



research in practice

# in a nutshell

who we are and  
how we help



Dartington

working  
together with



# this booklet is a brief guide to the work of research in practice

## it tells you:

- > who we are - the research in practice network
- > what it means to be a Partner Agency
- > how we help - our six-strand programme of work



## who we are

research in practice is a growing network of more than 100 Partner Agencies committed to the use of evidence-informed practice to promote positive outcomes for children and families who find themselves in vulnerable situations.

Since its beginning in 1996, research in practice has grown to be the largest children and families research implementation venture in England and Wales, independent of government and with its roots firmly in the practice world.

'The cornerstones of our work are to be accessible, accountable, alert, authoritative and active: to make research *accessible* through robust reviewing and customer-focused presentation in language and media; to be *accountable* to our 100 Partner Agencies who 'own' research in practice and direct our work; to be *alert* to the pressing issues for children's services; to be *authoritative* - a trusted source of reliable research evidence; and to be *active* on your behalf - delivering what is wanted when it is needed.'

Celia Atherton OBE  
Director, research in practice

## what it means to be a Partner Agency

The **research in practice** network pools the knowledge and experience of more than 100 agencies. By working together, we are able to make the most of latest research knowledge and share practice and policy innovations.

Being a Partner Agency in the **research in practice** network demonstrates your agency's commitment to using evidence-informed methods to improve service delivery, invest in staff development and secure better outcomes for children and their families.

Being a Partner Agency involves everyone - directors, chief executives, councillors, trustees, front-line practitioners, managers and policy staff. Our projects and publications are carefully targeted to support everyone's role.

- > Every Partner Agency has its own Link Officer, nominated by their director or chief executive, who co-ordinates participation across the network.
- > **research in practice** staff in Dartington and Sheffield, who represent a broad spectrum of inter-professional experience, act as the network secretariat.
- > A **research in practice** Regional Lead helps Partners promote evidence-informed practice locally.

## how we help

Our six-strand programme of work encourages creative, critical thinking among policy makers, managers and front-line staff working in social care, education and health across the public sector.

- > change projects
- > learning events
- > networking
- > publications
- > [www.rip.org.uk](http://www.rip.org.uk)
- > working across boundaries

## change projects

Change Projects are a hallmark of the research in practice collaborative approach to improving outcomes for children.

Partner Agencies and expert facilitators work together over time to gather current knowledge on a topic and then use it to develop a set of practical tools to promote evidence-informed practice. These materials are then piloted, rigorously evaluated and refined before being published nationally for wider use.

All Change Projects emerge directly from the concerns of Partner Agencies. Recent projects, for example, have covered social workers' use of research evidence in

At any one time, we're usually running up to six Change Projects. Check out our current projects at: [www.rip.org.uk/changeprojects](http://www.rip.org.uk/changeprojects)

the family court, the links between young people's alcohol use and offending, and how to ensure engagement in education at Key Stage 3.

- > Partner Agencies benefit from participation in the core groups, which usually meet seven times over 18 months.
- > All participants earn certificates that can be used toward Post Registration Training and Learning.
- > Expert facilitators enable participants to pilot the products inside their own agencies.
- > All Partner Agencies have the chance to develop ideas that are directly relevant to their own needs.

## learning events

Our Learning Events programme is an innovative series of workshops and conferences all designed to support agencies in delivering evidence-informed practice. Our 2008-09 programme encompasses 30 events in 21 different locations.

- > Events contribute to Post Registration Training and Learning and, in many cases, to Post Qualifying Awards.
  - > Our tried and trusted methods enable new knowledge to cascade through the workplace and feed into practice.
  - > Events cover a broad range of topics and focus on the outcomes for children central to the government's Children's Plan.
  - > Our e-learning provision enables all participants to consolidate their post-event learning at their own pace and convenience.
- > In a typical year, each Partner Agency is given 20 places across the programme of conferences and workshops.
  - > We ensure all events are relevant inter-professionally and advise as to who will benefit most from each event.

