PROP

Research Planning Handbook

11/7/2012

This project brings together a team of academics, policy-makers, practitioners, older people accessing health and social care provision, and specialists in evidence-use in practice and knowledge media. Together we will draw together existing evidence and generate new knowledge and understanding about improving health and social care for older people, and embed the use of this evidence to then improve the lives of older people across Scotland.

Contents

About this Handbook:

This handbook was created in support of the PROP practitioner-research programme organised by the Centre for Research on Families and Relationships (CRFR) and the Institute for Research and Innovation in Social Services (IRISS). This programme has received funding from the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC). The contents of this book are based on resources from previous practitioner-research programmes, in particular the Engaging with Involuntary Service Users in Social Work project carried out by The University of Edinburgh in 2010. The material in this book is indebted to the work of Michael Gallagher, the research fellow on that project, who designed the mentoring guidance and the research proposal guidance contained herein. All other material was created or adapted for the PROP project by Catherine-Rose Stocks-Rankin.

PROP (Practitioner-Research: Older People)

The Practitioner-Research Programme The PRP involves a series of small-scale research projects led by those delivering care for older people and/or involving older people receiving care. These research projects will be conducted with support and guidance from partner organisations, including NHS Lothian, West Lothian Council, Glasgow City Council, NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde, Midlothian Council, VOCAL and Alzheimer Scotland, and academic researchers at the University of Edinburgh and IRISS. It is envisioned that these projects will help support improved outcomes for older people and service improvement.

Each practitioner researcher will be allocated a mentor who will support the methodological development of the project and provide guidance on relevant literature etc. Mentors will also support practitioners to use their research findings in their practice, and support the dissemination and use of their research findings both within their service, organisation and wider afield.

Six one day training sessions will also be delivered over the PRP. These sessions will provide support for production and dissemination of research. This will include content on governance and ethics, methods of data collection, analysis, report writing and presentation. The sessions will focus on doing research, sharing experience, developing outputs and evaluating the process.

Knowledge exchange events will be organised throughout the PRP in order to facilitate learning from research projects within and across organisations. These events will support practitioners to share and disseminate research findings and provide evidence to partners and stakeholders about best practice.

Background This project is underpinned by two key premises, the first recognises that to improve care for older people there is a need for an improved evidence base that relates directly to the needs of those providing services and those developing policy; the second is the need to better share the evidence base through greater use of this by key audiences and users. One way to achieve both objectives is through the co-production of knowledge, between academic researchers and those involved in delivering care.

This project brings together a team of academics, policy-makers and practitioners accessing health and social care provision, and specialists in evidence-use and knowledge media. Collectively we will draw together existing evidence, generate new evidence and improve the use of this evidence to improve the lives of older people across Scotland. We will deliver a Practitioner-Research Programme (PRP) will run over eleven months, during which time practitioners will engage in a small scale piece of research directly related to the project's main theme of care for older people.

Project team This project is funded through the Economic and Social Research Council. The project leads are Dr Heather Wilkinson and Dr Claire Lightowler.

Dr Heather Wilkinson is a co-director of CRFR and Director of Research and Knowledge Exchange for the School of Health in Social Science; she also chairs the College of Humanities and Social Science Knowledge Exchange Committee in the University of Edinburgh. Heather has extensive project management experience including engaging with policy and user communities.

Dr Claire Lightowler is head of the Evidence-informed practice programme at IRISS. Claire is an experienced knowledge exchange and research professional whose experience has centred on building research capacity, nurturing engagement between academics and nonacademics, and supporting the use of research to inform policy and practice.

Catherine-Rose Stocks-Rankin is the key contact for the project. Catherine-Rose brings an expertise in partnership working and knowledge exchange, as well as a passion for improved outcomes for older people.

Partner Organisations: NHS Lothian, West Lothian Council, Glasgow City Council, NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde, Midlothian Council, VOCAL and Alzheimer Scotland

CRFR and IRISS will support this research through research training, a mentorship programme and a series of knowledge exchange events.

Dr Heather Wilkinson (CRFR) and Dr Claire Lightowler (IRISS) are responsible for the management of the project (including supervision of practitioner-researchers) and will lead on preparation of the written outcomes (reports, briefing papers and any journal articles which arise out of the project).

