

Long-term Evaluation of Research Utilisation Consultation

Preliminary Report Scotland



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Background

In 1994/5 the Foundation of Nursing Studies (FoNS) responded to the now widely recognised need for practitioners to base their practice on sound evidence of clinical effectiveness (Department of Health, 1996a) by organising nine workshops focused on the utilisation of research. The workshops involved 206 participants (Registered General Nurses, Registered Mental Nurses, Health Visitors and Midwives) spanning all clinical grades from seven NHS trusts.

The primary evaluation of these workshops was reported in May 1996 in *'Reflection for Action'* (Foundation of Nursing Studies). The results were encouraging. The workshops had: strengthened practitioners' skills in critical appraisal; raised their awareness that research varied in its quality; and consolidated their prior knowledge, experience and confidence. However, fears were expressed that these effects 'wore off' with time, and that organisations needed to commit time and resources to enabling their staff to achieve research based practice. As a result of these concerns FoNS considered it necessary to undertake a long-term evaluation during 1997/98.

Two questions guided the second evaluation. What effect had the workshops and the association with FoNS had **in the long-term** on:-

- facilitating participants to critically evaluate research and apply it in practice?
- enhancing a research culture in the organisation?

The results of the second evaluation were presented in a consultation paper and this was distributed to senior nurses, practice developers and nurse educators in Trusts

and academic institutions across the UK. The first phase of the consultation invited recipients of the paper to respond to the findings in the light of their own experiences. They were also asked to comment on the impact clinical governance has had on getting research/evidence into practice and provide information on the kind of resources/support that have, and/or would, help get evidence into practice. The same people were also invited to attend one of four consultation events held in Northern Ireland, Scotland, England and Wales. The overall aims of the consultation were to validate the findings of the long-term evaluation of research utilisation and to explore specific needs in terms of supporting and sustaining the use of research in practice.

At the consultation events we were delighted to have the support of the Chief Nursing Officers to open the events in Northern Ireland, Wales and Scotland and a Deputy for the Chief Nursing Officer in England. Each day included presentations on the challenges of getting research into practice in each of the four countries. During the day participants were divided into small discussion groups and asked to focus on 4 areas:

1. Developing knowledge and skills to support research utilisation
2. Establishing organisational structures to support and sustain research utilisation
3. Creating and maintaining a culture for research utilisation
4. The role of the Foundation of Nursing Studies in supporting and sustaining research utilisation

Workshop discussion group guidelines were provided for areas 1-3 and participants were asked to record as much as possible of their individual thoughts, views and experiences from and about current practice in individual response sheets. Flip charts were also provided for recording information. Participants were given an individual questionnaire to complete during the day that focused on area 4. The individual and group notes, questionnaires and flip charts were all collected from each group and have formed a large part of the data collected from each of the four days.

An individual preliminary report has been prepared for each country and participants have the opportunity to comment on and verify the content of the report. These four reports contribute to an overall UK-wide publication.

Introduction to the Scotland Consultation

Forty-six people attended the consultation event for Scotland held at the Education and Conference Centre, Stirling Royal Infirmary, 21st August 2000. We were very pleased to have Miss Ann Jarvie, Chief Nursing Officer, Scotland to open the day. Miss Jarvie welcomed the Foundation to Scotland and encouraged participants to take full advantage of the opportunity the day presented. We were also pleased to have two keynote presenters from Scotland to set the scene for the workshop activities. Kate Niven, Professor of Nursing, Stirling University & Director of Nursing Research Initiative for Scotland helped focus the morning's activities with a presentation on the challenges research utilisation present in Scotland. In the afternoon, Rhona Hotchkiss, Nursing & Midwifery Practice Development Unit, highlighted some of the challenges faced at a clinical level and the role of practice development.

For the purpose of the focused workshop discussions, participants were divided into four small groups. Each group identified a facilitator and ad hoc external facilitation was provided where needed. A vast amount of data was collected from the groups representing both individual viewpoints and group consensus. The data have been transcribed, reviewed and where possible key issues and themes identified. The reviewed data are presented in four sections under the workshop/questionnaire headings and an overall summary and interpretation provided.