See our latest programme at: [www.rip.org.uk/learningevents](http://www.rip.org.uk/learningevents)

## networking

A vital ingredient in our continuing success lies in the many and varied opportunities we create for formal and informal networking. Everything we do we do together.

- > **emailXchange** allows staff across all our Partner Agencies to benefit almost instantly from the hands-on experience of colleagues around the country.
- > Link Officers share experience and exchange evidence-informed practice ideas at their dedicated **residential annual meeting** and at regional meetings.

Our Learning Events offer another effective networking opportunity. For details of this year's programme visit [www.rip.org.uk/learningevents](http://www.rip.org.uk/learningevents)

- > Each year, key policy and change agendas are discussed at our well-established and highly valued **national policy forum for Directors of Children's Services**.
- > Councillors and Trustees are fired with enthusiasm for evidence-informed service development and delivery at our **annual national Councillors' and Trustees' Seminar**. Each Partner Agency gets two places.
- > We offer **one-to-one, in-house support** to help you develop your own events and strategy launches, to provide you with promotional materials and to answer your research queries.

## publications

Every year we commission and publish a carefully chosen range of material to support evidence-informed practice. Our pioneering approach means we cater for many different learning styles.

As well as printed materials, we also publish electronically and produce CDs with audio and video content. Four times a year, we send each Partner Agency an allocation of our latest publications.

For details of publications and free allocations for our Partners go to: [www.rip.org.uk/publications](http://www.rip.org.uk/publications)

The range includes:

- > peer-reviewed **research reviews and briefings**, all commissioned from experts and designed to meet the needs of busy practitioners, managers, Councillors and Trustees
- > a research-based **audio series** - particularly useful for training, discussion groups and individual study
- > **handbooks** of tried and tested tools and methods for promoting evidence-informed practice, with supporting video and audio material
- > **news, information and materials** to support the development of evidence-informed practice and help staff get the most from **research in practice**.

## www.rip.org.uk

**www.rip.org.uk** is more than just another website - it is a trusted and interactive learning platform, providing all our Partners with privileged access to an authoritative library of evaluated research, information and practical tools, and connecting them to a network of colleagues and researchers.

Here are some examples of what it offers:

> **What Works for Troubled Children?** is an interactive database of almost 1,000 interlinked pages, enabling practitioners to identify evidence-informed strategies, interventions and local and national resources.

- > Our **e-learning** pages offer crucial back-up for many of our workshops and other learning events, with links to specific research and information gateways.
- > All correspondence and attachments from our **emailXchange** are automatically stored in a searchable format - creating an invaluable resource for future reference.
- > Our online series of **Prompts** collate three types of evidence - research, policy documents and practice examples - relating to key emerging issues identified by our Partners.
- > From spring 2008, our intelligent, **topic-based search facility** will help visitors to find quickly all relevant publications, articles and other media from our extensive bank of online resources.

## working across boundaries

We are committed to working across traditional boundaries. While our roots are firmly in children's social care, where we continue to maintain our specialist expertise, **research in practice** has evolved to offer support within the broader context of children's services.

In particular, we're committed to supporting different disciplines to work together more effectively to achieve better outcomes for vulnerable children and their families - for example, through our Change Project *Working Together on the Front Line*.

For more about research in practice *for adults* visit: [www.ripfa.org.uk](http://www.ripfa.org.uk)

Of course, children don't live in isolation. We understand the need for our Partners to keep abreast of policy and research developments relating to adults too. So we maintain a close link with our sister organisation, research in practice *for adults*.

By working together, we can help improve outcomes at transition from child to adult, address common issues such as sensory impairment, and increase understanding of issues that involve the whole family - for example, when parents have a disability. We're also working together to forge international links - including hosting an international workshop in 2008 where teams from eight different countries will share their experiences of how best to embed evidence in practice.



## research in practice

research in practice is a department of The Dartington Hall Trust run in collaboration with the University of Sheffield, the Association of Directors of Children's Services and our network of over 100 participating agencies and consortia in England and Wales. We also have strong links with the Department for Children, Schools and Families, the National Foundation for Educational Research and a wide range of other organisations dedicated to supporting evidence-informed practice across all disciplines.

### for more information

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