

**A response by research in practice and research in practice *for adults* to 'Building a safe, confident future: the final report of the Social Work Task Force'**

**research in practice** and **research in practice *for adults*** warmly welcome the recommendations set out in the Social Work Task Force report and the government response.

The mission of our two organisations is to promote evidence-informed practice and research cultures to improve outcomes in child and adult services. Our focus is research dissemination, research utilisation and change management. We are uniquely placed as sector-led organisations with a particularly strong heritage in social work to support the implementation of the report's recommendations. Our work is strongly shaped by our subscribing Partner agencies – local authorities and national organisations, now numbering more than 110 in **research in practice** in England and Wales and 50 in **research in practice *for adults***. We provide a range of creative products and services to support evidence-informed practice, principally continuing professional development opportunities, learning events and e-learning; publications linking accessible synthesis of research evidence with practice-based knowledge and priorities; in-house support for evidence-informed practice strategies and initiatives; websites providing access to research and practice resources; Change Projects which embed evidence in practice; national research-based networking events and other opportunities for shared learning across our networks.

So we are well positioned to work with our Partner agencies and with national initiatives to take forward the recommendations in the Social Work Task Force report. Celia Atherton, founding director of **research in practice** and now Director of the Social Justice programme at Dartington, was a member of the Task Force and will be closely involved in developing this work.

The report and the government response emphasise the importance of **access to research and practical guidance** for social workers and managers. We have led the field in supporting access and use of research by practice agencies. We do this not only through our learning resources, publications and websites but also through our network model, which ensures the continuous dissemination of evidence-informed practice among our local authority and national agency partners. Our in-house support, delivered by staff and Associates with practice and research backgrounds, brings the evidence base into agencies in interactive group-based settings, providing opportunities for direct engagement with research knowledge and its application. **research in practice** is a core partner in the Centre for Excellence and Outcomes in Children and Young People's Services (C4EO), leading work on capacity building which provides tailored support from specialists from within the sector. This model of the co-production of research knowledge – much more than dissemination alone, and crucial to building research cultures – lies at the heart of our offer.

Our learning programme will support agencies in delivering on the report's recommendations for **high quality continuing professional development**. We have strong expertise in promoting and developing skills for **reflective supervision** which builds evidence and 'research mindedness' into supervision, captures practice-based learning, and builds cultures of learning. The report emphasises the importance of research as part of a strong supervision culture and our approach, rooted in bringing together research and practice-based expertise, is ideally placed to promote this.

We are extremely well placed to support the **assessed first year in employment**. Our research-based publications, learning events, e-learning resources and our websites provide excellent resources to support newly-qualified social workers, and we will be developing new products and learning events which address their needs explicitly.

The report rightly notes the importance of practitioners **engaging in research activity** as well as accessing and using existing research. A consistent theme in our work has been building staff capacity to conduct evaluation and research. Our Change Projects support groups of practitioners in sharing, developing and testing materials which help to embed research evidence in practice in key areas, and one Change Project focuses on building service evaluation capacity. **research in practice for adults** have recently launched the resources from their safeguarding Change Project and will be continuing to develop their offer to support Partners with this agenda, embedding evidence-informed resources and supporting new work through our one-to-one support programme. The Local Authority Research Consortium, which **research in practice** runs in partnership with the National Foundation for Educational Research, is a collaborative research project in which partner agencies carry out local fieldwork building into a substantial national body of evidence. This year **research in practice** will be launching a new service providing strategic, operational and methodological support to agencies for needs analysis, monitoring, research and evaluation.

The report emphasises the importance of **universities ensuring that students understand the research basis for practice** and appreciate the importance of research and evidence in their future careers. Higher education institutes can access our websites, to the benefit of both staff and students. Our accessible, multi-media research publications and evidence-based resources are highly valuable learning materials in higher education settings, drawing together research and practice-based knowledge to show how research can be applied in social work settings. Our strong links with academia and practice mean we can help to broker relationships between universities and employers. These relationships will be important to support the quality and relevance of the content of university-based courses. But they also provide a platform for course tutors to stay in touch with practice settings, and for practitioners to contribute to teaching and research. At a time when academic systems are placing increasing value on research impact, such partnerships have great potential for mutual benefit.

The Social Work Task Force report sets out an ambitious vision for the future of the profession with a **career-long culture of learning** at its core. Working together, our two organisations will help to realise this vision by supporting agencies in embedding strategies for evidence-informed practice, bringing research into agencies, and making evidence part of the everyday discourse of social workers at all levels. We have the opportunity over the next few years to transform the profession and the practice of social work by developing research cultures. We will be proud to work with our Partners in achieving this transformation.

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