



Kent Research Partnership: building research capacity in adult social care

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ARC KSS Research Week 2024



Kent Research Partnership ●

Connected Evidence to Practice ●

Creating Care Partnerships ●

Peninsula Adult Social Care Research Collaborative ●

Social Care Research in Practice Teams ●

Curiosity Partnership ●

NIHR HSDR funded
six research capacity
building partnerships
in England (2021)

Kent Research Partnership

Working to enhance research culture in Adult Social Care

WHAT IS IT?

Kent Research Partnership is a prestigious (£1.7m) four-year project (June 2021-May 2025) co-led by University of Kent and Kent County Council and funded by the National Institute of Health and Care Research (NIHR).

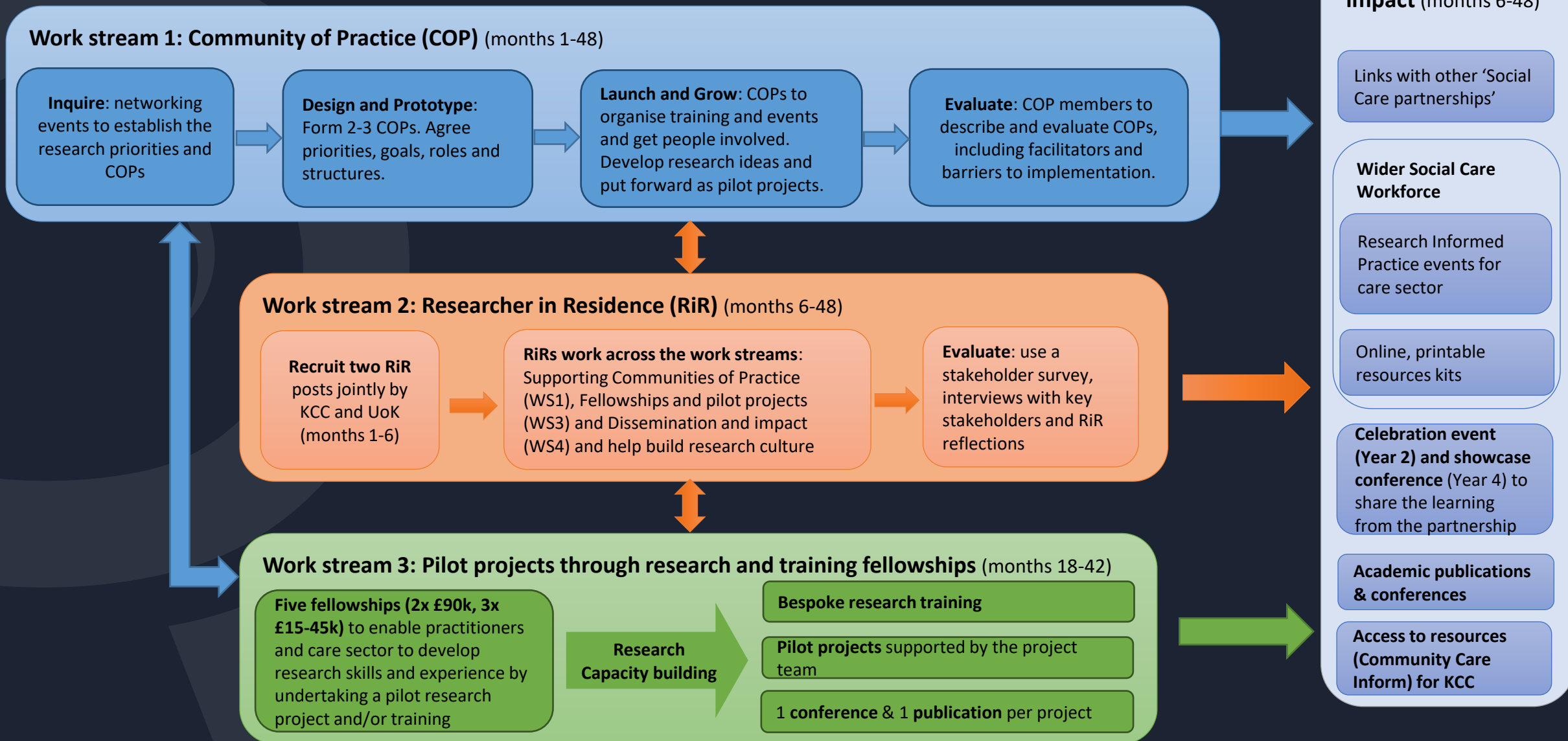
WHAT ARE OUR AIMS?

