

research
in practice
for adults

Link Officer Handbook

October 2009

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About the Link Officer Handbook

The aim of this handbook is to help you undertake your role as Link Officer as effectively as possible. As a Link Officer you have the crucial coordinating role between your organisation and **research in practice for adults** and we hope that the information included within this guide will enable your agency to get the most out of its Partnership with us.

The handbook outlines the key support services that **research in practice for adults** provides to Partner agencies, and identifies what we ask of you in your role as Link Officer.

An introduction to research in practice *for adults*

research in practice *for adults* was established in 2005 to help health and social care organisations use evidence from research and other sources to improve outcomes for service users and carers.

Our mission statement

research in practice *for adults* seeks to promote the use of evidence-informed policy and practice in the planning and delivery of adult health and social care.

Our aims

Our aims are to:

- develop effective models of research utilisation
- focus on the key areas essential to an individual's quality of life – social support, housing, health care, transport, training and employment
- build expertise in integrating the views of service users into our operations and those of our Partners
- create networks that will enable Partner agencies to share experiences
- incorporate the knowledge and experience of social care practitioners into learning programmes
- promote a multidisciplinary and inter-agency perspective

Central to **research in practice *for adults***' mission is the dissemination of research findings which:

- are important to people who rely on services
- have practical implications for service providers
- are outcome focused
- emerge from robust methodological approaches, and
- empower and motivate social care practitioners

Our activities

research in practice *for adults* provides a range of resources to assist with the development of evidence-informed practice which will support you, as Link Officer, to promote the integration of evidence-informed practice within your organisation. These resources are organised through the six strands of our work:

- learning events
- publications
- network exchange
- Change Projects
- website
- joint working with **research in practice**

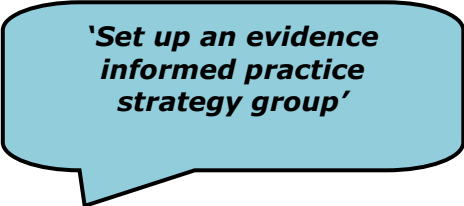
The Link Officer role

Link Officers are the bridge between **research in practice for adults** and its Partner agencies. For Partner agencies to gain greatest value for money, it is essential for the Link Officer, whether in an operational role or located within policy, performance or staff development to have good contacts throughout the agency. This ensures that participation in the **research in practice for adults** network can be fully integrated into the agency's work in order to promote and support the use of evidence in service delivery. The Link Officer may wish to work closely in the role with one or more colleagues, perhaps through a steering group.

The key to success in being an effective change agent is to have the support of senior managers and open channels of communication. Without these elements, the potential for establishing evidence-informed practice within the agency is limited.

To enable your agency to get the most benefit out of its Partnership with **research in practice for adults** it is essential that dedicated time is allocated to the Link Officer role. The time needed for the Link Officer role depends on: your stage of development and partnership with **research in practice for adults**; the existing structures and networks in place within your agency; and the administrative support, organisational cultures and management backing available to you.

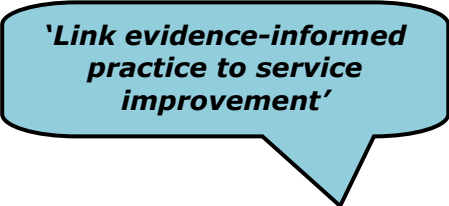
The selection of 'top tips' from current Link Officers below may help you in your role.



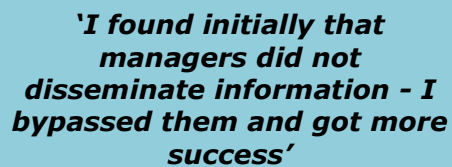
'Set up an evidence informed practice strategy group'



'Reserve allocated time for ripfa work'



'Link evidence-informed practice to service improvement'



'I found initially that managers did not disseminate information - I bypassed them and got more success'

The following 'job description' will help you to define your role as Link Officer, while the sections that follow will provide further detail about the steps necessary to carry out the Link Officer role efficiently and effectively.

Link Officer 'Job Description'

As Link Officer, you will support the implementation of evidence-informed practice in your organisation through:

1. Acting as the key link person in the Partnership between your agency and **research in practice for adults**.
2. Keeping **research in practice for adults** informed of any change of Link Officer or other contact details, including the title of your Director or agency, and passing on all relevant information to new Link Officers.
3. Contributing to the integration of evidence-informed practice in your organisation.
4. Promoting the use of evaluated research as a tool to improve services and outcomes.
5. Being the key person responsible for promoting, and disseminating information about, **research in practice for adults** learning events throughout your agency.
6. Managing the distribution of publications and development materials from **research in practice for adults** within your organisation.
7. Distributing the Research and Policy Update (RPU) throughout your organisation as soon as received on the third Monday of each month.
8. Attending the residential Link Officers' Annual Meeting along with any Regional Meetings.
9. Playing a key role in ensuring that your agency places are taken up on the annual Directors' Policy Forum and the annual Councillors' and Trustees' Seminar.
10. Identifying opportunities for one-to-one work, special projects and joint working that fit the strategic aims of your agency.
11. Participating in ongoing **research in practice for adults** Change Projects with other Partner agencies if beneficial to your services.
12. Encouraging the use of the website and discussion forum amongst colleagues.