Data Presentation

Workshop 1: Developing Knowledge and Skills to Support Research Utilisation

Activity 1.1 Participants were asked to comment on 'What triggers the use of research?'

The following data represent the common individual responses to this question under four broad headings:

Individual/personal factors

- An unanswered question, 'cannot back up why something is done'
- Concerns about practice
- Need to know potential outcomes
- Need to back up changes in practice
- Concern about care delivery
- Critical incidents
- Performance appraisal
- Clinical supervision
- Desire to expand knowledge
- Desire to make a difference
- Teaching others
- Networking
- Maturity in personal and professional development, more questioning and open to ideas

Internal organisational factors

- Infrastructure and resources (to support research use)
- Implementation of change to make things better
- Clinical governance, risk management, audit
- Complaints
- Monitoring of practice and dealing with inconsistency within the organisation
- Quality initiatives
- Nursing policy
- New guideline produced
- Journal clubs
- New staff
- Local champions
- Nursing roles, e.g. clinical specialist, senior nurses, lecturer practitioners
- Suggestion boxes for staff/patients and families

External factors

- New therapies that require investigation of best way to deliver care – linking to similar/related practice in other fields of practice.
- National and local strategies
- Government priorities
- Responding to external publication and reports
- Clinical Standards Board, SIGN

Educational factors

- Training/education sessions linked to practice
- Courses, degrees
- Joint appointment with universities
- Academic requirement

Participants were then asked to share and discuss their individual responses and draw together the common and most important themes which trigger the use of research in practice.

The following themes were found in all four groups:

Organisational culture

- Ownership
- Practitioner/researcher posts
- Local champion
- Leadership
- Service development

Data from within one group indicated that there could be problems at practice level in an organisation, which may not be perceived by people in a more senior role, but which can hinder the use of research. The examples given referred to lack of time, pressure of work, low morale and lack of support.

Clinical governance

- Clinical governance said to have raised the profile of research
- Critical incidents
- Economic pressure

Patient care

- Patient preferences
- Practice issues, e.g. inadequate pain control
- Poor practice

Education

- Educating practitioners about research and its importance to nursing work

Activity 1.2 What knowledge and skills do you/your colleagues need to support research utilisation? *Participants were asked to consider the kind of knowledge and skills needed.*

The responses from participants have been grouped under the following key headings:

Leadership & change management skills

- Change management skills
- Project management skills
- Communication skills
- Negotiation skills
- Diplomacy
- Influential
- Change agent
- Facilitation skills
- Assertiveness
- Political awareness

Research skills

- Critical appraisal skills
- Critical thinking skills
- Understanding principles of the research process
- Research awareness
- Research methods
- Literature searching skills, library skills, knowledge of databases
- Dissemination skills including, sharing/implementing good practice, networking, writing for publication
- Writing proposals
- Interpreting statistics
- Basic guide on understanding jargon
- Knowledge of sources of support for research

IT skills

- Information search skills
- Computer and paper literacy
- Internet skills

Participants were also asked to consider who needs the knowledge and skills and how loss of knowledge and skills can be prevented.

Who needs the knowledge and skills?

Most of the groups seemed to support the need for all nurses to have so called ‘basic skills’ which included critical appraisal skills and knowledge of the research process. All four groups talked of needing different levels of experience and one group referred to the need for structured career pathways for researchers in practice.

How can loss of knowledge and skills be prevented?

There were only a small number of responses to this question. One comment suggested that a way of rewarding research utilisation should be identified. The need for dedicated ‘time’ was also identified by two groups to make sure people can assess training and use skills. Linked to this there was a plea for appropriate investment of resources...“we should not invest in spreading ‘thin’ (research) appreciation but strategically invest in research with impact for nursing.” On a broader organisational level, commitment to life-long learning locally and nationally was referred to by one group together with identification of a respected individual who can be accessed for advice and support.

