

Kent Research Partnership Newsletter

Autumn 2022

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- Research Fellowship applications now open
- Celebrating one year of our working group
- Spotlight on DYADs study – and much more!

Welcome to our Autumn Newsletter

We can't believe that we are now in Autumn with seasonal colours and nights getting longer and with that starting to think about winter and what that means for social care. We know the social care sector is being squeezed in all directions and the people who work in, or use, its services are in much need of a good news story. We cannot change the current political landscape, but we can share some exciting opportunities with you all and continue to invest in our region.

We are very excited to draw your attention to our three, fully-funded, **Research and Training Fellowships**. These offer a unique opportunity for anyone working in adult social care in Kent to invest in their careers and start gaining valuable research experience. We know that managers may be apprehensive about staff spending time away from front-line practice and service delivery but investing in staff is an essential part of capacity building, retention and sustainability. Why not support people to undertake research projects linked to operational issues? Research is so much more than an academic exercise, it can identify solutions to problems, provide evidence to support innovation and most of all, improve the lives of those using and working in adult social care.

Contact us to find out more!



Ann-Marie Towers
Professor in Social Care
University Of Kent



Georgina Walton
Senior Project Manager
Kent County Council

Research and Training Fellowship applications now open!

Applications are now open for the KRP Research and Training Fellowships! These provide a unique and exciting opportunity for up to three social care professionals who will undergo a competitive application process to be awarded a research grant and complete a project. The KRP fellows will benefit from the full support of the KRP team throughout the life of the project.

Anyone working for an adult social care organisation in Kent is eligible, whether you are a care home manager, a social worker, a commissioning professional, or any of the many other roles which make up the social care workforce in Kent.

Our Researchers in Residence are here to help – even if you are just considering whether this opportunity is right for you, please get in touch. Applications are open until **13th January 2023**, so there is plenty of time to consider the opportunity, get in touch with us and talk to the members of the relevant Community of Practice about your idea.

UPCOMING EVENTS

14th December 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 12th January and 21st February 2023 (12:30-14:00).

18th January 2021 (12:30-14:00): **Enhancing, diversifying, and sustaining the social care workforce Community of Practice** via Zoom ([register on Eventbrite here](#)).

This Community of Practice will also meet on 2nd March 2023 (12:30-14:00).

RECENT EVENTS

Kent Research Partnership Research and Training Fellowships: Information and Q&A event.

An opportunity to find out more about how the fellowships will work, and to answer any questions may have before submitting your application.

Watch on YouTube:

<https://youtu.be/HzdXYgSGULk>

Addressing diversity and inclusion in working with people experiencing homelessness with Dr Carin Tunåker. Followed by a session on ethnography and observational research methods.

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

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

How on Earth Did We Get Involved in This? *John and Lyn Gallimore, members of our lived experience working group, share some of their experiences so far*

Almost every day, because of the work that people know that we do, we get emails asking us to join a new group. One such email was about this project. Before we made any decision somebody who shall be nameless said, “You know, I think you'd be really useful there.” So, we thought we'd give it a try. We would normally attend a couple of meetings to see whether it was something we felt we could be useful in contributing to, and then moving on from there. We are still here after a year.

The group is a good mix of commissioners, professionals, researchers, and volunteers. It is always interesting to listen to the professional input, but we are then able to balance that with the views of either carers or the cared for. Our inputs here and in other groups allow us to share information and learning across a wide range of health and social care settings. One of the big attractions of this project is that there is a vision with a beginning, middle and, more importantly, an end. So often a group is brought together, plans are made, work starts and – somebody moves on and everything comes to a grinding halt. As taxpayers we find this extremely frustrating and an enormous waste of resources. So why do we do it? We're of the age where we could be sitting on a beach in Tenerife or watching daytime TV. Neither particularly appeal, and we see our voluntary work as a way of staving off the Grim Reaper.

We look for nothing more than we have already described, but then we are invited to a group summer picnic at Kent University. What a lovely idea. Covid had put a stop to such gentle activities and then its re-emergence meant a number of people were taken ill or were worried about joining a large group, although the organisers had ensured that we had outdoor access, were socially distanced and the room was well-ventilated. They laid on a beautiful spread of sandwiches which were **not** curled up at the edges, along with a whole variety of dainty cakes and soft drinks, tea and coffee. Whilst we were not able to give full justice to the spread, many of the families who received doggy bags would be pleased that not everyone was able to turn up! Our thanks go to the research team and others at the university who worked to make this all possible.

