Improving the use of research in social care

A knowledge review for SCIE

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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

Over 3,000 refs

191 selected

28 studies
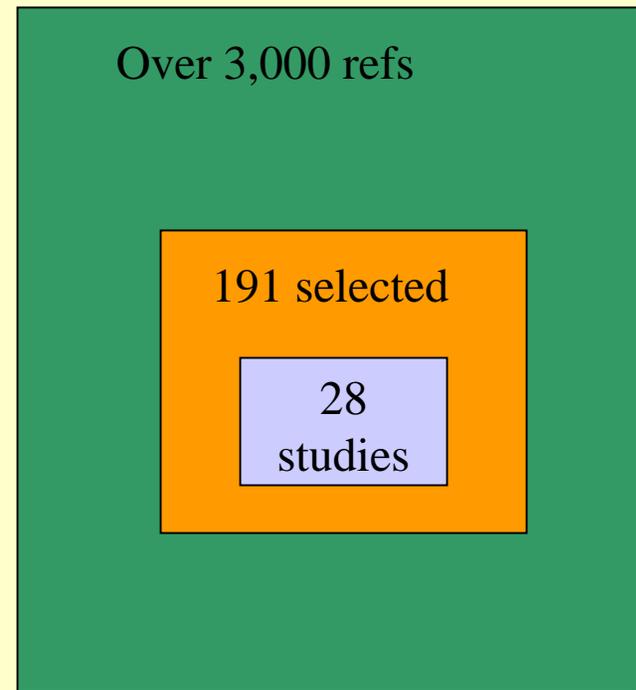
• Plus - documents from Social Services Departments

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

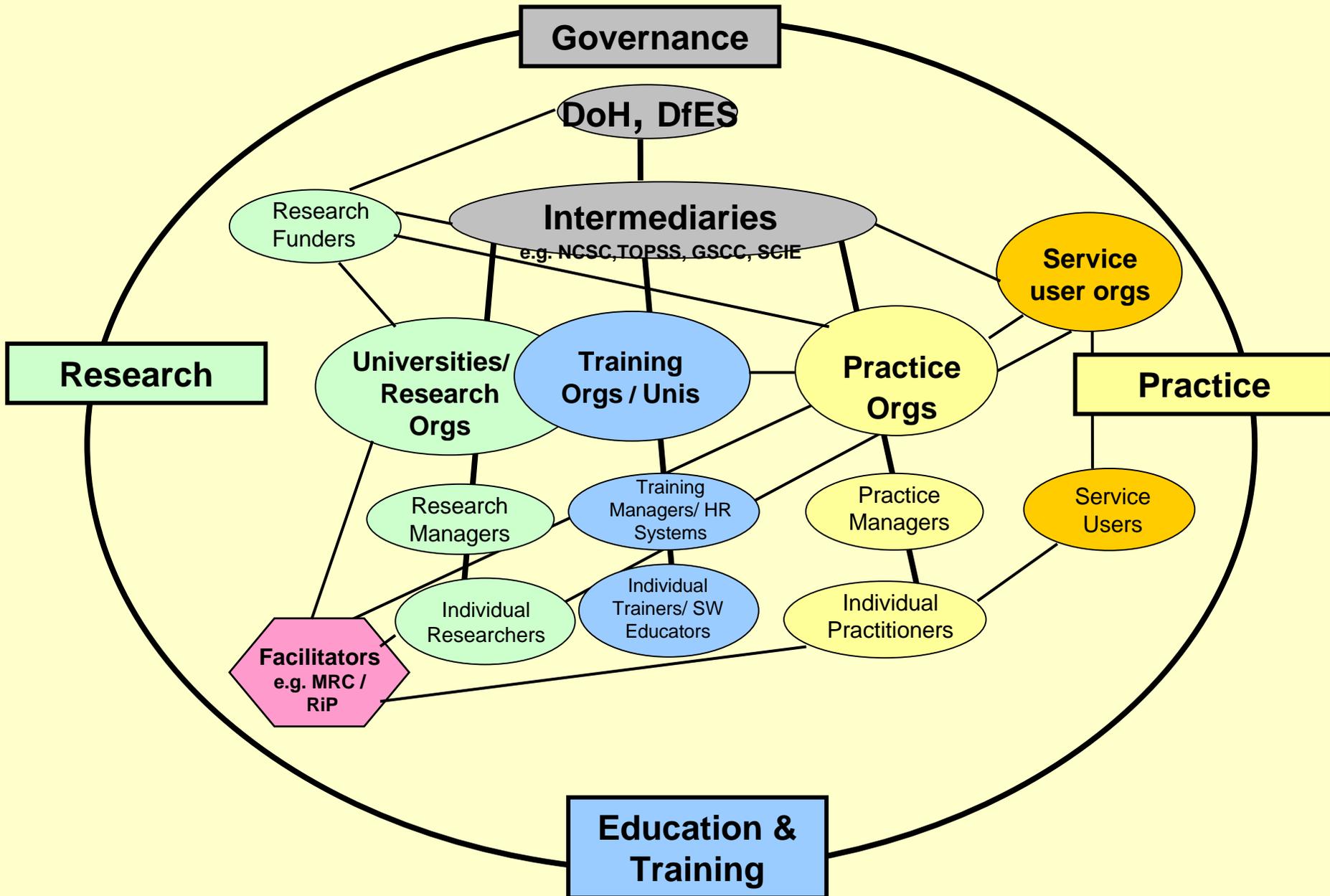- Partnerships with local universities and intermediary organisations

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

Governance

DoH, DfES

Research Funders

Intermediaries
e.g. NCSC,TOPSS, GSCC, SCIE

Service user orgs

Research

Universities/ Research Orgs

Training Orgs / Unis

Practice Orgs

Practice

Research Managers

Training Managers/ HR Systems

Practice Managers

Service Users

Individual Researchers

Individual Trainers/ SW Educators

Individual Practitioners

Facilitators e.g. MRC / RiP

Education & Training

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