The six strands of our work

The following sections introduce the six strands of our work, explaining the resources provided by **research in practice for adults** and identifying the role of the Link Officer within each of these.

The six strands of the work of **research in practice for adults** are:

- 1 learning events
- 2 publications
- 3 network exchange
- 4 Change Projects
- 5 Website resources
- 6 Collaborative work including joint working with **research in practice**

For each strand of work we provide:

- an overview of what the strand involves
- further details about key aspects of the strand
- an outline of what we offer
- what the role of the Link Officer is in relation to the strand

1 Learning events

Overview

Learning events are a core element of the **research in practice for adults** package. Places are **free** to all staff within Partner agencies. This entitlement extends to those working in partnership with them. Contractually each partner is entitled to 20 places annually; however at present we do **not** restrict the number of attendees per Partner.

We advise booking places early, as events can become full quickly, and often have waiting lists. On occasion it may be necessary to limit numbers, but you will be advised of this where it applies. We will always endeavour to accommodate you where possible – just ask.

Formats for learning events vary and include workshops, seminars and conferences. Details can be found on the Learning Events Programme, our website and event flyers. The target audience will vary and can include service users, carers, front line workers, managers, commissioners, strategic managers – please send flyers to the appropriate individuals or teams. The Learning Events Programme is developed using feedback from our Partner agencies, as well as national policy, influence from service users and carers, and experience with previous events. Let us know if there is an issue you wish to see addressed at a learning event.

The following suggestions from Link Officers may help you to get the best out of **research in practice for adults** learning events for your organisation.

'To ensure knowledge from the learning events is shared I have found it really beneficial to hold lunch time knowledge sharing sessions, these have been really well attended'

'We are putting info about the events on our intranet training site – which we know is the main source of info used by our staff on training'

'Share with your team what you do and get help with promoting events – get help with clerical tasks'

We also run Annual Events for Directors, Councillors and Link Officers. Please go to the **network exchange** section for more detail about these.

Promoting learning events

The Learning Events Programme

The Learning Events Programme runs from October to June each year. Approximately two months before the Learning Events Programme commences, Link Officers will receive printed copies of the programme to distribute within their organisation. Information about events is also available on the **research in practice for adults** website. As Link Officer, you are key to ensuring that the programme reaches the target audience. Remember that your agency pays for Partnership, so you need to help staff to access events.

Event flyers

Flyers providing further details will be sent to Link Officers by email approximately six to eight weeks before each event – these should be distributed as widely as possible, targeting individuals or teams where appropriate, according to topic.

Booking places at events

research in practice for adults has a dedicated Events Co-ordinator who is responsible for booking delegates, providing joining instructions and administering events.