Workshop 2: Establishing Organisational Structures to Support and Sustain Research Utilisation

Activity 2.1 The consultation report identifies that practitioners quote a lack of organisational support to use research in practice

Bearing in mind the knowledge and skills identified in workshop one, identify the specific organisational support required to achieve the development of skills and sustain the use of research in practice. Also consider how this could be achieved, where it would fit into the overall organisational structure and who would/should take responsibility.

Organisational support was identified under the following headings:

Creating a culture for generating and using research in practice

National:

- R&D nursing strategy which identifies priorities and promotes partnership and efficiency
- Ring-fenced central funding for dedicated research time, training, IT and access to library resources
- Continued support for clinical leadership
- Education strategy that support multi-disciplinary education

Linked to the above, there were several references to the need to value (in terms of dedicated time and funding) nurses and nursing research in the same way as doctors and medical research are valued.

Local:

- Nursing research needs to be valued in terms of time and money and not be seen as an ‘add on’
- Support and encourage partnerships, for example, joint appointments such as true lecturer practitioner roles that are practice based and research secondments and fellowships with academic institutions
- Research utilisation should be seen as practice development
- Development of change management teams to provide specific support to clinical leaders facilitating change
- Valuing the ‘pivotal’ role of the ward sister in increasing and sustaining research utilisation
- Value all members of the multidisciplinary team
- Funding system for succession planning to nurture less experienced researchers

Dissemination

- Systems for disseminating research findings locally
- Identify meaningful ways of measuring successful research utilisation that are simple

Increasing access to information

- IT infrastructure
- Access to library and database facilities

Education and training

- Identify knowledge and skills required to sustain research use in practice
- All staff given training in critical appraisal
- IT skills and information searching
- Provision of experts, e.g. statistician in every Trust

Responsibility for achieving organisational support locally was seen to rest with the Chief Executive and relevant Executive Board members. Ward sisters/managers were also highlighted in several areas as having a key role.

Workshop 3: Creating and Maintaining a Culture for Research Utilisation

Activity 3.1 What creates a culture that promotes the utilisation of research?

Participants were asked to describe a characteristic or element that creates the culture and where possible give an example from practice.

The groups identified the following broad characteristics and specific elements:

Managerial/organisational commitment

- Securing funding
- Commitment to change
- Learning organisation
- Strong leadership
- Facilitative and empowering
- Supportive
- Recognise integration of audit, clinical effectiveness, clinical governance, R&D and quality assurance

Investment in staff

- Incentives and rewards, saying ‘well done’ and giving something back
- Recognising potential and fostering skills
- Creating a ‘can do’ culture

Education

- Partnerships
- Shared learning
- Research fellowships

Openness and trust

- Encouraging openness in all staff to generate and take on new ideas and ways of working
- Encourage questioning
- All staff should feel secure 'no one stands up to disseminate in a culture of fear and ridicule'

Demystification of research

- Research forums
- Journal clubs
- Make research visible, 'if people see it, they want to try it'
- Expand the debate about what is needed, 'is research essential or is consensus-based evidence appropriate?'

Inter-professional respect

- Nurses respected as researchers in practice
- Movement toward health service research rather than nursing/medical research
- More Chairs in nursing research
- Nurses should not be seen as cheap data collectors, but as equal team members

Questionnaire: The Role of the Foundation of Nursing Studies in Supporting & Sustaining Research Utilisation

Participants were asked to provide information on the kind of activities the Foundation should continue to support in order to fulfil its aim of getting research into practice. The findings from our long-term evaluation have identified workshops as a valuable means of developing skills for using research. We wanted to find out more about the value of workshops and also about other things that might be useful.