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

[‘When it comes to carers, you've got to be grateful that you've got a carer coming’: older people's narratives of self-funding social care in England | Ageing & Society | Cambridge Core](#) (Open Access) Tanner, D., Ray, M., & Ward, L. (2022). ‘When it comes to carers, you've got to be grateful that you've got a carer coming’: Older people's narratives of self-funding social care in England. *Ageing and Society*, 1-22. doi:10.1017/S0144686X22000691

A range of free resources, including to help older people understand their options, are available on the project website. Why not [listen to one of the case studies](#) and share your thoughts on the discussion points with your colleagues?

The dyadic wider impact of social care: support for older carers and the people they care for (The DYAD project)

Team: Stacey Rand, Alisoun Milne, Grace Collins, Barbora Silarova, Wenjing Zhang, Helen Ramsbottom, Della Ogunleye, Christina Reading. Detailed findings are available [here](#). Please contact s.e.rand@kent.ac.uk if you'd like to have a chat about this project.

Key findings:

- Care and support, like homecare or day activities, are designed to improve peoples' quality of life (QoL). But there is little evidence on the effect of social care on the quality of life of adults with support needs and carers, aged 65 or over, individually and also together. (We refer to this as a ‘dyadic QoL approach’. This wider understanding of the effect of support on people's lives, to consider also the impact on family/friend carers, is sometimes referred to as ‘the whole family approach’.)
- Social care professionals' views of the benefits of adopting a dyadic QoL approach were: developing a more holistic view of people's needs and QoL; building trust between families and professionals. Perceived challenges were: the potential for carers' needs to be overlooked; the time, resource and skill/experience required; data protection and confidentiality; and wider factors in the social care system (e.g. underfunding, competing priorities).
- Older carers and people they support used a range of services from community-based social care over the last 12 months. Even though participants accessed a range of services and support, they reported that their needs have not been fully met across different areas of their lives.

If you look after or support a family member or friend, or are being cared for, how do these findings resonate with you? How do you consider the overall effect of care and support, on both carers and adults with support needs, in your work/life?

If you have participated in, or come across, research that our members might find interesting, please get in contact so that we can add it to our next spotlight!

Researchers in Residence round-up

We have really enjoyed supporting the development of our two Communities of Practice (CoPs):

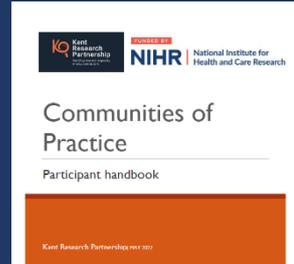


Enhancing, diversifying, and sustaining the social care workforce



Supporting people with complex needs throughout the lifespan

Both are underpinned by principles of co-production, diversity, inclusion and intersectionality, and a practice-orientated approach, and we are delighted that members from across the sector have already joined to consider some key issues and research priorities. We currently have more than 75 members registered for each CoP and our meetings continue to be well-attended, with 30-40 participants at each session in both June and July. We have invited guest speakers as well as CoP members to open the discussions on a range of topics, including:



We are excited to see how the CoPs progress in 2023, especially with potential and successful research fellows pitching their research ideas – a truly tangible example of building research confidence and capacity with the support of a wide range of people with experience both lived and learned. If you would like to join either or both CoPs, please send us an email at KentResearchPartnership@kent.ac.uk

We're here to help!

If you would like to find out more about what we can offer to you or your team, or you are looking for support for a fellowship application or any other research project, please feel free to set up a meeting or invite us to team meetings or other events – we would love to hear from you!

KRP at the Kent Registered Managers Conference



In September we attended the Kent Registered Managers Conference. This was a fantastic opportunity to meet (face-to-face!) more than 200 registered managers working in a range of social care provision across Kent.

We lured people to our stall with branded pens and hand sanitiser and spoke with managers about practitioner-research as a key part of building research culture, and as an option for retaining ambitious, research-engaged staff. We also heard about some brilliant ideas for research projects and were inspired by colleagues' enthusiasm for the project despite all the other pressures on their time. We came away with a renewed sense of enthusiasm about the importance of developing research and working closely with practitioners to make sure research is useful and relevant.



“As a member of the main team, I have a voice in all areas and will always ensure the public are a key part of our working, with co-production being addressed at all levels.”

John Potts, *public engagement lead and lay representative for the Kent Research Partnership*

Read the rest of **John's excellent blog** here: [Working in the world of academia.](#) | [Kent Research Partnership \(pssru.ac.uk\)](http://KentResearchPartnership(pssru.ac.uk))



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 issues.