

Terms of Reference Core Group Building a Research Community

The Building a Research Community was established in 2019 when the second Social Work and Social Care Research Strategy was being developed.

When the formal Research and Evidence Partnership was established by the Social Care Council in 2023 (as a Committee of the Council) the value of the Research Community as a networking and engagement group was recognized. In 2024 it was established as a subcommittee of the partnership.

The PhD Support Network operates as a subcommittee of the Building Research Community, and will provide updates as relevant.

The aims of the Building Research Community include:

- To develop a sustainable research community in Northern Ireland that connects the needs of the social work and social care at policy, practice and managerial levels, academia, service users and carers. community and independent sectors.
- To provide inputs into wider discussions in relation to the development of the third social work and social care research strategy for the period 2025-2030.
- To contribute, as relevant, to actions identified within the implementation plan for delivering the objectives in the Social Work and Social Care Research Strategy 2025-2030.

**Includes social work practice within statutory, not for profit and private organizations.*

The overall the purpose of the Research Community is for members to meet, engage and work collaboratively, sharing ideas and good practice that contribute to embedding and implementing a culture of research, evidence and continuous improvement and improved decision making. At the heart of our work is a belief in the contribution that research and evidence make both to the profession and outcomes for those who use services.

Specifically, group members will:

(The list below is not in any order of priority. all are equally important).

- Maintain a forum for engagement, collaboration, collation and exchange of ideas and good practice.
- Support accessible communications in relation to the emerging research agenda and its implications for organizations, service users and carers.
- Play a key role in connecting the work of the regional strategic agenda and the local research agenda.
- Link with employer organisations (practice and academia) and the wider community groups to ensure two-way flow of ideas.
- Contribute to wider discussions on highlighting social work and social care research priorities through a process of collaboration and co-production between and academia, policy, practice and service users.
- Create synergy between research and evidence and other drivers for example continuous service improvement, (quality improvement) workforce planning, learning and development (professional in practice (PiP) framework), governance, ethics, equality inclusion and diversity.
- Strengthen linkages with existing networks at local, national and international levels and build new networks supportive of driving forward research and evidence as part of core business.

The principles and values under which we will work are based on: Equality, diversity, inclusion, integrity, equality of participation, openness and transparency.

Throughout our activities we will adopt co-production as our method of working.

Membership

We adopt a flexible approach to membership creating opportunities for engagement and networking.

Chairing on a co-chairing basis

Lisa Bunting, Queen's University Belfast and
Helen McVicker Director of Standards and Regulation NI Social Care Council

Reporting mechanisms

As a subcommittee of the Research and Evidence Partnership a two-way flow of information will be supported oral reporting at the strategic Research and Evidence Partnership.

Frequency of meetings

Quarterly two online and two face to face

Secretarial support

Regular review of Terms of reference

Initial agreement August 2021 and regularly reviewed

This version updated July 2025