

## Dr Anna Cox

**ARC KSS Individual Development Awards (IDAs) are aimed to support individuals in the development of their projects and enable them to have the dedicated time to conduct any of the activities that will create change and make an impact in their local areas.**

**Dr Anna Cox from University of Surrey received an award in the first round for 'A feasibility study exploring the acceptability, use and perceived impact of Together Project resources, co-produced to support the delivery of good maternity care for people with learning disabilities'. Read Anna's IDA journey so far.**



The funding from my Individual Development Award (IDA) officially started on the 1<sup>st</sup> September 2021 but it has already been such an incredible journey. The award - and the support that goes with it – has already contributed to my success in gaining further funding from Health Education England (HEE).

In 2020, I had just delivered on my first externally funded project as Principal Investigator and I was proud of the resources that we had co-produced for parents with learning disabilities. I knew that the next step was to take the resources into maternity practice to see if they were acceptable and beneficial to parents and midwives, but the thought of jumping straight to a multi-site study in the NHS was quite daunting.

As an early career researcher, it is easy to feel like an imposter and to doubt the importance of your research. For me, the value of the Individual Development Award is greater than the pot of money that comes with it (although obviously that helps too!); the fact that the ARC believed in the potential impact of the work I proposed and in me as a researcher gave me greater confidence in my ability to take the work forward.

I meet regularly with my mentor, Professor Sally Kendall, and I cannot emphasise enough the value of this aspect of the IDA in terms of my personal development. Sally's guidance, in addition to the ARC KSS Researchers' Week, has really helped me to challenge my imposter syndrome and to focus on my strengths as a researcher and how to optimise the impact of my work.

On a practical level, the IDA provided me with the opportunity to develop a feasibility study with a single site, the Royal Surrey NHS Foundation Trust. I worked with a midwife to finalise the protocol and submitted it to the Health Research Authority for the necessary approvals. It was at this point that I applied to HEE for a larger pot of money to expand the study to be multi-site. My proposal was very competitive as so much of the preparation work had already been done.

I have used the funding from the IDA and HEE to recruit an excellent Research Fellow - Dr Athena Ip - who is joining the study next month. We are very excited about working together and aim to secure further funds for the next stage of the research, to implement and evaluate the intervention in maternity systems across the country.

[For more information on the study and the resources, go to the study [website](#)]

