

5th Annual Social Work and Social Research Conference

7th March 2018

**How do we know if Social work makes a
difference?**

Issues in evaluating complete interventions

Belfast Castle once again provided a wonderful backdrop to our 2018 Social Work and Social Care Research in Practice Conference. Attended by over 130 delegates the conference is now well and truly recognised as an important event in the social work calendar. Cecil Worthington, Acting Social Care and Research Director in the Health and Social Care Board, welcomed a diverse range of delegates and speakers drawn from management, practice, academia (tutors and students) research and service users and carers.



In his opening address Cecil paid tribute to the drive and enthusiasm of Fionnuala McAndrew, Director of Social Care and Children, whose interest and support for research and evidence and its contribution to helping to improve service user outcomes has helped get us to a position of strength.

Delegates had the privilege of listening to informative and thoughtful keynote inputs from David Westlake (Tilda Goldberg Centre for Social Work and Social Care, University of Bedfordshire), Cheryl Lamont (Probation Board Northern Ireland) and Berni Kelly (Queen's University) and Darren Smith (Peer Researcher).



David Westlake, Cheryl Lamont, Jackie McIlroy and Cecil Worthington

These presentations helped to stipulate discussion and dialogue as did the inputs by all our oral presenters and those who presented posters. These inputs were invaluable in informing delegates about the diverse range of social work and social research, evaluation and audit activity underway within organisations.



Berni Kelly and Darren Smith

In her address Jackie McIlroy Deputy Chief Social Work Officer (Department of Health) acknowledged the journey that we have all come on. From our very first annual conference in 2014 where our interest was on building partnerships to 2018 where we are actively discussing the challenges and opportunities offered by research for measuring impact and exploring how well we are doing.

This journey has not ended and future conferences and workshops will develop this theme.

No conference, however, would be complete without the addition of some creativity and imagination. At this event Joel left delegates spell bound with his mixing of the arts and the sciences, challenging us all to consider how to ***predict the unpredictable.***

Feedback from delegates

It was a great conference overall – a really good event.

There was a high quality of contributions and presentations from passionate speakers. And all the parallel oral presenters were extremely informative.

Helpful discussion on robust evaluation and outcomes refreshing look at demystifying weighing up success and determining value of information

Fascinating plenary presentation on understanding the challenges for practitioners and researchers in deliberating on success on outcomes

The peer researcher's excellent presentation was excellent and great to hear of this in action. Can we hear more from peer researchers in future conferences?

Pace of conference was "spot on" – a great blend of a wide range of research demonstrating how social work makes a difference - great concepts and ideas to transfer into training and practice - thanks to all organisers.

Excellent array of research presenters reflecting the wide world of social work practice envisions.

Enjoyed all the presentations including the 'light' interlude by Joel

Fantastic venue



An Outcomes Report will be made available but please do check out the PowerPoint Presentations available on the Social Work Research and Continuous Improvement Website.

<http://www.hscboard.hscni.net/our-work/social-care-and-children/swresearch>