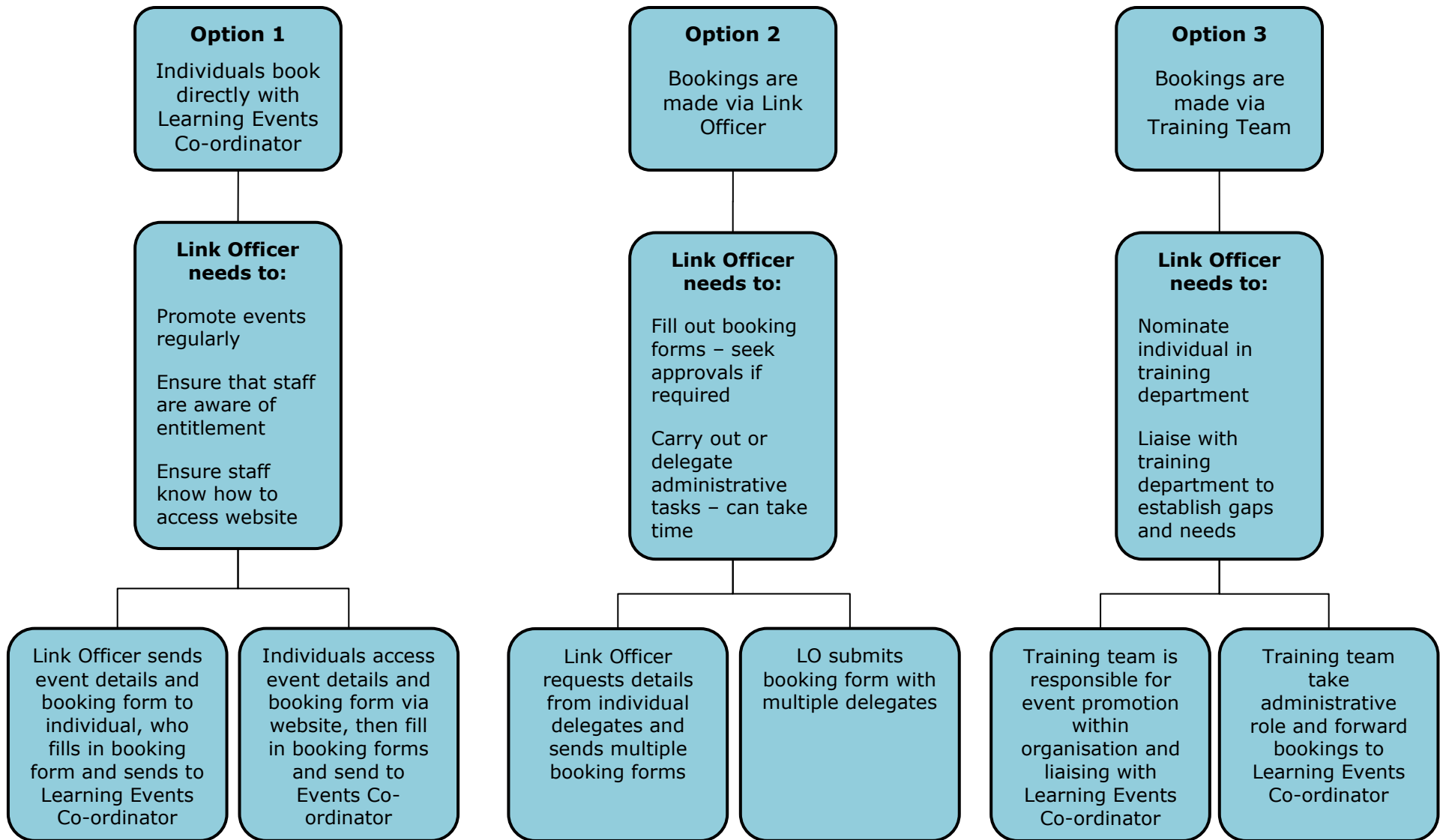
Partner agencies manage the booking process in different ways (see the flow chart on the following page for suggested approaches). Places need to be requested via a booking form which is sent to the Events Co-ordinator. This can be sent by the individual requesting the place, their Link Officer, or a Training Team. Booking forms can be found in the appendix at the end of this Handbook or accessed via the website.

All nominations should be submitted as early as possible before an event, but no less than two weeks. Bookings will be confirmed with the Link Officer and the individual requesting the place, and joining instructions will be provided, including venue details.

Occasionally late booking of places is possible. Please contact the Events Co-ordinator to check availability if you would like to make a last-minute booking.

Additional information about learning events and booking instructions can be found on the **research in practice for adults** website.

Booking places at events – flowchart



The Link Officer Role – learning events

The following are some of the tasks a Link Officer will need to complete to get the most from the Learning Events Programme.

Publicise and promote the Learning Events Programme:

TARGET

Send the LE Programme to Training Departments, Area Meetings, Senior Social Workers, Teams (e.g. Learning Disability Team).

NEWSLETTER

Include the forthcoming events in an existing newsletter

FORWARD THE FLYER

Send via email, put printed copies on notice boards, have copies available at other training events

CALENDAR

Get the events on your in-house calendar

SPREAD THE WORD

Don't miss any service areas – get a link in Learning Disabilities, Sensory Loss, Physical Disability, Older People, Housing, Mental Health, Hospitals, Carers, Policy and Commissioners – cover all bases

ADMINISTRATION

Get admin help to support you in this aspect of your role

Other suggestions

CONTACT DETAILS

Advertise **research in practice for adults'** contact details on your intranet, on notice boards, via the Training Department.

ATTEND AN EVENT

See how they work.

STATISTICS

Use the statistics sent to you to show value for money or encourage managers to allow staff to attend!

BOOKING PROCESS

Decide what will work for your agency and let people know **how** to book a place at events

FEEDBACK

Tell us if there is a topic missing or something staff wish to see.

LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS

Encourage staff to share learning within teams and colleagues. Start a Practice Issue Group or suggest lunch time seminars

We evaluate every event and endeavour to address issues raised to develop our programme further. You will receive feedback from us quarterly with event statistics, including how many people have attended and how many gave apologies or were 'no shows'.

2 Publications

research in practice for adults produces a variety of publications in a range of formats, most of which are available via the website.

Our publications list is constantly being developed with revisions of some existing material and new additions. For details of existing publications, please contact your Lead Research and Development Officer or refer to the list of publications and current work in the appendix at the end of this Handbook.

When a new agency joins our Partnership, multiple copies of every publication will be issued to the Link Officer for distribution. As new publications become available they are sent to all Link Officers. Please ensure that publications are disseminated as widely as possible within your agency. If you require additional copies, contact us with your request.

