

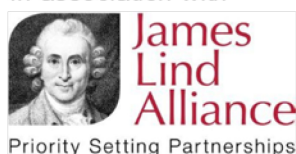
Research Prioritisation Project: How can we best provide sustainable care and support to help older people live happier and more fulfilling lives?

Project background, February 2021

In April 2020 Health and Care Research Wales and Social Care Wales began working on a joint project to identify research priorities relating to care and support of older people, on the topic “How can we best provide sustainable care and support to help older people live happier and more fulfilling lives?”

Critical to the project was to develop these priorities through meaningful engagement with older people, their carers, and social care practitioners. Early on we took the decision to design the project around learning from the well-established [James Lind Alliance Priority Setting Partnership](#) (JLA PSP) process, which has been used in more than 100 priority-setting projects around the world. We chose the JLA-PSP model because it aims specifically to bring patient, carer and clinician groups together on an equal footing, and has well-tested and well-documented methods of ensuring meaningful engagement and transparency. The JLA PSP process results in a “Top 10” that highlights important areas that patients, carers and health professionals have agreed are a priority for research.

In association with



Our project was run In Association with the JLA. To attempt to determine research priorities in around 6 months, the project did not follow full (12-18 month) JLA Priority Setting Partnership (PSP) process, but was mindful of the fundamental principles, including that of fairness and transparency, and used many of the techniques and methods, including some relating to co-production (the Interim Prioritisation Survey, the Workshop and meetings with researchers).

The JLA PSP process does not aim to develop specific research questions, and therefore we also took the decision to take the project “beyond the Top 10” and work with

researchers and potential funders to develop tractable research questions that could go on to be commissioned.

Gathering ideas:



Over the summer we ran two surveys, reaching out to people through over 100 organisations to invite people to take part if they were aged 65 and over and received care and support, were carers of older people, and/or were social care practitioners. We took extra steps to engage with people who tend to be under-represented in the development and production of research, with a focus on people who are likely to have different experiences of social care, including BAME and LGBTQi communities, disabled people and older people who are in prison or who are homeless.

In the first survey, we asked people to give us their ideas on issues and gaps in our understanding about care and support for older people that research could help solve. We asked “what worked” (and what didn’t work) in helping older people to live happier and more fulfilling lives. We got a great response from all across Wales, covering all aspects of care and support. 394 people responded, including 80 older people, 60 carers and 126 social care practitioners. The ideas they sent in were used to develop a long-list of 42 research areas.

In the second survey, people were asked to pick their favourite 10 from the long-list, and from that we narrowed the list down to a short-list of 15 research areas.

Developing the top 10:

In mid-September we hosted an online workshop with 20 participants including older people, carers and social care practitioners from range of settings and job roles. The workshop ran over Zoom with the help of four JLA facilitators. The participants considered the 15 short-listed research areas and produced a ranked list of their Top 10 priorities. Overall the workshop went very well and we had good feedback. The participants had a positive experience, felt they able to engage with the process.

“I found the experience very enlightening especially on how the diverse group respected each others’ points of view. Very respectful group discussions ... All group members participated positively with the improvement of Social Care at the heart of every discussion. Gave me some hope and faith for the future...”

Workshop participant

Beyond the Top 10:

Through the autumn we worked with researchers to consider how these Top 10 priority areas could be answered through further research. We also considered whether other types of work were needed, such as new evidence syntheses, dissemination or knowledge mobilisation activity, policy work, evaluations and audit.

We ran three meetings, each of which looked at 3 or 4 of the Top 10 topics and involved 5-7 social care researchers from across the UK with relevant expertise. Representatives from Health and Care Research Wales, SCW, the National Institute of Health Research (NIHR), the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) and Welsh Government policy took part. Importantly, a practice and public member who had been at the earlier workshop also took part, so that they could make sure that any proposed research stayed true to the Top 10 priorities that had been developed.

“It was helpful to present ideas as to how these questions could be tackled, then to discuss different ideas and share intelligence of linked/similar work that may be taking place.” **Researcher**

The “**narratives**” were the starting point for all discussions. The narratives, derived from information in the survey and discussions at the workshop, described the issues that older people, carers and practitioners were concerned about and what they felt that research could help solve.

We focused the discussions on developing **actionable** research: i.e. research that will help make a difference to social care practice, rather than research that focused on describing problems when the problem has already been identified. We set participants the challenge of pin-pointing what evidence is needed to move on in a practical way; to develop questions that matter and, ultimately, to develop interventions and/or recommendations that could improve people’s lives and wellbeing.

We also asked participants to develop questions that incorporated measures of **cost-effectiveness** into the research. This is because we recognise that social care commissioners in Local Authorities and social care enterprises are unlikely to implement changes to social care systems and practice unless they have a clear idea of the resource implications of new approaches. Ensuring that research provides this evidence on resource implications therefore helps to make the research more “actionable”.

Across the three meetings, 28 recommendations were developed of how the Top 10 research priorities could be taken forward.

Since autumn 2020 we have been engaging with NIHR, ESRC and other potential funders to explore who might fund which questions. Work to get research relating to the Top 10 commissioned will continue throughout 2021.

We have also been evaluating the research prioritisation process, writing an internal project and so far we have found that the new process we are testing has been very

successful getting meaningful involvement of both those who will use the research (social care practitioners) and those who will be affected by it (older people and their carers).

The success of the project as a whole will be evaluated in November 2021. Experience to date suggests that the “In Association with JLA” process has been successful in developing priorities through **meaningful engagement** with the public and practitioners. Hundreds of older people, their carers and social care practitioners took part, and we have received positive feedback that they felt their ideas were listened to.

For further information about the project, please contact the project manager [Emma Small](#)