Additional support for this project is provided by a research fellow, Catherine-Rose Stocks-Rankin, who is responsible for project management, knowledge brokerage and support of the practitioner-research programme.

Ian Watson, the programme manager of knowledge media at IRISS, will support knowledge sharing through social media and on-line resources.

Sarah Morton, co-director at CRFR, will support the programme through an evaluation of research-practitioner programme.

Partner Organisations It is expected that partner organisations will release staff to take part in the PRP. At minimum, this requires ½ day per week research time and attendance at all research skills workshops and knowledge sharing events (9 full day events in total).

The partners and the practitioners will benefit from improvements in their understanding of the health and social care for older people, and potentially improvements to the care they provide based on this improved understanding.

The remit of this group is the recruitment and support of practitioner-researchers. After recruitment has been completed, the central role of Project Partners is to champion the research project and support knowledge exchange efforts within and across organisations.

Other forms of support could include support with networking in the organisation to ensure access to necessary information for the research and advice on organisation ethics procedures.

Outline of Practitioner-Research Programme

Carrying out a Practitioner Research Project will enable you to:

- Investigate a particular issue which is of interest to you
- Build on your existing expertise in this area
- Develop your research skills through training provided by the university
- Benefit from supervision by an academic with expertise in your chosen topic
- Network with other practitioners or service users about research in improving social care for older people
- Feedback your findings to colleagues and networks

As a researcher on this project, you will be released from your current position for at least ½ day a week to carry out your research. During this time, you will be able to plan a piece of research, carry out data collection, analyse the data that you have generated and produce a series of outputs to be shared between your organisation and the project partners.

You will also have the opportunity to attend six research training workshops and a series of knowledge exchange events. These events will provide training for your research project and offer you the chance to share interim findings and final results of your work. You will also receive guidance and research support from a mentor at the University of Edinburgh and/or IRISS.

The projects are part of a larger research programme looking at evidence use in social care practice. Your research will be a central feature of this project and will be included in a series of knowledge exchange events over the course of the project.

The projects will take place over 11 months from June 2012-April 2013.

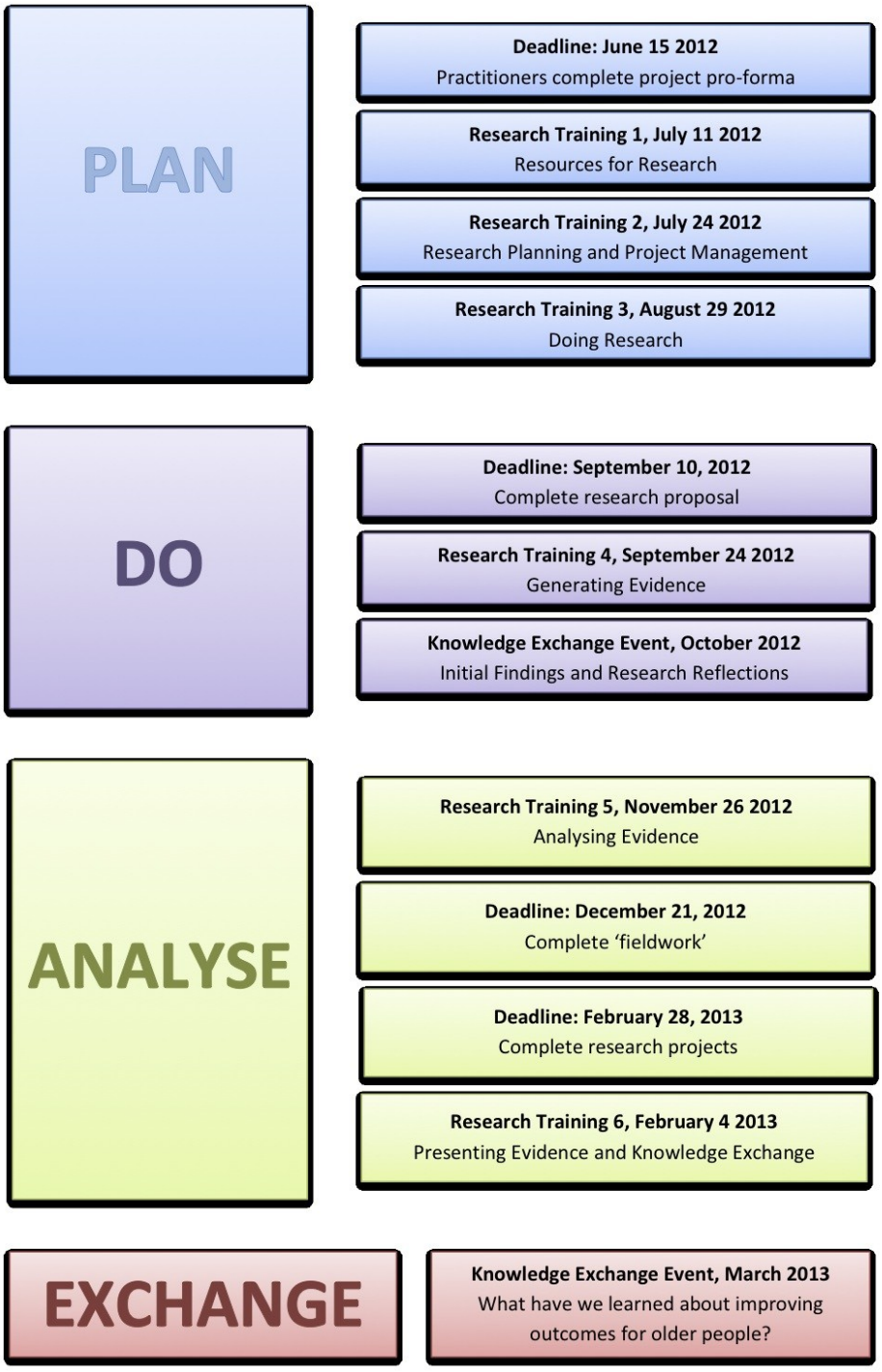
The PROP project is divided into four key stages:

- Plan – research planning and project management
- Do – conducting research and reflection
- Analyse – review and synthesize evidence
- Exchange – present findings and share learning

These activities will likely occur on the following timeline:

- **Plan**: July-August
- **Do**: September-December
- **Analyse**: January-February
- **Exchange**: March-April

PROP Flowchart



Key Dates for Practitioner-Researchers

July 11, 2012	Research Training #1	Resources for Research
July 24, 2012	Research Training #2	Researching Planning and Project Management
Aug, 17, 2012	Deadline	First draft of research proposal
Aug. 29, 2012	Research Training #3	Doing Research
Sept. 10, 2012	Deadline	Deadline for completion of research proposals
Sept. 24, 2012	Research Training #4	Generating Evidence
Oct. 2012	Knowledge Exchange Event	Initial Findings and Research Reflections
Nov. 26, 2013	Research Training #5	Analysing Evidence
Dec. 21, 2012	Deadline	Completion of 'fieldwork' component of project
Feb. 4, 2013	Research Training #6	Presenting Evidence and Knowledge Exchange
Feb. 28, 2013	Deadline	Completion of research projects
March 2013	Knowledge Exchange Event	What have we learned about improving outcomes for older people?

For more information on the project team, partner organisation and steering group please see our website: http://blogs.iriss.org.uk/prop/

Mentoring Guidance

Each PRP will be mentored by at least one experienced mentor with appropriate academic expertise for the topic being researched. We expect that mentors will:

- Help practitioners to focus their initial ideas to develop a coherent and feasible research plan
- Support practitioners to carry out this plan, ensuring that projects run to time and deliver a report at the end

Mentors will need to be available to practitioners over the course of the projects. Supervision arrangements will be flexible depending on the project. Supervision can take place face-to-face, via phone, via email or through a mixture of all of these. As a guideline, we would expect mentors to:

- Be available for face to face meetings at the start of the project, before data collection and again before analysis. These meetings might usefully be scheduled to co-incide with the sharing and training events.
- Field 2-3 emails or short phone calls per month per project.
- The mentor's role is to provide guidance and support at key points. They should not be expected to help carry out the research, to manage the projects or to be a sounding board for every decision taken.