Promoting the use of evidence-informed policy and practice in adult social care

We have an introductory leaflet which provides Link Officers with an excellent way to spread the word about **research in practice for adults**. It describes our aims and introduces the resources available to our Partner agencies.

OutLines

The **OutLine** series answers core questions in adult social care. Individual **OutLines** are commissioned from external specialists for each topic. They are aimed at frontline practitioners and managers alike and are intended to be accessible, authoritative summaries of available evidence. They also contain reference lists and examine what the key messages are from research and where gaps exist.

OutLines are available on the website in PDF format in the Publications section. For a list of current OutLines, please see the list in the appendix.

Key Issues

As the name suggests, these publications focus on emerging practice on topics of current importance. Where a current topic has, as yet, little evidence or limited research, **Key Issues** aim to provide ready access to policy and evidence that is available. They also suggest useful links and further reading. These publications are highly valued by frontline workers and those in strategic or commissioning roles.

Key Issues are available on the website in PDF in the Publications section. A list of current Key Issues can be found in the appendix.

Evidence Stories

Evidence Stories look at how agencies have made use of evidence in their practice. These practical demonstrations of the value of evidence-informed practice are published in summary as a series of postcards, with a full version of each 'story' available on the website.

Audio-visual

In addition to the above printed publications, we are developing a variety of resources in alternative formats, including audio and visual materials for use by individual practitioners and training departments focusing on a variety of topics. These are intended to explore practice issues, evidence and research, and service users' views and will be individually titled. Copies of these will be sent to Partner agencies and additional copies can be requested if needed. Current titles are listed on the website in the Publications section.

Evidence Clusters

Evidence Clusters provide accessible summaries of the most up-to-date, relevant evidence on key issues for policy and practice. We have adapted and condensed traditional systematic reviewing techniques have been adapted and condensed in order to complete each **evidence cluster** within a six to eight week period. Evidence Clusters are only available on the website - see the **website** section for further details.

Joint Publications

A number of publications are developed in collaboration with **research in practice** – see the **joint working with research in practice** section for further details.

Change Project Handbooks

See the **change projects** section for further information about Change Project Handbooks.

Link Officer Role - publications

With regards to publications, there are some very simple measures that Link Officers can put in place to ensure distribution of the materials available. On occasion, publications are left in boxes under desks, which neither benefits **research in practice for adults** nor Partners. Your agency is paying for Partnership so it is important to ensure that staff get value for money.

Existing Link Officers have suggested the following ways of helping your organisation make the best use of **research in practice for adults** publications.

TEAM MANAGERS

Send a copy of each publication to team managers in operational teams.

TRAINING DAYS

Take copies of publications to internal events on the same topic.

USE THEM

If you are part of a learning and development team, use the publications during workshops.

SENIOR MANAGERS

Send a copy of the introductory booklet to remind them we are Partners.

DISTRIBUTION LISTS

Start a list so as you don't have to re-find details

INTEREST GROUPS

If there is a journal club or practitioners' group, send them copies to look at

TARGET

Send copies to specific service areas. If a publication arrives with 'Older People' in the title, send it to Older People's Teams. Don't forget Policy Teams.

COUNCILLORS

Send a copy to your elected members

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TEAMS

Ask them where copies should be stored. Include the library.

ADMINISTRATION

Get admin help if it supports your role or ask colleagues to help with distribution and dissemination.

NEWSLETTER

Include new titles in a forthcoming newsletter

3 Network exchange

Overview

research in practice for adults offers excellent networking opportunities across Partner agencies. The **network exchange** aims to help staff in Partner agencies to access and share knowledge that will help provide effective adult social care. It does this through a combination of regular and targeted support, and a range of activities supporting networking and knowledge sharing among Partner agencies. The term 'network exchange' incorporates the following activities:

- An active **discussion forum**, which provides a valuable opportunity to draw on the experience of other members of the network
- A responsive **help!ine**, a social care research enquiry service which is only open to staff in our Partner agencies
- Monthly **Research and Policy Updates** (RPU), signposting new policy, reports and guidance, consultation documents, key research reports and journal articles
- The bi-monthly **What's New** newsletter, which keeps recipients informed of, among other things, developments in the **research in practice for adults** network, any updates to the website, and forthcoming learning events and publications
- Twenty hours dedicated **One-to-One Support** per year
- The **Link Officers' Annual Meeting** (LOAM), an opportunity for Link Officers to meet and share ideas over a 24 hour residential event, and regional Link Officer meetings held halfway through the year
- The **Directors' Policy Forum** (DPF), an annual residential event for Directors of Adult Social Care in our Partner agencies
- **Councillors' and Trustees' Seminar** (CTS), a residential event for Councillors, also held annually and currently provided jointly with our sister organisation **research in practice**

What are Partners entitled to?

