

Improving the use of research in social care

A knowledge review for SCIE

Research Unit for Research Utilisation, St. Andrews

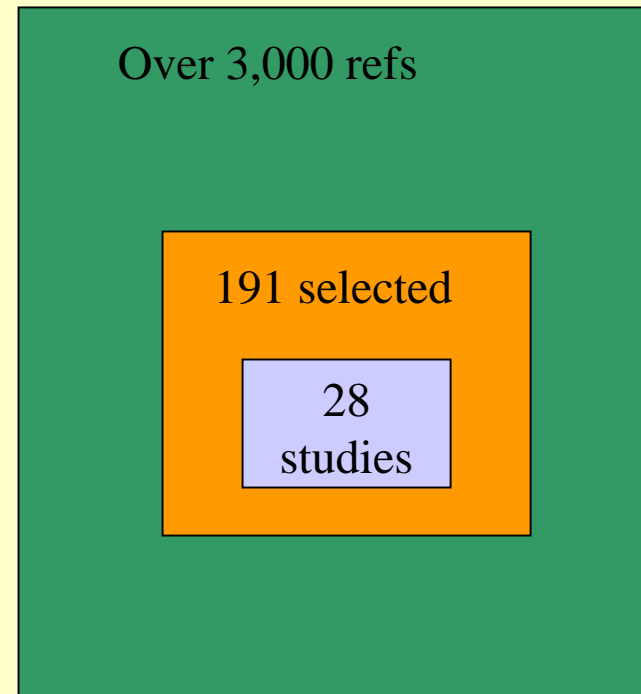
Barnardo's Research and Development Team

5 objectives

- how research is used in social care
- the effectiveness of different ways of promoting research use
- models of research use that include all groups in the social care workforce
- implications for learning and human resource management
- future directions for research and development

Methods - Literature review

- Conceptual, descriptive and empirical papers
- UK focus
- Studies from a range of settings but mostly of professional grade staff



- Plus - documents from Social Services Departments

Methods - Seminars and interviews

- 4 consultation seminars

- 135 participants

- Statutory sector, voluntary organisations, academics and intermediary organisations

- Mainly managers

- 7 face-to-face interviews

- Senior personnel

- GSCC, Topss England, Department of Health, UKHCA, NCHA, WORD, Shaping Our Lives

Research use - key themes

Access to research

- how research reaches individuals

Applying research

- the uses to which research is put

Promoting research use in social care

Ensuring a relevant
research base

Improving access to
research

Making research
understandable

Drawing out practice
implications

Developing best
practice models

Requiring research-
informed practice

Developing a research-
minded culture

Models of research use in social care

Research-based
practitioner

Embedded
research

Organisational
excellence

Research-based practitioner model

- Role and responsibility of individual practitioners to keep up-to-date with and apply research
- Use of research is a linear process - access, appraise, apply
- Assumes professional autonomy
- Emphasises professional education and training

Research-based practitioner model - the evidence

- Research-informed practice seen as joint responsibility
- Lack of access to research - including lack of time
- Research not "user-friendly"
- Lack of skills to interpret research
- Some negative attitudes towards research
- Limited evidence about effectiveness of initiatives to address the above

Embedded research model

- Research is embedded in systems and processes - standards, policies and tools
- Research use viewed as linear and instrumental
- Responsibility for research use lies with policy makers and managers
- Performance management and regulatory regimes encourage the use of guidance and tools

Embedded research model - the evidence

- Little evidence available about operation of model
- Senior officials may have better access to research
- Side-steps time pressures and cultural antipathy
- Evidence from other sectors that guidance alone does not change practice
- Some evidence about what makes "tools" successful

Organisational excellence model

- Leadership, management and organisation of social care delivery organisations is key
- Local adaptation of research findings and ongoing learning
- Importance of developing a "research-minded" local culture
- Partnerships with local universities and intermediary organisations