We expect mentors to have the same level of input regardless of how many people are carrying out the project. Where more than one person is carrying out a project, the team should co-ordinate to make sure that the mentor's work is not duplicated, e.g. emails cc'd to everyone involved, conference calls set up or one person acting as spokesperson for the group, meetings with the team rather than with individuals. We do not expect mentors to give separate individual support where projects are collaborative.

PRP mentoring: checklist for Mentors

- Are the project aims and questions clear and focussed?
- Do the proposed methods fit with the aims?
- Have ethical and legal issues been addressed?
- Is the timescale reasonable?
- Have you agreed what the output(s) will look like?
- Have you made clear your availability and how you can be contacted (email address, phone number)?
- Have you made clear any times/periods for which you will be unavailable?
- Have you made clear what you are (and are not) able to offer in terms of your time and input?
- Have you set a date for your next contact with the practitioner researcher(s)?
- Have you agreed some clear objectives, e.g. they will send you [draft of x] by [date] and you will get back to them with feedback by [date]?

PRP mentoring: checklist for Practitioner-Researchers

- Have you agreed your project aims and questions with the mentor?
- Have you given your mentor chance to comment on your proposed methods, ethics, timescale, outputs?
- Are you clear about your mentor's availability and how he/she can be contacted?
- Have you exchanged email addresses and phone numbers with your mentor?
- Have you made clear what you want from your mentor, and checked that they are able to offer this?
- Have you set a date for your next contact with your mentor?
- Have you agreed some clear objectives, e.g. you will send them [draft of x] by [date] and they will get back to you with feedback by [date]?
- If there is more than one person in your team, have you agreed how to coordinate and communicate between team members so that the mentor's work is not multiplied?

Research Proposal Guidance

This template is designed to help you progress from the outline pro-forma to a fully developed research plan.

Title

- A short, coherent statement of what the research project is about. Ideally it should state the topic and also say something about the methods you will use.
- You may want to think of a more informal title that will help you explain your research to participants or other interested groups

Background

- State your rationale: why is the topic in need of attention? Why now? This could come from policy or practice or both.
- What is already known about the topic? Consider the following sources:
- Published research literature
- Policy documents
- Your organisation's own internal evaluation and monitoring
- Anecdotal evidence from other practitioners
- Your own experiences as a practitioner
- What is not known about the topic? What are the gaps? What needs to be found out and why?

Aim

- This should state what the research is trying to achieve.
- It's best to have one aim for a project of this size – two at most
- Be as specific as possible about the who, what, where and when, e.g. "to investigate the views of nurses" is too broad, "to investigate and compare the views of nurses and older people around the concept of vulnerability in one local NHS hospital" is much better.

Research questions

- These should be specific, focussed questions, maximum of three
- Ask yourself ' how could it be made more focussed or more specific?'
- Make sure you can answer these questions within the time frame, e.g. "how can we improve services?" is too broad to answer, whereas "How do nurses and older people understand 'vulnerability' when engaging with NHS services?" is something you could reasonably answer

Methods

- This section should explain how you are going to answer the questions
- The methods need to be the most appropriate way to answer the questions – ask yourself "is this the best way to answer that question, or would some other way be more likely to answer it better?"
- Be specific: how many questionnaires, how many interviews, how long will interviews go on for, will they be structured or semi-structured, where will they take place, what will your sample be, how will people be recruited and selected, how will the data be recorded, how long will it be kept for, what will you do with the data, etc.
- Be realistic – don't try and use every method, just select one or two that are most likely to be effective

- Think about your participants and their lifestyles, abilities etc., e.g. there's no point sending out a written survey to people who can't write, and no point trying to interview people who won't want to talk to you.
- Think about what data you already have in your organisation – using this could save you a lot of time.
- Make sure you provide some details of how the data will be processed and analysed.
- Could you do be doing things such as data entry and analysis along the way, instead of leaving that all until the end of data collection?

Ethics

- Does your project have the potential to cause harm or offence, to upset people, to make them feel uncomfortable or coerced?
- How will you ensure that participants are fully informed about what they are getting involved in?
- How will you ensure that they are able to give or withhold consent? What will you do to make sure that not taking part is a realistic option which people can choose if they wish to?
- How will you ensure participants' anonymity and confidentiality?
- How will you show sensitivity to participants' feelings and needs?
- How will you ensure you do not discriminate, so that those who have relevant views to express can do so, regardless of e.g. their ability to communicate verbally, to write, etc.?
- What will you do if people disclose information about abuse or illegal activities?
- How does your project fit with the law, e.g. on data protection, and with your organisation's own policies and legal obligations?