- Free membership of the **discussion forum**. As Link Officer, you will be the key point of contact for your agency on the forum. You will be provided with a username and password, and forum messages will be sent directly to your email inbox. Further memberships of the forum will be provided on request for your colleagues.
- Use of the **help!ine**. Clearly worded questions about an area of policy or practice can be submitted to the **help!ine** by telephone or email, and will receive a response within two weeks.
- The latest **Research and Policy Update** in your email inbox on the third Monday of every month, for your own use and for circulation to relevant staff throughout your organisation.
- The opportunity to submit a proposal for how you would like to use your allocated twenty hours of dedicated **One-to-One Support**. Please refer to the guide on page 25. A structured form is available for your proposal – please see the Useful Forms page in the Appendix or contact **research in practice for adults** if you would like to receive a copy. All proposals are welcome, but please contact us if you would like guidance about ways to use this entitlement. We will then work closely with you to ensure that you receive the support you need.
- A place at the **Link Officers' Annual Meeting** (LOAM), and regional which is a great opportunity to meet other Link Officers and share ideas, as well as communicate ideas to **research in practice for adults** about ways in which we can work more effectively with you.

Link Officer Role – how can you make the most of the network exchange?

The **network exchange** is one of the most important resources supporting evidence-informed practice in your agency. By making full use of this resource, you will be able access and share knowledge with the many other members of this active network.

- As the Link Officer you will be automatically signed up for the **discussion forum** and should try to encourage others to join too (a straightforward guide to using the forum is provided on the following pages). As well as establishing valuable links within the **research in practice for adults** network, forum members can draw on this important resource to help address problems or issues and make decisions, as well as feel the benefit of helping others to solve their problems.
- Forward **discussion forum** queries to the individual (or individuals) you think might best be able to respond. As well as ensuring that the forum remains an active resource where queries are likely to get useful responses, this will also ensure that **research in practice for adults** maintains a high profile within your organisation, and also that colleagues in your agency remain aware of your role as Link Officer.
- Let staff in your agency know about the **help!line** and how to access it, so that they are able to seek support from **ripfa** with difficult questions.
- Circulate the monthly **Research and Policy Update** to relevant and interested staff in your organisation. Set up an email distribution list of interested individuals and build this up over time.
- Take advantage of your agency's entitlement to twenty hours **one-to-one support** per year. Identify individuals who would benefit from this support and encourage them to submit a proposal.
- Attend **LOAM**, and encourage your Director and Lead Councillors to attend the **Directors' Policy Forum** and **Councillors' and Trustees' Seminar** each year, to ensure that the message of evidence-informed practice reaches all levels of service.
- Investigate the potential for providing links to the **RPU** and **discussion forum** directly from your agency's intranet, perhaps in a Learning, Training and Development section or other relevant part of the site.

'When I circulate the updates, I also do a 'quick link' sheet with headlines for those people who won't take the time to read the update in full'

'Circulate the RPU each month as an attachment to an email, through the team clerks and ask them to forward to the whole team thus reaching everyone in the local authority and PCTs'

'Send RPU to everyone by email if your council has circulation lists. If not, ask for one!'

'Get a rep in each purchaser and provider team – preferably a volunteer – to whom you can send updates, etc'

'I established a channel on our Intranet for storage of the updates so they will be accessible and people won't have to decide whether to save them'

A guide to using the discussion forum

About the forum

The **research in practice for adults** discussion forum is an online message board supported by an email group feature. It is ONLY open to staff in our Partner organisations, and allows Link Officers and other staff to access information or shared experience around any given issue. It's a great way of taking advantage of the network aspect of being a Partner.

Members of the discussion forum can post messages straight to the online message board via the **research in practice for adults** website, or they can email them to forum@ripfa.org.uk. Either way, messages are distributed out to all members via email, as well as appearing on the online message board.

