGF) for Social Care Group

MRCYork staff have continued to facilitate a regional group of staff with responsibilities for the development and delivery of RGF structures within their agency. It meets quarterly and comprises staff from outside member agencies as well as within, including the NHS. The group offers an opportunity to share ideas and experiences of developing RGF processes and encouraging research activity. We have been kept in touch with national social work research developments through Professor Ian Shaw (who is a member of the group) who holds a national role on such matters. We also maintain regular contact with the SSRG through Chris Russell. This enables us to keep abreast of national developments in relation to the RGF (or lack of them) from the Department of Health. The situation regarding Children's Services remains of concern although a number of those agencies in the region who have not yet brought Children's within the remit of their RGF procedures moving towards it. The lack of resources for this work remains of concern.

Knowledge Transfer Partnership initiative

As reported last year, MRCYork and the Department of Social Policy and Social Work have been working in partnership with Wakefield Family Services Department (formerly Social Services and Health) on a Knowledge Transfer Partnership (KTP) project funded through the Department for Trade and Industry and the ESRC (Economic Social Research Council). This two year project ended in mid July and has been assessed both by Wakefield Family Services and the university to have been highly successful. The team attended the regional RGF Group meetings where they gave regular updates on their work and shared the materials that they developed. Conference papers have been given (including at the International Association of Schools of Social Work Conference in Durban, South Africa) and articles submitted to peer-reviewed journals. The work of the project was the subject of one of the workshops in our annual programme (see above).

Making Research Count York Website

Members have access to the York project's web site: www.york.ac.depts/spsw/mrc. Apart from

basic information about the MRCYork project, it includes information about the MRCYork forthcoming programme, Annual Reports, information about other regional Making Research Count programmes and national MRC conferences. It also provides access to the national Social Policy Association website.

Discussion

This report covers the seventh year of our project in the Yorkshire and Humberside Region. We are pleased that we appear to have maintained our performance on all aspects of the programme. It is especially encouraging that our attention to implementation in the shorter events as well as those taking place over longer time periods is well received. It is also satisfying when seeing staff at more than one event to hear of the use that they have made of earlier research findings and associated discussions. However it was also disappointing that there was so little take up of the Research Consultation sessions during the pilot period. Clearly the time was not right for this initiative but we hope that our successors consider offering this again in the future.

While we outline below some of the key issues arising from the delivery and evaluation of the programme, the change in staffing arrangements means that we cannot include specific plans to address them. We are confident, however, that our successor(s) will use these as the basis for discussion with our members:

- *MRCYork dissemination/implementation model* – organisers of conferences and research-related sessions typically pay little attention to helping participants consider implementation strategies tailored to their locality. By building implementation discussions into the core of each event in our programme, we have found that rich discussions can evolve regardless of the time involved.
- *The triangle of knowledge* - national MRC has actively promoted the importance of the triangle of knowledge (academic research, practitioner wisdom together with service users' and carers' knowledge). This year, the York project has continued to concentrate on including service users and carers as well as practitioners, where possible, in the audience as well as on the platform. This has worked well.
- *Joint working objective* – we reported last year on a trend towards reduced involvement in our programme of staff from agencies outside of the mainstream social care context, for example health, housing and education staff. This has continued and remains, in our view, disappointing.
- *Adults' and Children's Services arrangements* – our programme has continued to attract 'mixed' audiences at some events. This appears to work well, given the limited opportunities for such dialogues.
- *Knowledge Transfer Partnership initiative* – the project to explore new research utilisation models as a result of the Knowledge Transfer Partnership initiative with Wakefield Family Services Department is now complete. It has provided valuable learning about ways of improving research-mindedness within a social work and social care agency context. The project drew heavily on both MRC principles and materials and has in turn contributed knowledge to our work. Reports and associated articles are available on request.

Conclusion

The core aim of the MRCYork project is to help social work and social care staff within adults' and children's local authority services to implement research and related evidence in effective and sustainable ways. Such work is complex to deliver successfully, especially given the pressures

faced by staff in busy operational services in the public sector. However, this has been a stimulating and rewarding project to work on. Given the opportunity, staff readily engage in critically reflective debate about their service, identifying the type of existing and future research and knowledge that enables them to do this. Not surprisingly, we hand over the project with mixed feelings but we are confident that MRCYork events will remain an important part of the regional calendar.

Marilyn Crawshaw
Leslie Hicks

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Annual Report and Executive Summary available on our website: www.york.ac.uk/depts/spsw/mrc

The Making Research Count (University of York) Team is:

Professor Ian Shaw ☎ 01904 321260 ifs2@york.ac.uk

Leslie Hicks slh8@york.ac.uk (to August 2008)

Marilyn Crawshaw ☎ 01904 321254 mac7@york.ac.uk (to August 2008)

Paul Dyson (Acting Regional Co-ordinator) ☎ 01904 321207 spsw520@york.ac.uk (from July 2008)

Jane Phythian, Administrator Voicemail ☎ 01904 321237 jp42@york.ac.uk

Department of Social Policy and Social Work

University of York, Heslington

York, YO10 5DD

Website: <http://www.york.ac.uk/depts/spsw/mrc>