The following three key areas of activity were identified for the Foundation:

Skills development workshops

- Change management skills
- Critical appraisal skills
- Research awareness

Support for dissemination

- Funding for projects that contribute to research utilisation. Some suggested that funding of large (multi-centred) projects rather than multiple small projects would be more effective
- Sponsorship of local dissemination (of good practice)
- Development of a contact list of good practice/evidence i.e. who and where
- Development of the nursing equivalent to the Cochrane database
- System for advice and support
- Continue support to conferences, forums and workshops

Raising the profile of nursing research

- Working collaboratively with national organisation such as NRIS, NBS and NMPDU to provide leadership support and empowerment for nurses at all levels
- Consultation exercises on key nursing research issues

Overall Summary and Interpretation

This summary intends to review and highlight the key issues raised by participants in each of the workshops and in the questionnaire. In workshop one, participants were asked to focus on two areas, triggers for research use and the knowledge and skills required to support research use. As with the other consultation days, this workshop resulted in the longest discussions and yielded the most data

Many of the individual triggers for research related to practice problems, concerns about the delivery of care and a personal desire to increase knowledge or improve care. A single statement about professional maturity suggested experience encourages a more opening, questioning approach to practice, but perhaps also highlighted the demands nursing practice places on new or less experienced nurses. The organisational factors that were listed fell into two broad groups of organisational culture and clinical governance. There was also reference to the presence of guidelines and standards and, in particular, mention of the SIGN guidelines and the Clinical Standards Board specific to Scotland. The group discussion reiterated the importance of organisational culture and clinical governance. Patient care issues were again highlighted in all the groups, including being aware of patient preferences. The issue of patient preference would be worth further exploration, because of the challenge it offers to the nature of research and evidence and its role in informing practice. A further area raised in one of the groups was a lack of understanding about what is achievable in practice with regard to using research. It was suggested that lack of time, workload, low morale and inadequate support is hindered the use of research in practice and needs to be addressed before attempting to move forward.

As part of the first workshop, participants were asked to consider the kinds of knowledge and skills that nurses needed to help them use research. The three broad areas identified appeared to receive equal support within the four groups. A wide range of leadership skills was identified,

together with change and project management skills. There was a strong focus on research skills, including those which would help people make better use of research by including critical appraisal and critical thinking skills. These skills were seen as important for all nurses. In order to encourage the use of skills and prevention of their loss, it was suggested that rewards and incentives should be offered for research utilisation. Adequate investment was also highlighted both in terms of time and money. Linked to this was a request from one group that investment should aim to strengthen research and not just, as they described, spread 'thin' appreciation.

Organisational support was the focus of the second workshop and in all the groups the need to create a culture for generating and using research came though most strongly. On a national level the development of an R&D strategy, ring fencing funding, continuing support for clinical leadership and multidisciplinary education were key areas identified. Locally, the need to value nursing research in terms of time and money was again stated. Recognition of particular roles which support research use was also asked for, including the role of the ward sister which was described as 'pivotal' to research utilisation. There was also a suggestion that research utilisation be seen as practice development. A rationale was not given for this, but it may be that for many nurses the term practice development is less daunting. Improving systems for disseminating research locally was also seen as important as was increasing the accessibility of information. Education and training was the final area of support identified. Critical appraisal and IT were the two main areas requiring particular attention, but it was acknowledged that an assessment of needs would be important.

Moving on to look more specifically at what creates, and perhaps more importantly, maintains a culture for research utilisation, the groups identified a broad range of characteristics and activities. The six key characteristic that emerged from the data included organisational commitment, education, investment in staff, openness and trust, demystification of research and inter-professional respect. Whilst the first two

have been common throughout the workshops, the others have been less obvious or unmentioned. They provide useful food for thought about what motivates research activity and more specifically research use.

Finally, the completed questionnaires about the role of FoNS in supporting and sustaining research provided information on three key areas of activity. The Foundation's workshops have proved valuable in the past and it was suggested these would still be useful, focusing on management of change, critical appraisal and research awareness. Project funding for the implementation and dissemination of research was considered important by all the groups, but a response from one group, which FoNS would want to explore further, was the suggestion that funding of multiple small project could be ineffective. The idea for maintaining a list or database of good practice was also of interest and there would be scope here for exploring some of the existing networks of information that are available both within and outside the Foundation. Developing a system for advice and support would also be of interest to FoNS as it is an area where the organisation has tried to have a role, particularly as an 'added extra' to project funding. The final area of activity suggested focuses on raising the profile of nursing research, encouraging the Foundation to work collaboratively with the relevant national organisations in Scotland.