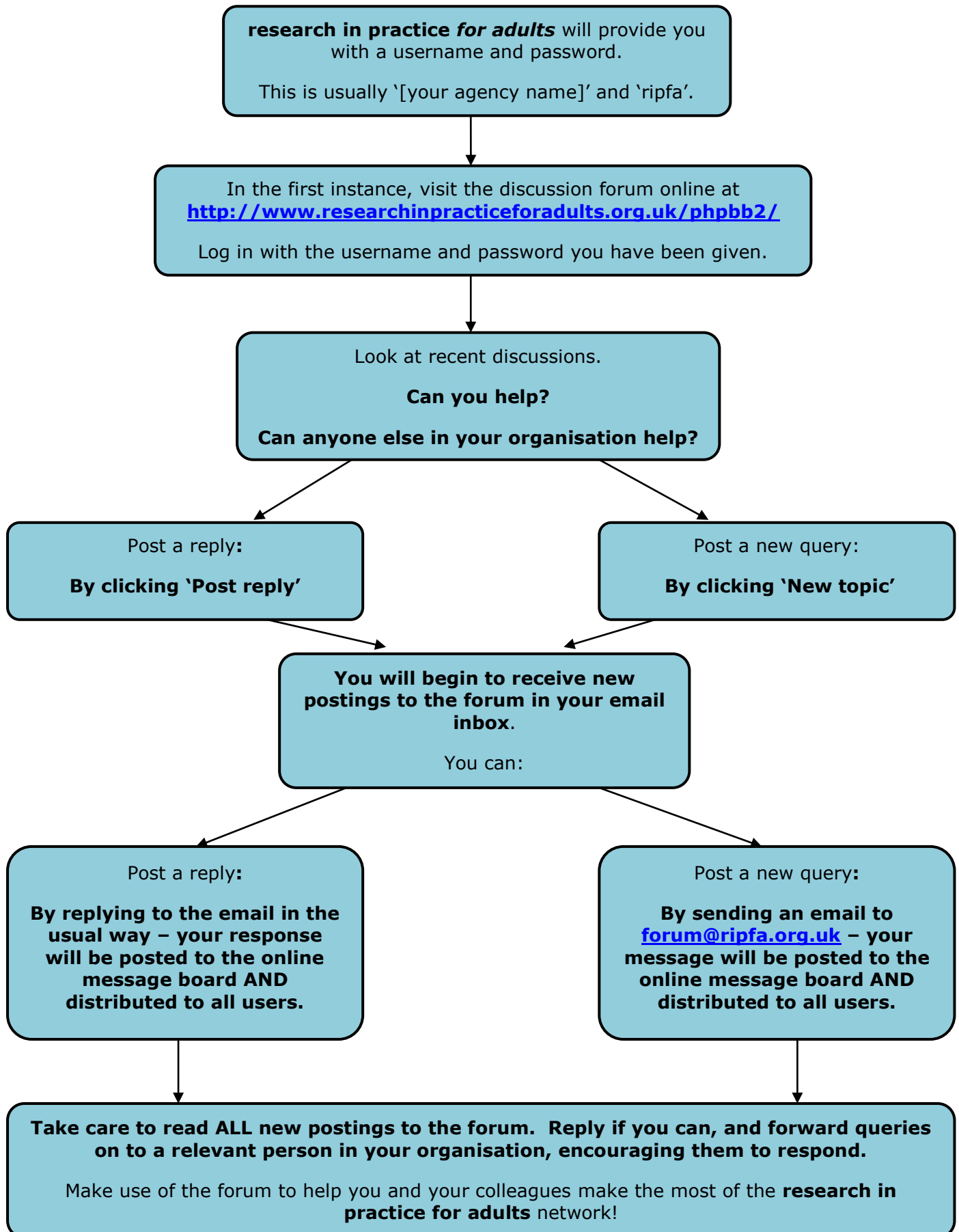
Link Officer Role – the discussion forum

When you are first appointed as Link Officer for your organisation, you will become your organisation's **lead user** for the discussion forum. **research in practice for adults** will provide you with a username and password, which you can then make available to all staff in your agency. Anyone who has been given the username and password can access the online messageboard, and read and post messages. However, as lead user, you will also receive forum queries in your email inbox, and will be able to send queries to the forum via email. Please check that the topic has not already been posted and replied to before posting a question. As Link Officer, if you are aware that a query may be particularly relevant to another member of staff in your organisation, we ask that you forward it on to them if possible.

Please note that:

- You can choose to opt out of the email feature, but if you do so, we ask that you visit the forum online on a regular basis to ensure you remain aware of current discussions. To opt out please contact either forum@ripfa.org.uk or info@ripfa.org.uk.
- Other staff in your organisation are entitled to register as individual users, but some Link Officers choose to be the sole user for their agency, and to field all discussion forum queries and forward them on to the relevant individuals – let us know if this is your preference.

Using the discussion forum: step-by-step guide



One-to-one support for Partner Agencies

research in practice for adults offers annually 20 hours of one-to-one support time to all of our partner local authorities.

There are no strict guidelines as to how this time can be used and we prefer to be flexible and to follow a needs-led approach. Some partner agencies prefer to use all 20 hours for one project while others split the hours between several small themes. Some partner agencies decide to pool their hours together and work on a joint project.