Dissemination

- What will the outputs look like? How will they be distributed?
- Think about your audiences: what will each audience want?
- How will you feed back the findings to your participants?
- Think about how much time each output will take, and make sure you aren't proposing things you can't deliver.

Timetable

- When will you do the different elements of the work?
- Be sure to allow enough time for recruitment of participants and for analysis and writing up. These tend to take longer than people expect.
- Be realistic. If the timetable looks unfeasible, then go back and reduce the scope of the study (e.g. fewer interviews, fewer surveys, less data collection, scrap one of your questions, fewer outputs)
- Think about risks: what are the most likely causes of delays? How will you deal with these if they happen?
- For projects involving more than one person, how will you divide the work up amongst you?
- How does the timetable fit with your mentor's availability?

Self-Audit Checklist for Ethical Review

This form is adapted from a template used by researchers at the University of Edinburgh, School of Social and Political Science.

Potential risks to participants and researchers

1. Is it likely that the research will induce any psychological stress or discomfort?

2. Does the research require any physically invasive or potentially physically harmful procedures?
3. Does the research involve sensitive topics, such as participants' sexual behaviour or illegal activities, their abuse or exploitation, or their mental health?

4. Is it likely that this research will lead to the disclosure of information about child abuse or neglect, or other information that would require the researchers to breach confidentiality conditions agreed with participants?

5. Is it likely that participation in this research could adversely affect participants?

6. Is it likely that the research findings could be used in a way that would adversely affect participants or particular groups of people?

7. Will the true purpose of the research be concealed from the participants?

8. Is the research likely to involve any psychological or physical risks to the researcher, and/or research assistants, including those recruited locally?

Participants

9. Are any of the participants likely to:

    a. be under 18 years of age?

    b. be physically or mentally ill?

    c. have a disability?

    d. be members of a vulnerable or stigmatized minority?

    e. be in a dependent relationship with the researchers?

    f. have difficulty in reading and/or comprehending any printed

    g. material distributed as part of the research process?

    h. be vulnerable in other ways?

10. Will it be difficult to ascertain whether participants are vulnerable in any of the ways listed above (e.g. where participants are recruited via the internet)?

11. Will participants receive any financial or other material benefits because of participation, beyond standard practice for research in your field?

Confidentiality and handling of data

12. Will the research require the collection of personal information about individuals (including via other organisations such as schools or employers) without their direct consent?

13. Will individual responses be attributed or will participants be identifiable, without the direct consent of participants?

14. Will datafiles/audio/video tapes, etc. be retained after the completion of the study (or beyond a reasonable time period for publication of the results of the study)?

15. Will the data be made available for secondary use, without obtaining the consent of participants?

Informed consent

16. Will it be difficult to obtain direct consent from participants?

Conflict of interest

17. Does your research involve a conflict of interest as outlined below?

    The University has a 'Policy on the Conflict of Interest', which states that a conflict of interest would arise in cases where an employee of the University might be "compromising research objectivity or independence in return for financial or non-financial benefit for him/herself or for a relative or friend." See: http://www.docs.csg.ed.ac.uk/HumanResources/Policy/Conflict_of_Interest.pdf

    Conflict of interest may also include cases where the source of funding raises ethical issues, either because of concerns about the moral standing or activities of the funder, or concerns about the funder's motivation for commissioning the research and the uses to which the research might be put.

    The University policy also states that the responsibility for avoiding a conflict of interest, in the first instance, lies with the individual, but that potential conflicts of interest should always be disclosed, normally to the line manager or Head of Department. Failure to disclose a conflict of interest or to cease involvement until the conflict has been resolved may result in disciplinary action and in serious cases could result in dismissal.

This form was adapted from the ethics procedure used by the School of Social and Political Science at the University of Edinburgh.

More details available here:
http://www.sps.ed.ac.uk/research/ethics/postgraduate_research_ethical_procedures