In conclusion, this report presents a review of data collected from the one-day consultation in Scotland. The data from this report together with that collected in Northern Ireland, Wales and England provide great insights into 'where have we come from?' and 'where are we going to?' in terms of getting research and evidence used in practice.

*Theresa Shaw
Professional Development Officer
November 2000*

Attendance List

Name	Title	NHST/Company
Mary Addo	Ward Manager, Forensic Rehabilitation	Grampian Healthcare NHST
Joanne Booth	Consultant Nurse	
Margaret Brown	Senior Nurse, Practice Dev.	South General Hospital NHST
Fay Buglass	Director	Foundation of Nursing Studies
Helen Cheyne	Practice Development Midwife/Clinical Research Fellow	University of Stirling
Margaret Clarke	HISS Project Manager	Law Hospital NHST
Fiona Dick	Specialist Nurse, Stroke Rehabilitation and Liaison	Forth Valley Acute Hospitals NHST
Andrew Elliot	Staff Nurse	Western General Hospitals NHST
Marjorie Gillies	Nursing Research Fellow	Yorkhill NHST
Morag Gray	Head of Department	University of Napier
Ali Hancock	Clinical Nurse Manager – Urology	Aberdeen Royal Hospital NHST
Janet Hanley	Trust Research Manager	Lothian Primary Care NHST
Gordon Hill	Research Nurse	Western General Hospitals NHST
Rhona Hotchkiss	Director	NMPDU
Caroline Inwood	Executive Director of Nursing	Fife Acute Hospitals NHST
Anne Jarvie	Chief Nursing Officer	Scottish Executive
Jane Kane	Clinical Effectiveness Facilitator	Grampian Healthcare NHST
Alyson Kettles	R&D Officer	Grampian Healthcare NHST
Dawn Lamond	Senior Research Fellow	University of Stirling
Helen Leslie	Matron	Carrick Care Homes
Janet Matthews	Lecturer, Child Health	Napier University
Fiona McArdle	Research Nurse	Royal Infirmary of Edinburgh NHST
John McCall	Specialist Nurse, Stroke Rehabilitation and Liaison	Forth Valley Acute Hospitals NHST
Maggie McCowan	Senior Nurse, Infection Control	Southern General Hospital NHST
Lucy McCloughan	Research Co-ordinator	Lothian Primary Care NHST
Shona McDermott	Clinical Effectiveness Manager	Glasgow Nuffield Hospital
Nan McIntosh	Nurse Practitioner – Oncology	Yorkhill NHST
Andrew McKie	Lecturer in Nursing	Robert Gordon University
Ruth Mitchell	Lecturer, Child Health	Napier University
E Munro	Practice Development Nurse	Fife Acute Hospitals NHST
Kate Niven	Professor of Nursing	University of Stirling
Bernadette O'Hare	Clinical Leader	Greater Glasgow Community NHST
Julie Peacock	Clinical Practice Dev. Officer	Fife Primary Care NHST
Jim Robinson	Senior Lecturer in Child Health	
Irene Russell	CNS	Law Hospital NHST
Marjory Russell	Senior Midwife	Law Hospital NHST
Margaret Smith	Director of Nursing & Quality	North Glasgow University Hospitals NHST
Steve Smith	Community Psychiatric Nurse	Grampian Healthcare NHST
Heather Strachan	Information R&D Manager	Borders Primary Care NHST
Pam Tavendale	Clinical Governance Co-ordinator	Grampian Healthcare NHST
Monica Thompson	Professional Development Advisor	Royal Infirmary of Edinburgh
Christine Turnbull	Matron	
Angela Wallace	Directorate Nurse Manager	Fife Acute Hospitals NHST
Sylvia Watson	Nurse Manager	Grampian University Hospitals NHST
Peter Wimpenny	Nurse Teacher	Robert Gordon University
Sheena Wright	Lecturer Practitioner	University of Glasgow



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