The overall aim of the partnership is to build research capacity and develop a research culture in adult social care in Kent. This means:

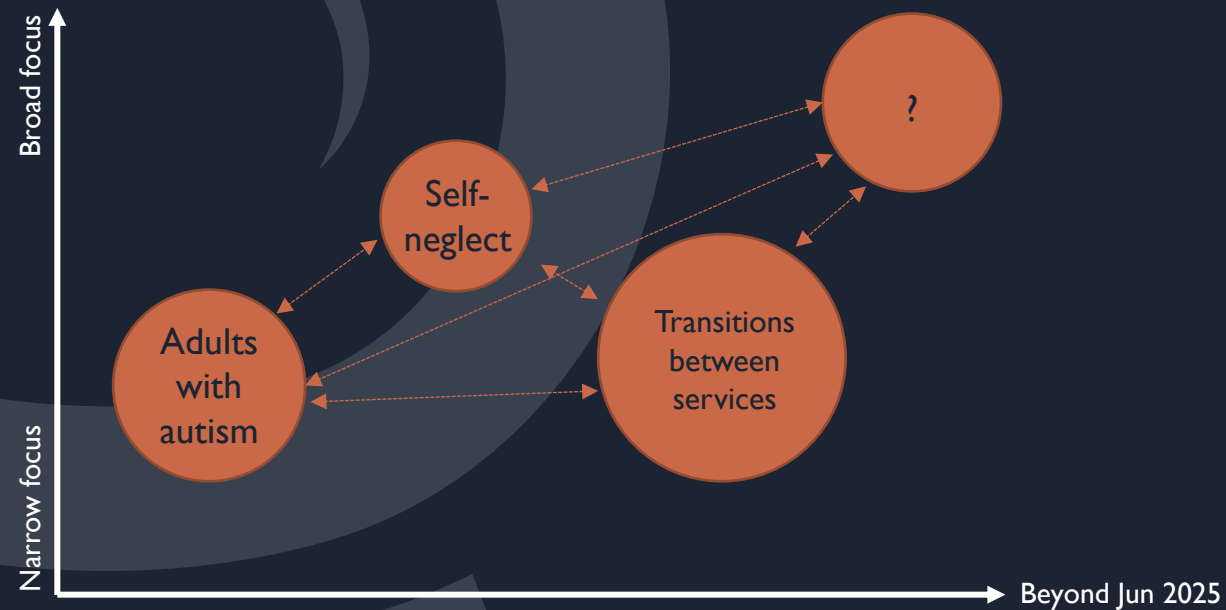
- Helping the ASC workforce become 'research-ready' in a variety of ways
- improving dissemination of research findings to ensure they have an impact on practice
- helping a new generation of researchers (including those with expertise through their own experience and/or professional backgrounds) to deliver research projects relevant to key priorities for adult social care in Kent.

