



Newsletter

June 2026



Anne McGlade,
Co-Convenor EiPSIG



Kreta M. Sørensen,
Co-Convenor EiPSIG

Introduction

Dear colleagues and friends of Evidence into Practice Special Interest Group,

A very warm welcome to all our members and to anyone who has picked up this Newsletter as a casual reader. If you are reading this for the first time an additional welcome to you. If you would like to find out some more about our group do pop onto the [ESWRA](#) website or you could have a look at an initial publication within European Social Work Research by McGlade et al, 2023, see: <https://doi.org/10.1332/BPBB7727>.

You can also discover the report on the 13th Annual Research Conference 11 March 2026, see: [Social Work and Social Care Research Conference report now available - NISCC](#).

If you are interested in becoming a member email me at: EiPSIG@hscni.net.
We would love to hear from you.

Thank you also to Andriana Alkiviadou, who is helping in designing and putting together this information in an amazing way.

“

**Albert Einstein emphasized the value of
lifelong learning:**

***“Intellectual growth should commence
at birth and cease only at death.”***

***This reinforces research and learning as
a continuous process.***

”



Aberdeen – the Granite City - hosted the 2026 ESWR conference which got underway on 15 April with the Pre-Conference sessions of the Special Interest Groups and ran until Friday 17 April.

The conference was jointly hosted by Robert Gordon University (RGU) and the University of Dundee with hundreds of delegates attending from across Europe and from further afield from places such as Brazil, America and Hong Kong.

The ESWRA conference remains one of the largest research conferences of this type which bring together researchers, academics and a growing number of practitioners, PhD students and people with lived experience. The appetite for quality evidence has never been greater so it's perhaps not surprising that the event was so well attended.

With over 400 attendees this year the committee, organisers and student helpers ensured the event was a great success and ran smoothly.

Over 1300 abstracts needed to be assessed – an incredible task. So very well done everyone who got an abstract accepted. A wonderful achievement.

In his welcome address Gary Spolander, Professor of Social Work at RGU reinforced the message so relevant to our Special Interest Group.

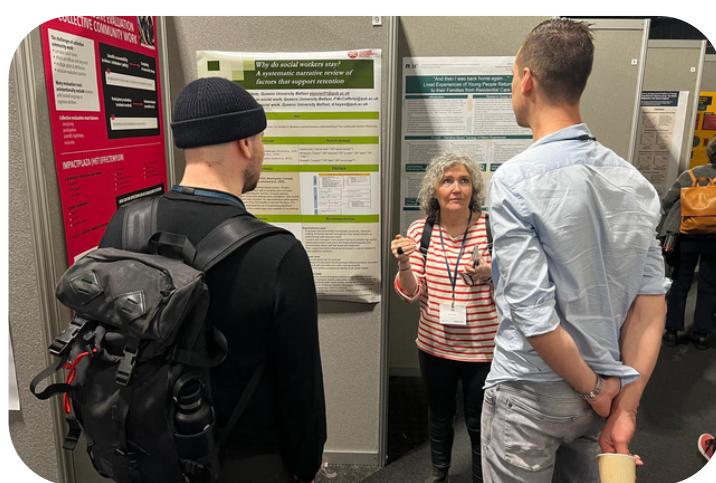
He said: "Evidence informed practice is really important in terms of ensuring that we deliver services which are fit for purpose and which really exemplify the best understanding that we have of social work in society today."

A huge degree of gratitude is owed to Gary and Professor Richard Ingram, Head of Social Work at the University of Dundee who played a major role in the organising committee and to all of the committee.

It was an excellent conference; friendly, welcoming and including an array of research and evidence address multi-professional practices.

Social work researchers from all over the globe are taking part in one of the largest conferences of its type in the world. The challenges facing individuals, communities and society nationally and internationally have never been greater, nor has the need and appetite for impactful social work research. It is fantastic that Scotland is the location for such an important event.

