

Lucy Rogers

[ARC KSS](#) academy is working in collaboration with the Research Design Service South East (RDS SE) to bring you inspirational stories from researchers across our region and top tips for establishing a research career.

Lucy is a Speech and Language Therapist working for Sussex Community NHS Foundation Trust in the Early Years Clinic Service in Brighton. We met her to find out more.



Q: Can you tell us a little bit about yourself? I first qualified in 2008, so I've been a therapist for a little while now. When I first qualified, I worked with children in various age groups. Over more recent years I've specialised in working with children in the early years at Brighton in the Early Years Clinic Service. My case load is very broad which means every day is usually quite different.

I work with children with a real range of different communication needs. Within that my specific clinical interest is children who do have speech and language needs where there isn't an obvious cause.

A lot of research shows that young children presenting with these needs are at risk of a knock on effect on their emotional wellbeing, literacy and communication when they're older.

Q: How did you first get interested in research and where did you start?

I never really intended to get into research, but then in 2016, a personal opportunity came up to do a Masters in Psychology. I've always loved learning and been interested in Psychology. As well as working clinically part-time I did this Masters, sounds quite sad really, but it was almost just for fun. My dissertation was a good opportunity for me to explore something from my clinical practice. I kind of caught the bug for it then and after my Masters finished, I really wanted to take that forward.

Back in 2018, Dr Diane Sellers presented on the clinical academic career trajectory which up to that point I'd never even heard of. Shortly after that some internship places came up with the University of Kent and I got onto that, which gave me the opportunity to do a module in applied health research. I also had an external supervisor from the Bristol Speech and Language Therapy Unit who is a specialist in speech sound disorders. So that meant that I could develop my research ideas with

somebody who's quite high up in the area.

So, towards the end of the NIHR Integrated Clinical Academic Programme (ICAP) I applied for the NIHR Pre-doctoral Clinical Academic Fellowship (PCAF) bridge. I started it in October and that runs through to this coming October. My overarching goal is to have my application for the NIHR Clinical Doctoral Research Fellowship (CDRF) but I kind of have a sub-set of activities I need to do to get to that so I'm doing a bit of Patient Public Involvement (PPI) work at the moment. I found that clinical practice in this area varies quite widely and clinicians are very creative in how they support the targeted group I'm looking to develop the intervention for. That is why I've developed a workshop that is going to different trusts. This involves presenting on what the current evidence tells us and then brainstorming around what individual Therapists are currently doing in practice. This provides an opportunity to learn from each other.

Q: So, what is your area of research interest? What's the question that you're developing for your CDRF then?

It's to develop a novel intervention for children who have communication difficulties where there isn't any cause and those communication difficulties affect both speech production and language production. What we know is that children who have difficulty pronouncing their words or sounds in words are also more likely to have difficulties with their language. But there isn't a lot of evidence out there as to how best to support these children or interventions specifically developed for this group. We are really quite a creative bunch in that if we see a child we very much look at their individual needs and we can tailor things but at a certain level you do need to have an evidence base to prove why we're doing what we're doing.

Q: So, you've obviously done amazingly well and a lot of respect to where you've got to, what would you say has been the biggest challenge for you so far?

I think personally for me the biggest challenge has been covering two diagnostic groups. It's almost like the mindset is there's research on language or speech. What I'm doing is bringing them both together and it's really important to do that but I think it will have its own challenges.

So actually having had the time to do wider reading has been really important and I'm learning because it does cover so much. I need to tap into the knowledge of a range of different people rather than one specific kind of person. My supervisors have been really helpful, but I've also found it really useful contacting other authors to get that broader perspective on things.

Q: What advice would you give to others?

- 1) Try not to be put off by rejections. I suffered rejections from local/national conferences before being asked to present at a leading international conference! It happens to every researcher, and you will only get better through acting on constructive feedback.
- 2) Contact other people in your field and see if you can support with their work. This could give you valuable research experience to take forward with you in your own research career, as well as experience in preparing articles for publication- which is something the NIHR ICA fellowship panels look out for.

I'm also trying to be a little more active on twitter, sharing my experiences and retweeting research opportunities within the local area/my field @lucy_r_sl

ARC KSS would like to thank Lucy for sharing her work and research journey and we wish her good luck. Find out more about NIHR development schemes [ICAP](#), [CDRF](#) and [PCAF](#).

You can also get support for NIHR applications through the [RDS SE website](#).