What Works Centre for Children’s Social Care

e-newsletter, no.09 14th September 2018

Co-designing the future WWC’s roles and functions with partner organisations

Activity to develop and test promising approaches to generating and sharing evidence is now well underway with our pioneer partner authorities.

This ‘prototyping’ work is at the heart of our approach to co-designing the future WWC with our pioneer partners. The aim of the prototypes is to test ways of making evidence more accessible and relevant to practitioners and helping practice leaders to foster cultures in which effective evidence is used on a day-to-day basis. The initial phase of work has been one of ‘discovery’, building relationships with our new partners, and seeking to understand their issues and challenges in more depth and how our proposed prototype approaches could meet their needs. In each of the pioneer authorities, we've been engaging with leaders, supervisors and frontline practitioners whose invaluable input has been helping us refine and revise our hypotheses and suggested approaches.

The next stage of work is ‘design’, where we will be developing first iterations – prototypes – of the new tools and services to test with partners to ensure the tools make a real difference for practitioners. After several iterations (with the number depending on the prototype and the level promise it demonstrates in testing) we plan to commence trialling them in new, live practice settings.

Poll sheds light on use of evidence in practice

Nearly one third of children’s social workers think that none of their local practice is based on credible and robust data and evidence, according to a twitter poll the Centre posted recently. Over 500 people responded to our poll – the best response yet. Our twitter following increased too, recently passing the 2,000 mark. It is great to have such a healthy level of engagement so early in the life of the initiative, and polls are emerging as a great way to listen to social workers and get direct feedback on real-world practice to inform the work of the Centre. If you’re not following us yet, please do so, and if you have another idea for a poll, please do let us know by messaging directly us on twitter!

Read the latest blogs from the Centre

Are researchers the ‘head’ and practitioners the ‘hands’ of social care? That’s a question that Hannah Roscoe asks in a [new blog following](https://whatworks-csc.org.uk/whats-new/blog/'head-and-hands'-valuing-knowledge-created-by-the-children's-social-care) attending and presenting at the JSWEC conference in Canterbury on behalf of the Centre. Hannah looks at how a two-way dialogue can be encouraged between research and practice. She says: ‘Clearly, both of these descriptions are caricatures, and don’t reflect the close working relationships between research and practice that exist in many places’. She goes on to talk about how a nuanced and equal relationship between research and practice is vital.

In [another recent blog,](https://whatworks-csc.org.uk/whats-new/blog/what-we-heard-at-jswec) Lorna Stabler, from the Centre’s research partner CASCADE, discusses how real-world practice must inform the work of the Centre going forward. Lorna also presented at JSWEC, looking at the application of evidence standards in children’s social care. In her blog, Lorna reports that delegates were keen to hear more about how the Centre is engaging the sector, and particularly how it will be looking to bridge some of the gaps that exist in the current evidence base.

Heading to Community Care Live

The What Works Centre for Children’s Social Care also is also attending the Community Care Live conference, which takes place on 25 and 26 September. If you’re attending, do come and visit us at our stand. We’ll also be running a workshop session on Wednesday 26 September from 2pm – 3pm. It’s called: ‘Making evidence count’. The Centre’s Chair, Sir Alan Wood will be speaking, along with Anna Bacchoo, SCIE Practice Development Manager for the Centre, and Isabel Vanderheeren, Transformation Lead, Children’s Services, at Walsall Metropolitan Borough Council who will be presenting some of the exciting work from across the Centre. So please come to the session or drop by and see us on Stand 50.

Watch this space

Look out for the next issue of the newsletter later this month where we’ll be reporting on an exciting opportunity for partners to get involved with two new innovative research projects.

Sir Alan Wood, Chair of the What Works Centre for Children’s Social Care, said: ‘It’s an exciting time for the Centre so I urge readers to keep an eye on the Centre’s website and their inboxes. What Works Centres can be notoriously long-term projects. If we are to make an early impact for children, young people and their families, it is vital that we work in constant close collaboration with practitioners and service leaders. Whatever your role, if you work within children’s social care or are touched by it, please get in touch and let us know your thoughts!’