



Lisa Richardson: championing inclusive practice

Lisa Richardson, University of Kent researcher, has worked on NIHR-funded projects on intellectual disabilities, including a trial on group cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT) and a scoping review on inclusive research. Her work has informed leadership training and supported future research development.

How long have you been in this role? What does it involve?

Since 2020, I have been situated in two departments at the University of Kent, Personal, Social Services Research Unit and the Tizard Centre. I work across multiple National Institute for Health and Care Research (NIHR) funded projects across both of these roles. For some time, I had been contributing to the NIHR Applied Research Collaboration Kent, Surrey and Sussex (ARC KSS) Co-production theme and more recently the NIHR Quality, Safety and Outcomes Policy research Unit in my Personal Social Services Research Unit (PSSRU) role. Within Tizard I have been the Trial Manager for a cluster randomised control trial investigating the effectiveness of group CBT for men with intellectual disabilities and harmful sexual behaviour (supported by NIHR Health Technology Assessment funding).

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

I have received two IDAs from ARC KSS. For the Future Leaders award, I was keen to undertake a project where I would design and lead the work and gain experience with research leadership. It was also timely as there was the opportunity to work collaboratively with a social enterprise who I had an established a good working relationship with and who were supporting potential leaders with intellectual disabilities to themselves be leaders in education, health and social care settings in the region. This project would benefit from some evaluation, hence my application.

For my second award, I sought time and support to undertake a scoping review about the barriers and facilitators to engaging people with intellectual disabilities in adult social care research, an interest very close to my research interests and activities.

How easy did you find the process?

It was a very easy process, the application was not at all onerous, but a good experience to practice cultivating a coherent proposal. The interview for the Future Leaders award was somewhat daunting and for the most part the interviewers were welcoming and supportive.

Where did you find out about it?

I was part of the ARC KSS

What has this IDA enabled you to do?

Gain direct experience of leading a project, especially managing a research assistant and managing finances. I have further developed my skills in undertaking scoping reviews. I have made long lasting contacts and developed my interests. I will now be going on to undertake a paid role and PhD at Kings College London.

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

Yes, the social enterprise have utilised the findings to improve their leadership training offer for people with learning disabilities and this has informed training for leaders and trainers on the Oliver McGowan Mandatory Learning Disability training programme as well as students undertaking supported internships with [Bemix](#).

The scoping review is yet to be published, so watch this space. I hope it will help inform future areas of research and understanding around engaging people with intellectual disabilities in adult social care research.

What have been the highlights of the project?

Working collaboratively with a social enterprise.

What have been the challenges?

Finding a research assistant that was committed to the work on only a temporary contract. Only having a small amount of time to deliver the project and balancing these demands with other projects (day job) where I was answerable to others.

What kind of support did you get?

Mentorship and supervision. There was more support available, but as I was already within a research role it was not all relevant to me and I did struggle to identify time to attend everything on offer.

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

Go for it, but ensure you draw on the support of your mentor and communicate widely with other colleagues about what you are doing.

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

Determination and patience, inevitably there will be bumps in the road and it takes resilience and creativity to overcome these. You need to be both a people person and have the ability to work independently.