

Creating A Research-Aware Workforce: Lessons From The Trenches

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Abstract

Keeping up to date with the theories, research and evaluation findings that inform their practice is an ongoing challenge for practitioners. This can be difficult in organisational settings, where clients and service delivery take priority and where access to information and resources can also be difficult to facilitate.

Interrelate has begun a process of building a culture where research and evaluation are part of the everyday life of the organisation. While ongoing exposure to research and evaluation findings is a central activity, the idea is also to help foster a mindset in which practitioners recognise that evaluation and research are already part of their interactions with clients and begin to apply that kind of thinking outside of the direct practice environment – such as in program and practice development and obtaining client feedback. It is an attempt to build the research from the ground up by creating a 'research-aware workforce'. In this way, the process goes beyond simply doing research and evaluation projects to or with practitioners and/or clients, which can affect their capacity to meet targets for face-to-face service delivery. It involves staff by having them intentionally consider the intended outcomes of their programs, what needs to be measured, how this might most effectively be undertaken, and what potential barriers might exist.

This paper will discuss the strategies that have been implemented to date, the challenges encountered, what we feel we have achieved and what we want to do next.

To learn more about *Creating A Research-Aware Workforce: Lessons From The Trenches*, contact Interrelate's Research & Service Development team on rsd@interrelate.org.au.