Kent Research Partnership

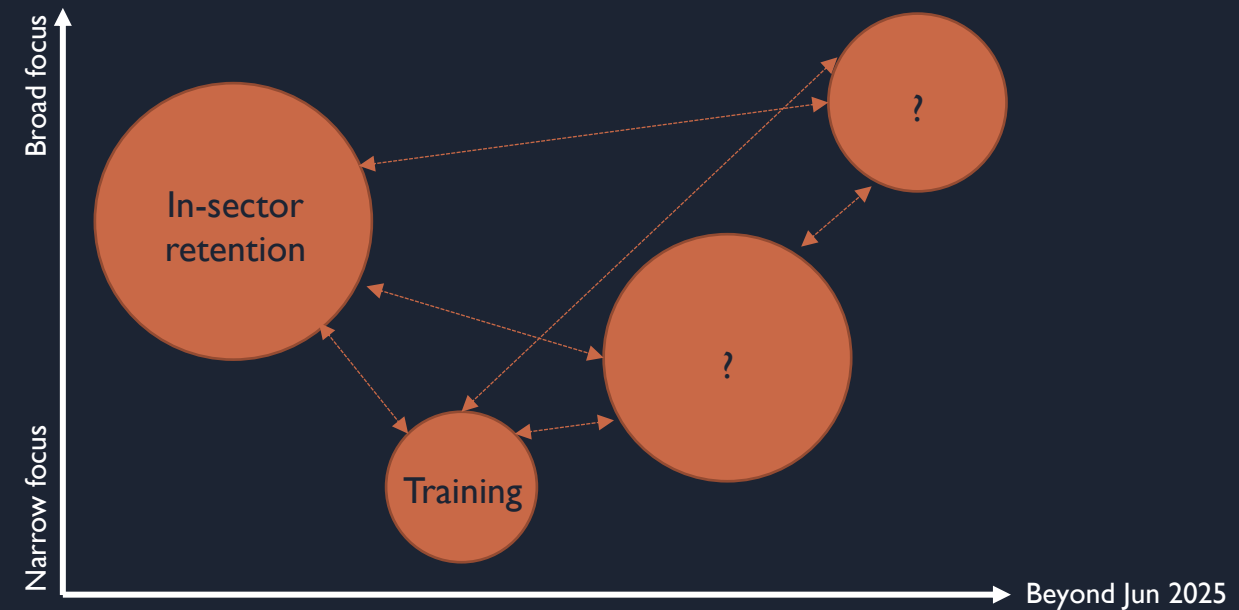
4 years from June 2021







- Co-Production
- Equality, Diversity & Inclusion
- Practice-oriented approach



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Our Research & Training Fellows



Hannah Kingsford
Social Worker, KCC

Thriving, surviving or not at all coping: factors affecting burnout in Social Workers



Sophie Fournel
CEO of Disability Assist

Exploring barriers and enablers that influence working-age individuals with MS in considering employment



Lisa Richey
Social Worker, KCC

Supporting neurodiversity within social work: A qualitative study investigating social work manager roles.



Bethany Preston
Care Worker, Tender Loving Carers

Research training only, with an aim to learn about evaluation of digital interventions in their service

The role of the Lived Experience Working Group

“Having given up work to care this project allows me to carry on using my brain again. Part of a team. Caring can be isolating and at some points quite monotonous, so it is nice to have something to work towards”



Key achievements:

- Designing and commissioning co-production training.
- Co-authoring an academic paper about the experiences of the working group and approach to co-production.
- [Blog published by Think Local Act Personal](#) highlighting the importance of the working group and of co-production in research.
- Playing a key role in the celebration event and at other conferences – including presenting on co-production at the School for Social Care Annual Conference.
- The group designed and owns an impact log to capture the outcomes that they are interested in.
- The group was selected by NIHR to test a new evaluation method (The Cube).
- Several group members have taken on public advisor roles in other projects as a result of their involvement in the Partnership.