Photo gallery



European Conference for Social Work Research 2027

5-7 May, Bucharest, Romania



ECSWR 2027
**16TH EUROPEAN
CONFERENCE FOR
SOCIAL WORK RESEARCH**
5 - 7 May 2027
University of Bucharest / ROMANIA

*Facing the Polycrises – Rethinking the Role of
Social Work Research*

For more detailed information
www.ecswr2027.com

 **European
Social
Work
Research
Association**

 **UNIVERSITY OF
BUCHAREST**
UNIVERSITY OF BUCHAREST

 **FACULTY OF
SOCIOLOGY AND
SOCIAL WORK**
UNIVERSITY OF BUCHAREST

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‘Creativity is the generation and
initial development of new, useful
ideas. Innovation is the
successful implementation of
those ideas in an organization.’

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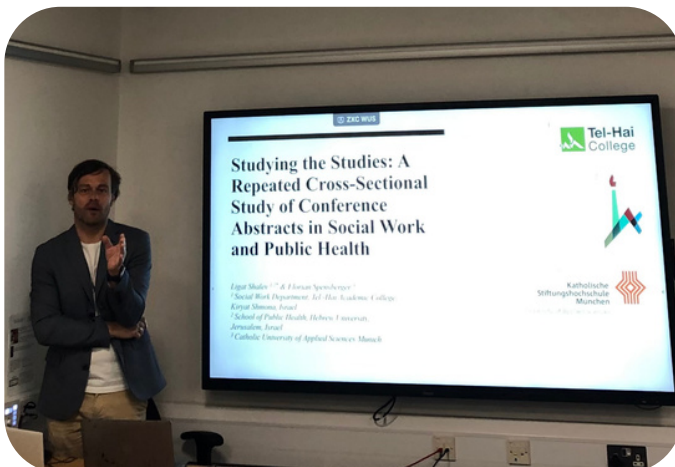
Pre-conference Special Interest Group Event

Aberdeen 2026

Wednesday 15th April 2026

The Special Interest Group (SIG) was one of 30 hosted at the event this year. We are delighted that we had another energetic and enthusiastic Pre-Conference half day SIG on Wednesday 15 April 2026. Thank you to everyone who participated.

At this half day event, Anne McGlade, Co-convenor, expressed her delight in welcoming 15 people to the meeting, comprising a number of new participants as well as loyal members including, colleagues from Decision, Assessment and Risk Special Interest Group (DARSIG) who share joint interests. A number of new members are PhD students whose work will be of interest in future EIPSIG sessions. The group offers a welcoming space for dissemination and discussion.



On the day the group received two very interesting presentations:

Enhancing Research Rigor and Interdisciplinary perspective: Examining Trends in Study Design and Methodological Robustness in European Social Work and Public Health Conferences



Ligat Shalev, Hebrew University, School of Public Health, Jerusalem, Israel and Tel-Hai Academic College, Department of Social Work, Tel-Hai Israel



Florian Spensberger, University of Applied Sciences, Department of Social Work, Munich Germany

Listening to Approved Social Workers (ASW): Stories Making a Difference

ASWs are specialist social workers who have powers to detain people under the Mental Health Order in NI, the *Mental Health (Northern Ireland) Order 1986*.



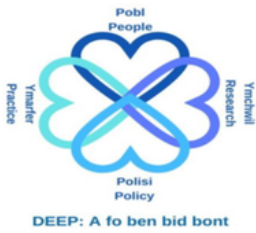
Delivered by Lisa Morrison, Trainer and Consultant, a person with lived experience

If you would like to have a copy of these presentations please email: EiPSIG@hscni.net.

We would also like to thank Siddhartha Baviskar, who continues to look after our seminars and helping to keep us all engaged and connected.

If you are interested in presenting your work please email: siba@kp.dk or EiPSIG@hscni.net.

Fifth online seminar - An introduction to 'Most Significant Change' (May 2026)



Michael Gray,
Pembrokeshire County Council



Nick Andrews,
Swansea University



With the key message *that not everything can be counted*, members of the Evidence into Practice Special Interest Group, were treated to an interesting online session by Nick Andrews of Swansea University and Michael Gray, Pembrokeshire County Council.

Nick shared an easy explanation on what Most Significant Change is;

Most Significant Change (MSC) is a storytelling approach to gathering and exploring change outcomes that was developed in the context of public health and international development (Davies and Dart, 2005).