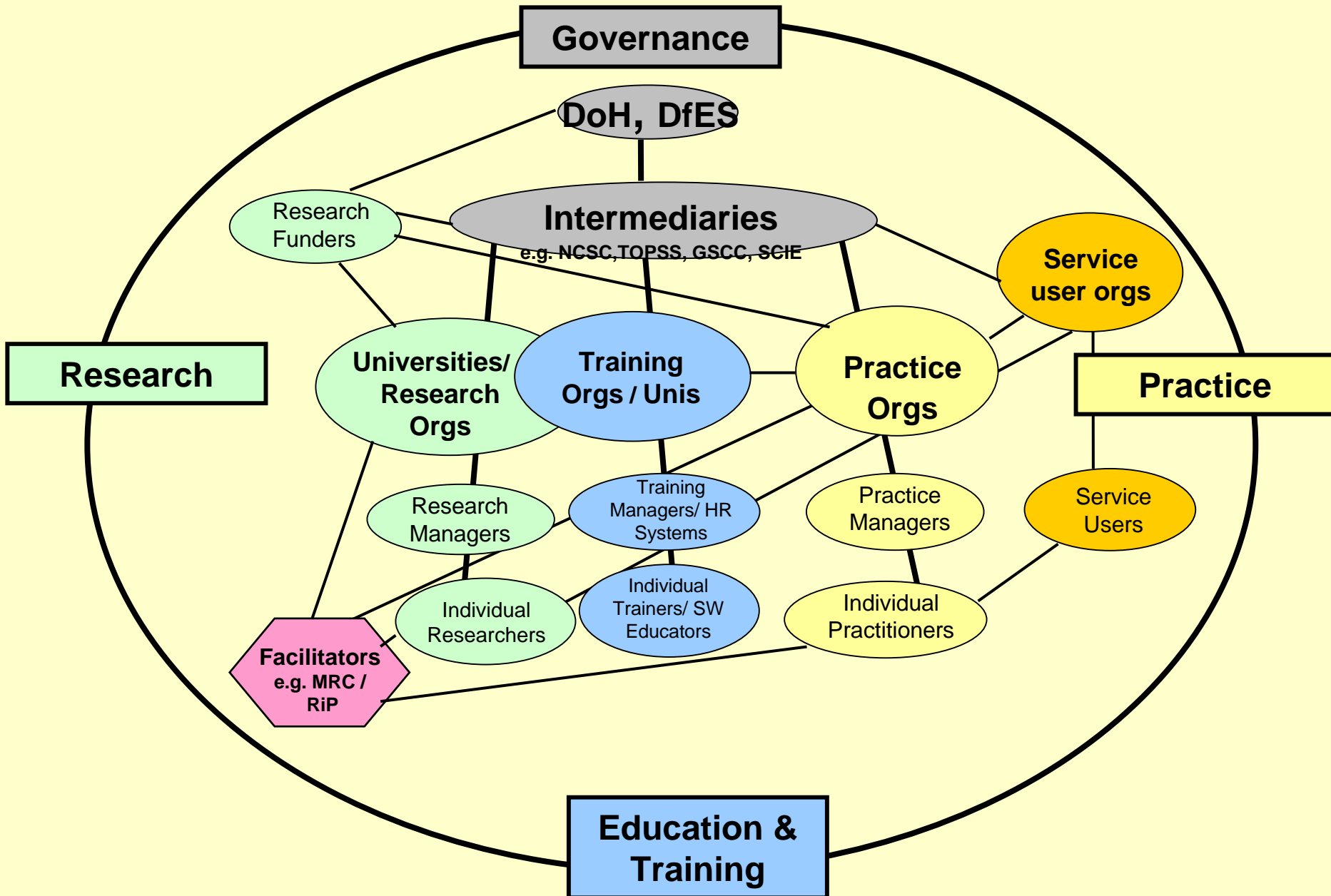
Organisational excellence model - the evidence

- Evidence of lots of activity in line with this model
- Importance of high level leadership and local research "champions"
- Support for practitioners working jointly with researchers
- Support for practice-led research
- Constraints on experimentation and innovation

One or more models?

Do the models fit together?

A whole systems approach to research use



Tensions between models

- **Autonomy** to change practice
 - or demands for **compliance**?
- **Linear** use of research (access, appraise, apply)
 - or local **creation** of research-based knowledge?

Felt most acutely at level of practice

Gaps

- Research funders
 - a national research and development strategy?
- Service users
 - present - but not in a central role

Different models in different contexts

- Different staff groups
 - embedded research model more appropriate for non-professionally qualified workforce?
- Different stages in developing research use
 - practitioner involvement in developing guidance and tools may be important
- Different types of research
 - some types of research translate directly into practice - others challenge preconceptions and form a backdrop to policy and practice

Conclusions - taking forward research use in social care

1. Much activity but often fragmented - need for co-ordination
2. Social care field is diverse - need a varied approach
3. Lack of strong evidence about what works in encouraging research use - need for more evaluation
4. No single model is enough - need a whole systems approach