This is the second edition of the Newsletter in relation to the Social Work Research Strategy. The first edition published in July 2014, provided the case for the development of such a strategy for Northern Ireland. In this edition I am delighted to announce the fact that in December 2014 the Strategy was launched for consultation. This is a very exciting time for the profession so it is important that we build on the momentum already established to secure successful outcomes intended to be mutually beneficial for both service users and carers and the profession.

The strategy has been informed by the engagement and support of a wide range of interested organisations and individuals both internally within the health and social care sector and externally from a diverse range of settings including academia, the voluntary sector, representative organisations, service users and carers and other individuals. I wish to personally thank all those for their time commitment to date. It is our intention to capitalise on the positive attitudes that exists for the development of the strategy at this time.

I feel very privileged to be associated with this work which I believe is a step change towards a cultural change in the profession in relation to social work the conduct and application of research evidence.

The newsletter will also provide you with some other interesting and innovative initiatives and feedback on a number of events and celebrations on the research agenda.

If there are pieces of information that you would like to share with a wider audience I am happy to add into any forthcoming edition of the newsletter.

Anne McGlade
Social Care Research Lead
Health and Social Care Board
Tel: 028 95363017
Launch of the Social Work Research Strategy

In December 2014 the Health and Social Care Board launched a public consultation in relation to the:

Supporting the profession in relation to social work services in Northern Ireland

The consultation led by the Health and Social Care Board reflects joint leadership across the Department of Health and Social Services and Public Safety and Association of Directors of Social Work. This consultation exercise runs until March 2015.

In her foreword Fionnuala McAndrew, Director of Social Care and Children in the Health and Social Care Board and Lead Director for this work stated:

“*The Social Work Research Strategy outlines our vision for the future drawing on where we are now and why we feel that a social work research strategy is important. The aim is to build an organisational culture that recognises the value of research and evidence to inform policy, commissioning and practice in the delivery of services and so support both the visibility of the social work profession and better outcomes for service users and carers*."

Research is fundamental to everyday practice of policy makers, commissioners...
The timing for the development of the Research Strategy coincides with the implementation of the 10 year Strategy for Social Work in Northern Ireland (DHSSPSNI 2012). The Social Work Strategy sets out the vision and agenda for action by social work and social workers in improving the social wellbeing of individuals, families and communities, including supporting greater personalisation. It is intended that the aspiration within the Social Work Strategy will be enhanced by having the design, development, delivery and management of services and new innovations based on sound evidence of ‘what works’ and equally importantly ‘what does not work’. As a result service users and carers will have more of a say in services that affect their lives.

**It is your strategy so we want to hear your views**

Where can I find the Social Work Research Strategy?

The consultation documents including the equality and human rights screening outcomes are available at:

http://www.hscboard.hscni.net/consult/

Telephone: 028 95 363017 or Text phone: 028 95 363017 with prefix 18001 if you wish to speak to the Social Care Research Lead about the strategy.

Email: swresearchconsultation@hscni.net if you need a paper copy.
This was the theme of a very successful and interactive workshop hosted by the University of Ulster on 20\textsuperscript{th} November 2014 as part of the 2014-2015 DARE (Decisions, Assessment, Research and Evidence) Series of Workshops.

DARE is a research cluster that undertakes research, teaching and organisation development to support social work and allied human service professions in:

- Professional judgement and shared decision making
- Assessment processes and tools to inform decisions
- Risk assessment and management in practice and Organisations
- Creating and using evidence to inform practice and policy

The November session, attended by local and national participants was led by Anne McGlade Social Care Research Lead for the Health and Social Care Board. It considered some of the principles and processes of evidence informed practice, including its underlying ethical and value base.

Given the range and choice of evidence currently available Anne highlighted the importance of critical appraisal skills and what this means in practice. Linking the session to the current Draft Social Work Research Strategy she emphasized how the strategy provided an ideal opportunity for reinvigorating the debate on the value and contribution of critical appraisal and the use of evidence in decision making.

For further details check out:

www.socsci.ulster.ac.uk/irss/
Drawing on an expert panel of social work practitioners, the seminar lived up to its promise of being interactive and informative. It explored the current use of evidence in some key practice areas across health and social care organizations; the challenges in undertaking this work and how the opportunities offered by the social work research strategy to support staff to ensure that service users and carers can be confident that services provided are based on the best available evidence.

Our panel included:

- David Hamilton, Looked after Children, South Eastern Trust
- Debbie Gillespie, Primary and Community Care, Older People’s Services Northern Trust
- Marc Harvey, Dementia Home Support Team Northern Trust
- Jane McCullough, Children With Disability, South Eastern Trust
- Brenda Horgan, Workforce Training, Northern Ireland Social Care Council

Each panel member provided a useful case study on how they went about searching and reviewing and applying evidence to inform their practice.

Do you want to have further dialogue about evidence informed if yes please get in touch with Anne McGlade details on front page (email: anne.mcglade@hscni.net)

For details on future DARE seminars check out the website:

http://www.socsci.ulster.ac.uk/irss/DARES%202014-15%

With events such as this we encourage attendees to feedback the learning and discussion to colleagues. After the Evidence Informed Session in November a social worker contacted us in support of the Initiative. In her response she indicated:

I’ve mentioned the scheme to colleagues who are positively disposed towards it. I emphasized that it has the potential to increase the efficiency, safety and enjoyment of the work that we do.