Writing MSC stories in this way is different from writing case studies. Case studies are generally third person stories about people, whilst MSC stories are first person stories. The danger of case studies is that the content can be led by what matters to the person gathering the stories, rather than the person whose story is being told.

Most Significant Change has three essential features that form a virtuous cycle:

- story gathering
- story exploration and selection
- feedback on learning and response.

It starts by inviting people to share their stories about what's changed following an intervention, service or programme.

Rather than asking about pre-determined outcomes, MSC asks an open question, for example: Looking back over the past six months, what good or bad changes have come about as a result of your involvement with the service?

Key benefits of MSC:

- It can be therapeutic.
- It captures complex outcomes.
- It supports individual and collective learning.
- It builds relationships and 'common knowledge' (Edwards 2012).

This isn't stand alone and compliments other methods - stories are powerful because they engage our heads and our hearts and are 'real life.'

“ *Not everything that can be counted counts, and not everything that counts can be counted.*
William Bruce Cameron ”

Michael included his work from his evaluation study titled:

How does Health and Care practitioners' participation in story based dialogic evaluation inform strategic thinking and acting towards desired health and care outcomes? An exploration of the Most Significant Change Technique.

His study was undertaken through 25 semi-structured interviews. These were a mixture of Local Authority, Health, Voluntary and Community Sector and Welsh Government colleagues from across Wales United Kingdom. It used Reflexive thematic analysis (Braun and Clarke 2006).

Emergent messages – what can Most Significant Change tell us?

MSC connects to individuals and between people on an emotional level. This in return creates some of the necessary conditions for relational learning.

This relational learning environment provides an opportunity to accept and appreciate the complex nature of outcomes creation. MSC is conceived as more than evaluation, but as an organisational routine or “coordinative capability” (French, Hesselgreaves et al. 2023).

Engagement in MSC exposes the limitations of quantitatively driven forms of evaluation, it supports ongoing efforts to strike a balance between dialogic story-based evaluation for learning, and rationalist evaluation for proving.

As a Director of Social Service as well as undertaking this masters level study, Michael explained that he is currently working with Welsh local authority colleagues to help influence the use of MSC in policy.

If you would like to receive a copy of the presentation slides contact: EiPSIG@hscni.net. The recording is also available to view [here](#).

Interested? Find out more through the links below:

Blogs:

<https://oracycambridge.substack.com/p/from-metrics-to-meaning-bringing>

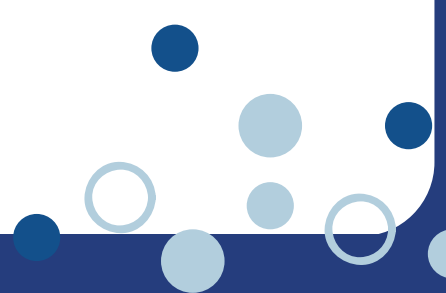
<https://insightcollective.socialcare.wales/whats-on/news-and-blogs/from-metrics-to-meaning-most-significant-change-as-a-learning-focused-approach-to-evaluation-in-wales>

Film:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ey0pk1clewI>

Podcast:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mfXfhFDPR2k>



News from the STAR Project: Using Validated Screening Tools for Assessing Risk

From Kresta M. Sørensen, Siddhartha Baviskar and Svein Arild Vis

The **STAR** project, first presented at the pre-conference in Munich 2025, explores whether validated screening tools can strengthen referral assessments in child welfare.

The study investigates whether tools like the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ) can be feasibly integrated into practice — and whether they, when combined with professional judgement, can support more equitable and effective assessments for children and families. It thereby both introduces evidence into practice and generates evidence from practice.

The feasibility study is being conducted in collaboration with two municipalities using a PDSA (Plan–Do–Study–Act) approach. This involves close interaction with professionals as well as interviews with young people and parents. It builds on a scoping review and initial workshops and interviews with practitioners.

Currently, the SDQ is being tested in practice as a supplement to social workers' assessments. It is used with children aged 11 and above (with some exceptions, e.g. abuse cases), and participation is voluntary for children and families.