Here are some ideas of how the one-to-one support time could be used, based on our experience from the last two years:

We could:

- **Scope the evidence and prepare a literature review** in a certain area of practice that is a priority for your local authority; some areas in which we have worked so far are carers' self assessment, developing evidence banks, policy context for equality and diversity training, residential care for older gay, lesbian and transsexual people, etc.
- Assist with developing guidance or training on research methods, deliver workshops on **research skill and evidence informed practice** locally for staff
- **Support an internal evaluation/appraisal process**; support a partner in a process of commissioning and contracting an external evaluator
- Look at other particular learning needs within your organisation and deliver an **individually tailored workshop**; for example, some local authorities requested training for providers or training on supported self assessment for practitioners
- **Facilitate a process of knowledge exchange** with other local authorities leading in certain areas of practice; experience shows that approaches like telephone conferences are very popular with busy professionals
- Help and support with **data collection and statistical analysis** of certain monitoring or evaluation initiatives that you are carrying out

This list is just an example of what we can offer and cannot encompass all of the different needs and solutions in how one-to-one support time can be approached. The programme runs from 1st April each year to 31st March the following year.

We expect people to fill in the pro forma (see Useful Forms in the Appendix). The deadlines are subject to mutual agreement throughout the process.

4 Change Projects

What are they?

change projects identify an area of practice, take account of the available evidence, pilot new ways of working and evaluate the impact. We describe **change projects** as a collaborative approach to developing more effective ways of putting sound research into everyday practice, combining experiment with innovation, reflection, evaluation and action-learning. They are a dynamic process; with participants working together to design handbooks and other practical tools that translate research evidence into practice. Typically projects will take place over 18 months to two years and bring people together from five or six Partner agencies.

Why?

The primary aim of any **change project** is to influence and ultimately improve outcomes for users of adult social care services and carers. They are designed to enable participants to contribute to the improvement of evidence based approaches, both in their own agency and in the broader professional community. They also provide an opportunity for us to work closely and collaboratively with Partner agencies from across our network.

Key features

It is central to the change project process that projects:

- hold improved outcomes for the service-users central to their aims
- adopt an evidence-informed approach to all aspects of development
- seek to include service users and/or service user views in the change project
- are practical and hands-on
- result in a product or event that can be shared widely to help improve practice

While there is no universal model of a **change project**, it is likely that all will contain the following elements:

- each **change project** topic will emerge from consultation with Partner agencies about current and future priorities for service and skill development
- the output of each **change project** will originate in practical work undertaken by practitioners, policy makers, **research in practice for adults** staff and researchers working together
- membership of each **change project** will be formed by an open call for expressions of interest from Partner agencies, and this 'team' of up to seven agencies will then lead one or more stages of the **change project**
- the work of teams will result in 'products' which will be produced in draft first - to be tested, refined, piloted, evaluated, re-refined and published for the benefit of the whole Partner agency network
- both draft and final materials may be accompanied by a launch or conference event held to share the messages learned from the **change project**
- pilot and final materials will be posted to the **research in practice for adults** website

Link Officer Role – change projects

Your responsibility when it comes to **change projects** is predominantly one of awareness raising and increasing participation. There are **nine stages** in each **change project**:

Stage One: Idea generation

Stage Two: Scoping study/literature search

Stage Three: Experts' Knowledge Exchange/ Firm proposal and plan

Stage Four: Recruit and run a **change project** development group

Stage Five: Produce a Pilot Handbook

Stage Six: Recruit and run a **change project** pilot group

Stage Seven: Produce a final Handbook

Stage Eight: Launch and publicise the Handbook

Stage Nine: Promote and support the use of the Handbook (including learning events)

There are **four stages** when your involvement is critical:

Stage one: idea generation

At this stage **research in practice for adults** will contact you and ask you to canvas opinion from your colleagues as to what issues are of key concern for them. We will ask you to feed these back to us and a shortlist of potential topics will be drawn up. You will again be asked to distribute this shortlist to your colleagues and to feed the most popular topics back to us to enable us to choose the focus of the **change project**.

Stage two: recruit and run a **change project** development group

We will send you information about what format the **change project** development stage will take. This will include specific meeting dates and the commitment required from staff participating in the project. You will be asked to promote the project to staff in your agency, to talk to your Director about whether they wish your authority to be involved, and to collate responses and return the completed application form.

Stage six: recruit and run a **change project** pilot group

Once the development stage is complete and a Pilot Handbook is being produced we will contact you about the pilot stage. Again we will contact you with the format of the piloting stage, including information about the commitments needed from staff. We will ask you to promote participation in the piloting process, to talk to your Director about involvement and to collate responses and return the completed application form. Partners participating in the development group are not eligible for the pilot group for the same **change project**.

Stage nine: promote and support the use of the Handbook

The real success of all **change projects** is in the sharing of resources, tools and information and therefore this stage is very important. We will send you hard copies of the Final Handbook together with publicity materials, invitations to associated learning events and suggestions of how best to distribute the materials amongst your staff.

For details of current change projects, visit the website.

Self-reflection questions:

- Do you know what a **change project** is?
- What **change projects** are currently running?
- Is your agency involved in any of these projects?
- In what ways can you promote involvement in these projects?

