

Myth Busting Knowledge Exchange Methods

Back in November we held a one-day conference to share and deliberate on the learning from the SCEIP project (<http://socialcareresearchimpact.org.uk/event/creating-an-impact-social-care-research-in-practice/>). You can watch the videos from the plenaries at that event by clicking on the link. The day included three workshops which were opportunities for participants to debate and discuss in more detail. One of these workshops focused on knowledge exchange methods, what we know about them, what people had tried, what they had learned, and what their fears and hopes were. This blog post will share some of the discussion, there was so much we will need to return at a later date with more.



(<http://socialcareresearchimpact.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/02/Screenshot-2015-02-17-10.40.01.png>)

The workshop discussion involved a range of people, some of whom were researchers, some who worked in sector-led improvement agencies and organisations, and some who identified themselves as working in social care in a paid or unpaid role. At least one person said that they used social care services, so we had a real mixed group.

In this first post I wanted to highlight three myths that were busted in the discussion, a later post will look at learning points that were shared, areas where it became clear we did not know enough, and the potential role of metaphor. Today though, let's start with some myth busting.

Myth busting

1. There's not enough money available for creative knowledge exchange methods
2. Practitioners and non-researchers are not interested in, or are sceptical of, research
3. Creative methods are gimmicky and won't be taken seriously

Myth 1: No money

The workshop consisted of a number of people who had used creative methods for knowledge exchange. People in the room had used visual note-taking and infographics, video, comics, blogs, singing and music making, drama and arts activity, yet despite this the myth about funding was still present.

Time and again we hear doubts about research funders providing funding for knowledge exchange activity, and time and again we hear from funders that they **will** fund, providing it is an integral part of a proposal. Funders may be reluctant to fund additional dissemination activity at the end of a project if researchers run out of time and money, but it appears that a lack of money is not necessarily a barrier to using creative methods. The key is to think early about what you're trying to achieve, what groups you wish to collaborate with, and what approaches or methods you wish to use.

Myth 2: No interest

Throughout the SCEIP project we have regularly heard from researchers that it is proving increasingly difficult to find research sites in social care; that practitioners working in the field do not have the time, interest or incentives to engage with research activity; or that there is a scepticism about the value of research. We have also heard regularly from practitioners that research is not timely, is not relevant, and is not realistic in the demands it places on those who try to access or use it. While the nature of our project means that we are likely to meet self-selecting (and therefore interested) groups from research and practice, the discussion in this workshop very much dispelled the myth that there was no interest.

Workshop participants passionately argued that there was interest, that we needed to allow for nuance when considering motivations for engaging with knowledge exchange, and that researchers getting to know their potential collaborators (or end audiences for their research if they did not intend to co-produce it) would help them make sensible decisions. There was a call for all interested parties to take time to understand the attitudes and

assumptions of each other and create a shared agenda from the very beginning (ideally before an application for research funding is submitted).

Myth 3: No point

The third myth that was dismissed within the workshop was in relation to the appeal, or seriousness, of creative knowledge exchange methods. There was some discussion about whether these methods would be seen as gimmicks, or amusing side shows for serious research, or whether they were an innovative way of reaching new audience groups and valuable in their own right.

Nic Brimblecombe shared her experience of a user-focused project on young people with mental health difficulties (<http://blogs.lse.ac.uk/healthandsocialcare/2014/12/08/tales-from-social-care-at-the-world-association-of-social-psychiatry-jubilee-congress-13-15-november-2014/>). They produced a comic and illustrations to share the findings of their research (more on that next week). Nic dismissed this myth, as many have tried to before, with the simple truth that different people like different formats. The comic attracts attention and is likely to appeal to young people more than a research report, but that does not mean you can have one without the other.

Conclusion

So there you have it, the workshop discussion certainly suggested that there was a point to creative knowledge exchange methods, that there was interest and that there was money available to fund it (if it was planned in the right way and at the right time). If

you have any thoughts of your own, or examples of how you've addressed these myths, then please share them in the comments. Thank you.

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