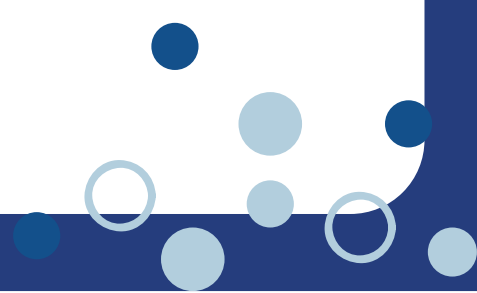
Data collection includes:

- Interviews with young people, parents, and social workers.
- Outcome data from electronic case files (DUBU).

We are now in the middle of the testing phase and will soon begin interviews. With data collection progressing well, we expect to complete analyses and answer the research questions within the coming year.

To discuss or find out more contact:

Kresta M. Sørensen, Associate Professor, PhD in Social Work, University College Copenhagen, Department of Social Work Faculty of Social Education, Social Work and Administration, please email: krms@kp.dk.



Call for book proposals



Bruce Thyer,
EiPSIG Member

To find out more details contact: Bruce Thyer, EiPSIG Member, please email: bthyer@fsu.edu.

Cognella, a leading publisher in the human services fields (<https://cognella.com/>) has announced the establishment of a new interdisciplinary book series titled: *An Introduction to Research Methods in the Human Services*.

This series of 10-12 individual titles per year is due to begin in 2027. Each book will be brief, about 100 published pages (about 130 journal manuscript pages prepared in strict APA style).

Contact the book series editor Professor Bruce Thyer at Bthyer@fsu.edu with your idea for a topic/title.

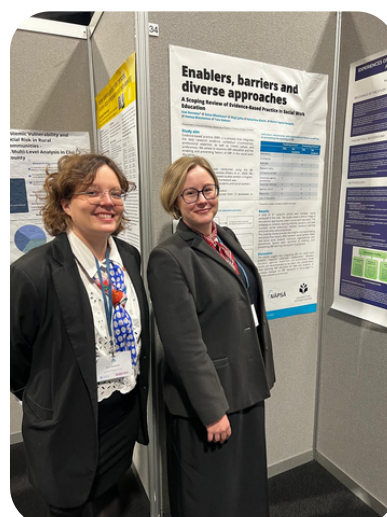
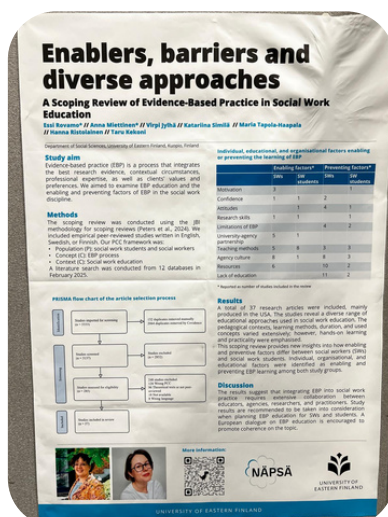
The scope of research methods featured in this series is anticipated to be inclusive, encompassing a variety of quantitative, qualitative and mixed methods topics. This series will be published in low-cost paperback and e-book versions.

Enablers, barriers and diverse approaches

A Scoping Exercise on Evidence Based Practice in Social Work Education

Congratulations to Essi Rovamo and Anna Miettinen of Finland, EiPSIG members who were present at Aberdeen conference to present their poster.

Likewise, congratulation to Liz Tanner, part of the Workforce Special Interest Group and the Northern Ireland Research Community Network. Liz very successfully presented PHD evidence work at the ESWRA conference in poster format.



Interesting articles and studies

Digital and online harassment

Social Media has many benefits but we need to be aware of the negatives.

One in six social workers experience social media abuse and online harassment in the course of their work (one in five if you include personal harassment).

This message emerged from a national survey of social workers, students and probation officers undertaken in the Republic of Ireland conducted by Kenneth Burns and colleagues from University College Cork that explored experiences of digital abuse and harassment through social media platforms.

View the evidence in the following two articles:

[The Social Media, Online and Digital Abuse and Harassment of Social Workers, Probation Officers and Social Work Students in Ireland: A National Survey](#)

['Crossing the Line': Child Protection and Welfare Managers' and Social Workers' Experiences of Social Media, Online and Digital Abuse and Harassment in Ireland](#)

A number of resources have been made available by University College Cork including: *The Crossing the Line escalation scale* – you can download it and other free resources [here](#).

