

Research improves social care training in Cornwall

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With reports of abuse in care settings rising, it has never been more vital that staff are trained to provide the highest standards of care to vulnerable people. In Cornwall there were instances where vulnerable adults had suffered abuse and neglect. For this reason Cornwall Council enlisted the help of ESRC-funded researchers from Plymouth University to improve training for their social care workforce.

"We work with some of the most vulnerable people in our communities," says Corinne Leverton, who works for the Adult Care and Support section of Cornwall Council. These people need support with [everyday life](#), and they might not be able to get outside their own home which makes them feel very isolated. We felt we needed some expert advice on how to change what we do, so that we can help vulnerable adults live a full and engaged life in society.

Although the council had training programmes, it was felt that these programmes weren't filtering down into care workers' practice. The council turned to Plymouth University [academic researchers](#) to analyse and review the evidence in order to design a new training programme for staff.

"We started to have a conversation about how we might work together more specifically on some of the issues that were troubling the council" says Dr Tony Gilbert, Associate Professor at the School of [Social Science](#) and Social Work at Plymouth University.

The University of Plymouth suggested a [Knowledge Transfer Partnership \(KTP\)](#), and Dr Lindsey Pike was appointed as an Associate tasked with reviewing the existing practices of the council. This partnership lasted for two years from June 2008 to June 2010, during which time she helped to develop a set of principles that could be applied in a whole range of different contexts by the council when designing its training.

"At the time there had been a couple of major inquiries into failures in [social care](#). A huge amount of effort, time and money was being spent on training, with little evidence of practice change; this was an opportunity to actually see what evidence there was around training and how best to deliver it" says Dr Pike.

Dr Pike undertook a survey of staff in the sector to identify the knowledge base of practitioners. She used the evidence base on 'training transfer' to support the development of a new training programme on human rights for social care workers and created an e-learning package. The [training programme](#) was specifically designed to incorporate aspects of safeguarding adults, the Mental Capacity Act, and Equality and Diversity legislation. Around 3,000 staff per year now receive training using this new model.

"I think what we achieved with this KTP was to really ingrain the fact that it isn't just about providing training, it's about asking if the [training](#) is changing practice and that is a big shift in focus," concludes Dr Pike.

Provided by Economic & Social Research Council

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