



My research journey

Gill Middleditch, is an Advanced Clinical Practitioner at Kent Community Health NHS Foundation Trust.

She was awarded a Springboard Individual Development Award by the Applied Research Collaboration Kent, Surrey and Sussex (ARC KSS), to help her develop her research project: *A change management project to improve patient engagement, through performing Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) medication reviews in a specialist behavioural school.*



How long have you been in this role?

I have been in my role for one year now.

What does it involve?

My role involves, undertaking initial assessments, diagnosing ADHD and autism, formulating care plans and reviewing children and young people with down syndrome and cerebral palsy. As well as leading on the nursing team from a managerial and education perspective.

What made you apply for an Individual Development Award (IDA)?

I applied for the IDA Springboard Award in August last year. Initially, I had applied for the pre-doctoral award but was unsuccessful. The feedback from the panel was really valuable and they encouraged me to consider the ARC KSS IDA Springboard Award, I didn't want to lose sight of research activity within my role, so I applied for the Award and was successful.

How easy did you find the process?

I found the application process a little lengthy and sometimes it lacked clarity, but I was glad once I was finished and was excited to hear the outcome.

Where did you find out about it?

I did have previous knowledge of the award, but it was when I was attending the Association of Child Psychotherapists (ACP) conference, that I noticed that an NIHR stand was promoting the awards. It was this, alongside the feedback from the panel after my original pre-doctoral award application that made me apply.

What has this IDA enabled you to do?

This Award has helped me improve service development through clinic structures changing, it has raised the profile of research activity in community paediatrics, as this wasn't as active as it could have been. It also allowed me to build new relationships within the children and young people network and to present at one of the ARC KSS Children and Young People's theme meetings.

Do you think this has made an impact in your work? Who is at the receiving end of this research?

Predominantly, neurodiverse children, young people and their families and health and education professionals have been at the receiving end of my research.

What have been the highlights of the project?

One of the biggest highlights was receiving feedback from children and young people on the clinics held in school. I also had the opportunity to attend the Young Peoples Advisory Group (YPAG), which I wouldn't have done without the IDA award.

What have been the challenges?

One thing I found challenging was preparing my PhD application in the background. The Award has helped me to draft a PhD application, but building a supervisory team and navigating this has been a little difficult. It was also a challenge to make sure we received feedback from the young people in clinics as they can be hard to reach.

What kind of support did you get?

I received lots of support from my mentor, but sometimes I felt like I was leading this.

What happens next?

I have now applied for the ARC KSS Future Leader award, and I am currently a visiting Fellow at the University of Greenwich.

What advice would you give someone looking to take part in research who has never done research before?

Take small steps, as clinicians we can be fast paced and goal-orientated. Allow yourself time to adjust to a different way of progressing with your research. However, small the progress may be, it will become bigger/greater if you persevere.

What qualities do you think you need to be a good researcher?

Be open minded, questioning what you don't know, ask questions! Don't be scared by research terminology. Do embrace developing yourself.