5 Website

Overview

research in practice for adults has a dedicated website at www.ripfa.org.uk. The website gives access to:

- All **research in practice for adults** printed publications in electronic format, including OutLines and Key Issues (see **publications** section)
- Previous editions of **research in practice for adults** newsletters - What's New and Research and Policy Updates
- **evidence clusters** and **information clusters**
- An active **discussion forum** (see **network exchange** section)
- A continually developing Resource Bank, Policy Links and Research Links
- The current Learning Events Programme and details of events as they become available, as well as resources from past **learning events**, such as electronic copies of presentations
- A useful and simple to use search facility to help you access the latest evidence on key topics
- Current contact details for **research in practice for adults** staff and Link Officers.

Most aspects of the website are accessible to everyone, including Link Officers, all staff in our Partner agencies, and members of the public. This is an essential way of ensuring that we are able to encourage awareness of the importance of evidence-informed practice. However, our active Discussion Forum (see **network exchange** section) is only open to Partner agencies, and all website content is directly responsive to the views of Link Officers and staff in Partner agencies. In the future, further areas of the website may become available to Partners only.

What are Partners entitled to?

- Unlimited access to all aspects of the website, to help you and your colleagues deliver evidence-informed practice in your agency.
- Access to **evidence clusters** and **information clusters**, a unique set of resources developed by **research in practice for adults**. These web-based and fluid publications provide accessible summaries of good quality, up-to-date research evidence targeted at practitioners.
- Free membership of the **discussion forum**, which provides a valuable opportunity to draw on the experience of other members of the network (see **network exchange** section).
- A real response to any comments and contributions you have regarding website content – as a partnership organisation, **research in practice for adults** builds the website based on what you feel is important.

For example, if there is a topic you would like to see covered on the website, perhaps in an **evidence cluster**, or a resource that should be listed in the **resource bank**, let us know.

Link Officer Role - How can you make the most of the website?

The **research in practice for adults** website is an important gateway to a wide range of resources which will help to support evidence-informed practice in your agency. By making full use of the website, you will be able to take advantage of the many benefits of being part of the **research in practice for adults** network.

- It is important to visit the website as often as possible, and remain familiar with current content, so that you are able to recommend colleagues to the relevant sections that might help them with specific issues or problems.
- Encourage use of the website and the **discussion forum** among staff in your agency, emphasising that this is an opportunity, not a chore - by using the resources they find there, they may find their role becomes easier, and that their decisions are supported by evidence and the experience of other members of the network.
- Promote the use of **evidence clusters** and **information clusters** as evidence summaries that are aimed specifically at practitioners in their brevity and style and are developed in response to Partner agencies' views of what is topical and relevant.
- Sign up for the **discussion forum** and encourage others to do so too.
- Forward **discussion forum** queries to the person you think might best be able to respond.
- Encourage contributions to the Resource Bank and offer suggestions for Policy and Research Links to be added to the website.
- Keep **research in practice for adults** informed of any change of Link Officer or other contact details, so that we can update the details on the website and **discussion forum**.

6 Joint working with research in practice

Our sister organisation, **research in practice**, who work with children's and families' services, was established almost a decade before **research in practice for adults**. We are modelled on their way of working, but our delivery methods are adjusted to the different world of adult social care. We both exist to promote evidence-informed practice. If your agency is also a Partner of **research in practice**, find out who their Link Officer is as you may be able to benefit from their experience. **research in practice** has a website at www.rip.org.uk - some of this is password protected, but it is worth taking a look to see if any information is available to support your role as Link Officer.

Our sixth strand of work is **joint working with research in practice**. This includes the annual Councillors and Trustees seminar (see **network exchange** section), joint publications, joint events (including the possibility of joint launches), and joint working between our staff, for example joint presentations at conferences.

This joint working enables us to share methods and approaches and bridge potential gaps between the provision of Adults' and Children's services. Topics that have already been addressed are:

- "Whole families"
- Parents with learning disabilities
- Transitions
- Young carers

If your agency is a Partner of **research in practice**, you can benefit from their publications and products, for example, the **NIFTY** handbook on local evaluation. Another handbook, **Leading Evidence Informed Practice (LEIP)**, is a handbook which can be equally beneficial in the adult arena, with helpful tools and techniques for promoting evidence-informed practice across your agency.

Link Officer Role – joint working with research in practice

These examples show how you can help to ensure that joint working between **research in practice** and **research in practice for adults** can benefit your agency. If your organisation has a long history with **research in practice**, this can be an advantage, but do bear in mind that we do not always follow the same delivery patterns as our sister organisation. If you are unsure, please contact your Lead Research and Development Officer.

LINK OFFICER

Contact your counterpart in children's services if your agency is a Partner of both.

CTS

Ensure that your Councillor knows about and attends the joint event

WEBSITE

There are useful resources on the **research in practice** website – take a look.

JOINT PUBLICATIONS

Make sure they reach the right people

THINK HOLISTICALLY

When feeding back to us, is there something we could do as two organisations that would assist you?