We were delighted to have Dr Kenneth Burns speak at a Social Work and Social Care Research Conference in Northern Ireland on 11th March 2026.

If you are interested in reading the outcomes from our Annual Research conference, including oral and poster presentations please view [here](#).

Interested in the paradoxes of Artificial Intelligence?

Read The '**stuck paradox**': what we learned from leaders about AI and digital transformation', by Sara Woodhouse Chief Executive of Kings Fund England

The King's Fund delivers its vision through research, analysis and insight, leadership and organisational development with health and care leaders, convening and events, and through partnership with others.

Save the Date - Decisions, Assessment, Risk and Evidence in Social Work (DARE) Conference

The 9th Biennial International Symposium DARE conference will be held for the second time at the Zurich University of Applied Sciences (ZHAW), Campus Toni-Areal, Thursday 25 June to Friday 26 June 2026, please email: dare-conference@zhaw.ch.



Leadership in research

At the EPSIG event in Aberdeen, Lisa Morrison and Anne McGlade emphasized the importance of leadership and providing opportunities to people of lived experience and practitioners to be part of research, including skills training.

If you want to read more to find out more about the necessary element of supporting and building capacity check out this publication [here](#).

The content of this article, turning the tables, was also the subject of an additional oral presentation at the Aberdeen Conference that also included leaders Carole Kirk and Ian Burnside from Northern Ireland.

Turning the tables: creating space for lived experience leadership in research

This article outlines the learning gained from a service user carrying out an evaluation in a health and social care trust in Northern Ireland.

It explains why, at top levels and throughout health and social care organisations and in education and at government level, people need to work together.

The article covers the views of Lisa as a service user and the people within the organisations who supported her. They discuss issues that can make it difficult for service users to be involved in research as well as different aspects that made this experience positive for everybody involved. The quality of the relationships which developed was key to what worked well alongside every person placing the same importance on values like respect, trust, being open to learning and seeing everybody as equals.

They discuss how opportunities to develop research skills, for both social work practitioners and service users, are needed to maintain good services. The article highlights the benefits of service user researchers when proper structures and supports are in place.



Spotlight on PhD and Doctoral Studies Students

Are you working on doctoral level studies? If so then why not send us information about your research topic or area of interest and we will spotlight your PhD work in each of these newsletters.

We were delighted to have a number of PhD students at our pre-conference event in Aberdeen.

In this newsletter we highlight the work of one of these students - Victoria Aikhegbe of Stirling University and her work on 'The impact of caring for grandchildren on the health of grandparents in the UK'.

If you are interested to find out more please contact Victoria at: v.o.aikhegbe@stir.ac.uk.

Read Victoria's abstract

To date, research on the relationship between grandparents serving as primary carers for their grandchildren and the associated health outcomes remains inconclusive (Yang and Yin 2022; Dong et al., 2023).

Although a substantial body of literature exists, the health implications of grandparent carers continue to be debated and remain an empirical question rather than a settled issue.

This uncertainty largely stems from variations in theoretical frameworks, research designs, cultural contexts, and caring arrangements.

These inconsistencies highlight the need for a more comprehensive approach that accounts for such differences.

Addressing this gap, the present study focuses on the UK context and draws on role accumulation theory and role strain theory to examine how grandparents manage caring responsibilities and how these roles influence their health, both positively and negatively.

What's new in Northern Ireland

Research Strategy launched on 29th April 2026

To read the Strategy click [here](#).

Whilst this work is more relevant to Northern Ireland, you can also take part on our public 12 week consultation by clicking [here](#) - please read carefully the appropriate documents before you take part in this survey. All views are welcome.

If you have been engaged in developing such a strategy do get in touch by emailing anne.mcglade@niscc.hscni.net as sharing the learning is very important.

Evidence Based Practice Process



Your views are welcome and valued, so please let us know:
What else would you like to see included?
Ideas are always welcome.

Let us know at EiPSIG@hscni.net.

Membership

We are always keen to welcome new members to our Special Interest Group. New members are very welcome. If you'd like more information or wish to join EiPSIG please contact the convenor at EiPSIG@hscni.net.

