

Methods and Tools - Making connections: linking research and practice

Summary

A review by Barnardo's commissioned by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation

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Purpose

The volume of research production in social care greatly exceeds its application in practice. The UK government has made clear that it expects social care services to take the same path as health care in developing practice based on evidence of 'what works'. The increasing emphasis placed on clinical governance within health care will, if trends continue, be gradually replicated within social care. Purchasers of social care services will increasingly demand that providers furnish evidence supporting the effectiveness of their proposed interventions. Social care services lacking an adequate evidence base are unlikely to survive. Against this background, Barnardo's - the UK's largest children's charity - was commissioned to undertake a review of factors which promote or inhibit the dissemination of social care research and its application in practice.

Methodology

review of health and social care literature on dissemination and implementation of research

survey of major UK research commissioners and producers

focus group interviews with research users in four UK countries

interviews with key UK personnel responsible for dissemination of health and social care research.

Key messages

too much 'R'; not enough 'D'

research producers have insufficient incentives to produce an adequate volume of applied research

there is a substantial, but unsatisfied, demand among social care practitioners for useable, high quality research

implementation receives less attention than dissemination; research findings will be applied in practice when they are timely, relevant to practice, easy to access and understand, are not counter-intuitive and their utilisation is rewarded.

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