What I particularly liked about the initiative is that it has the potential to enrich and invigorate – to bring what is at the back of our mind to the tip of our tongue and to give people the confidence to try approaches that they may instinctively feel drawn towards but that they may otherwise not feel to be culturally permissible, as well as to introduce approaches that are novel or even culturally counter-intuitive. Apart from the obvious benefits to the client, I think that this in itself has the potential to reduce worker-fatigue as it’s inherently more dignifying and energizing to engage one’s mind in what one is doing rather than merely to follow the well-trodden path, which experience has shown to have had grimly predictable result. I think this whole aspect of evidence informed practice is quite powerful and can bring a little more rigour and I intellectual glamour to the whole proceedings. I think clients would quickly pick up on this tone.

(Response from a member of staff in one of our Trusts)
Application of Research Methods Programme at UUJ - Celebrates 21 years

For many Social Work Managers and Practitioners the Research Methods accredited, master's level Programme at the University of Ulster holds a particular place. The programme managed by a partnership between the University of Ulster and the key employers of Social Workers in Northern Ireland including the Health and Social Care Board and Trusts, voluntary and justice sectors.

Since the course was launched 21 years ago it has proved itself a valuable contributor to the development of knowledge and skills for the profession and the development of services. Over 200 staff successfully completed research and evaluation studies of direct application to their organisations.

Birthday celebrations including birthday cake, of course, were certainly in order as Professor Mary McColgan OBE and Chair of the event warmly welcomed colleagues who had come from far and near to join into celebrations.

The Choir from Jordanstown School for Children who are Deaf or Visually Impaired got the celebrations off to a fabulous start. The enthusiasm of the children and teachers was a joy and delight to see and set the tone for the rest of the event.

Choir from Jordanstown School
Whilst the Choir was a hard act to follow Professor Paul Carmichael, Dean of the Faculty of Social Sciences, provided an insightful key note which articulated the value and contribution of the programme. In congratulating the current course Director by Professor Brain Taylor for its continued success he also paid tribute to the contribution made Billy McCullough the first Course Director (who himself provided his own reflections).

A particular tribute and note of gratitude was paid to Professor David Bamford whose foresight and vision 21 years ago was that:

"the credibility of the profession would be enhanced through building the capacity and competence of social work practitioners to understand, and undertake research and apply the evidence to practice”.

Anne McGlade co tutor on the course in offering congratulations to a recent cohort who gained their awards at the birthday celebration also noted the colossal outputs from the course over the 21 years. The list of projects from over 200 candidates who successfully participated were eloquently displayed in posters, read she suggested, as a “A Who’s Who” at all levels and in all statutory and voluntary Social Work providers in Northern Ireland today.
Making the connection between the research methods course and the Social Work Research Strategy she highlighted new and exciting initiatives underway with the development of a module on evidence informed practice where a greater emphasis will be placed on creating a better understanding of finding relevant evidence; increasing critical appraisal skills and applying research knowledge to practice. In the future of the course will also encourage and practically support candidates to publish their accredited studies in Research Policy and Planning, the journal of the Social Services Research Group: http://ssrg.org.uk/

Delegates also had the pleasure of hearing from a diverse range of individuals who participated in the course over the years and who shared their personal learning journey in relation to research and evidence. Through a series of interviews led by Campbell Killick (South Eastern Trust) Stephen Knox (Barnardos), Paul Doran (Probation Board Northern Ireland), Roslyn Dougherty (South Eastern Trust) and Patricia Nichol (Northern Ireland Guardian Ad Litem) on “what the programme did for me”. The “value of the research methods course” was further articulated by Donna Murphy (Southern Trust), John Devaney (Queen’s University Belfast) and Marie Roulston (Northern Trust).

Reflecting on the event afterwards Professor McColgan commented:

“seeing so many agency partners and senior managers, and hearing the testimonies, I was struck by the impact of the research methods course on the personal and professional lives of the participants and felt the legacy of the course had permeated much deeper than we have hitherto recognised”.

Professor McColgan celebrates with candles
Child Care Research Forum Conference (CCRF) 2014

Made in Northern Ireland

On Wednesday 19th November 2014, the Child Care Research Forum (Queen’s University) held the highly successful ‘Made in Northern Ireland’ conference, the third in the series, in the Hilton Hotel, Templepatrick. The theme for this year was innovation and how it affects our research policy and practice.

Throughout the day, delegates were treated to a variety of presentations focused around the six high level outcome areas from the Children and Young People’s Strategy - Health; Enjoying, Learning & Achieving; Living in Safety with Stability; Economic & Environmental Wellbeing; Contributing to Community & Society; Living in a Society which Respects their Rights. Feedback from those in attendance has been wonderful with comments received stating “This was an outstanding conference in every way including content and facilitation, debate session was an excellent idea and a very successful way to open” and “The whole day was a delight”.

New enquiries and requests to join the Child Care Research Forum are still coming.
Speaking after the event Kathryn Higgins said we are hoping to enter into a new and exciting time with the Child Care Research Forum which will be based on an enhanced collaborative approach, including collaboration with University of Ulster.

Check out more about the Child Care Research Forum and about the November event on:

http://www.qub.ac.uk/research-centres/InstituteofChildCareResearch/News/Title,481347,en.html#d.en.481347
Forthcoming events

November and December were busy times for research and evidence events. We hope to keep up the established momentum with a Research Conference planned for February 2015. Following the 2014 event the Health and Social Care Board and the HSC R & D Division of the Public Health Agency hope to repeat the success.

The aim of the Conference is to promote opportunities for current and potential researchers to identify issues or barriers to innovative research and to explore how research can be better supported in the future.

To register for the event please complete the following information:

Date for your diary:
Monday 9th February 2015, Mossley Mill, Newtownabbey

Confirmed speakers include:
Emma Williamson: University of Bristol
David Carson: University of Portsmouth
Karen Winter: Queen’s University Belfast
Campbell Killick: South Eastern Trust

Opportunities for engagement in interactive activity and to learn more about the availability of research and evidence resources will be provided (HONNI)