Benefits to Adult Social Care and Partners

- **Prestigious:** one of six social care partnerships funded in England.
- **CQC:** evidence of commitment to research, national leadership in capacity building and continuous quality improvement.
- **Research income:** funding research infrastructure, new roles, fellowships training and CPD opportunities.
- **Attract and retain a skilled workforce**
- **Evidence-informed practice:** resource to inform evidence-informed practice and make Kent a leader in adult social care research.
- **Working with people and partners in a different way:** for example, Lived experience working group, relationships with other councils.
- **Opportunity to influence national policy**

Challenges in building research capacity

Capacity for staff to engage – competing priorities

Small presence in a large directorate – requires regular successful applications to sustain and grow

Accessing research funding – availability of researchers and calls appropriate for LAs

Lack of backfill to release staff to take up opportunities

Impact of new ways of working



Achievements and progress

TWO COMMUNITIES OF PRACTICE

We have two communities with over 100 members signed up to one or both



Enhancing, diversifying and sustaining the social care workforce



Supporting people with complex needs throughout the lifespan



VIBRANT LIVED EXPERIENCE WORKING GROUP

- Commissioned training as part of the grant to support citizens to be involved in all aspects of the work: COP meetings, setting priorities, contributing to outputs, reviewing fellowships, sitting on funding panels, contributing to fellowship projects.

CONTRIBUTING TO NATIONAL POLICY

- Submitted evidence to the Parliamentary inquiry into the Invisibility of Adult Social Care
- POST-Notes
- Policy briefings

INVESTING IN THE WORKFORCE AND GENERATING RESEARCH INCOME....

TEN THINGS TO CONSIDER WHEN SETTING UP A SOCIAL CARE RESEARCH CAPACITY BUILDING PARTNERSHIP

Author: Dr Jolie Keemink

1

TIME

Expect processes to take longer than you think they will. Develop a clear timeline that allows for flexibility and delays. Be patient about progress and achievements. Be in it for the long run.

2

EXPECTATIONS

Create clear expectations about partnership objectives, and a visual representation of the expectations and timeline. Ensure a joint expectation about what capacity building in research looks like in practice.

3

RELATIONSHIPS

Build strong relationships with senior stakeholders (e.g., directors) from bid stage. Prioritise relationship-building early on, also with frontline staff. Understand the power dynamics within partner organisations.

4

PERSPECTIVE

Understand the starting point of your partners; research might be very novel or might mean something different to them. Consider the competing pressures your partners are under. Follow your partners' agenda, not your own. Align priorities to your partners.

5

FLEXIBILITY

Flexibility is essential for success. Ensure you can adapt to partners' timelines. Training, research, and other activities should be tailored to partners' needs. Recruitment may also require flexibility.

6

INFRASTRUCTURE

Ensure resources are not a barrier for partners to be involved in the partnership. Know the existing research (governance) infrastructure. Consider who is responsible for management of partnership-related roles and where resources are secured.

7

INVOLVEMENT

Ensure time for involvement of practitioners is protected financially and practically. Consider a reward structure for involvement. Be clear about whether involvement is voluntary or compulsory. Ensure public involvement.

8

SUCCESS

Develop clear markers of success early on. Celebrate the small achievements. Create a feeling of joint success. You are building capacity together; you are not judging your partners' progress.

9

CONTRACTING

Discuss and set up collaboration agreements as early as possible to avoid delays. Be aware of the requirements and who to contact for contracting. Consider if involvement in all activities are contracted.

10

LONGEVITY

Consider the longevity and financial sustainability of the partnership. For Communities of Practice, plan for how they will become self-governing. For partnership roles, consider if and how their role will lead to a long-lasting role.

Thank you



<https://research.kent.ac.uk/chss/our-research/kent-research-partnership/>



[Kent Research Partnership5715](#)



[@ResearchKent](#)

For further information and/or to join a CoP please email: kentresearchpartnership@kent.ac.uk



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**Kent
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[Kent Research Partnership](#) is a prestigious (£1.7m) four-year project (June 2021-May 2025) co-led by University of Kent and Kent County Council and funded by the National Institute of Health and Care Research (NIHR). The wider team includes national and local partners such as Homecare Association, National Care Forum and KiCA. The partnership is supported by the lived experience working group made up of 12 members with experience of social care.

The overall aim of the partnership is to build research capacity and develop a research culture in adult social care in Kent.