REPORT:
Research to Action Survey Results

JUNE 2016
1. INTRODUCTION & EXPLANATION

The disability sector is in a period of significant reform, presenting us with an opportunity to positively change the way services and supports are provided to people with disability. The need to effectively use research to deliver quality services, and promote evidence informed policy and practice has never been greater.

The NDS Centre for Applied Disability Research (CADR) has been funded to pull together a comprehensive online collection of disability research and resources. The new ‘Disability Knowledge Clearing House’ will host links to thousands of academic and grey literature items, including the Audit of Disability Research undertaken by the University of Sydney in 2014 (the Audit)\(^1\). One of the key findings of the Audit was that the current evidence base is not fit for purpose and what is there is difficult to find. The Clearing House will be launched mid-2016 and will feature an assessed collection of disability research and ‘Research to Action Guides’ on priority topic areas, literature reviews and translational research products based on the best available local and international evidence. The research questions, target audiences and actions that will be informed by the Research to Action Guides will be guided by the nature of existing research evidence and the priorities of research end-users.

The purpose of this paper is to describe the results of a survey undertaken to test support for 12 proposed Research to Action priority topic areas discussed in the Research to Action Consultation Paper, and preferences regarding useful resource formats. In addition to the survey, the Australian Cross-Disability Alliance organisations were approached by NDS to participate in interviews regarding the Research to Action Consultation Paper and survey. Three interviews were conducted in May and June 2016. Representatives of Children and Young People with Disability Australia, the First People’s Disability Network and People with Disability Australia discussed the views of their constituents on the proposed topic areas, formats and the Research to Action Guide process.

1.1 Method and respondents

A short, multiple choice survey was conducted between 6 May and 3 June 2016. The survey was promoted online throughout various sector networks including NDS, National Disability Practitioners, The Australian Cross-Disability Alliance, CareCareers, Every Australian Counts, NSW Family and Community Services and a range of E-Newsletters including CADR’s Lines of Inquiry, Disability Employment Australia and NSW Council for Intellectual Disability.

Alongside the survey, a consultation paper in accessible formats was available.

149 individuals completed the Research to Action Survey.

Of the channels the survey was promoted through, the majority (28%) found the survey via an NDS News Update email. The Every Australian Counts website, and NSW Ageing, Disability and Home Care Portal were the next most successful channels, engaging 15% and 16% of respondents respectively. Lines of Inquiry and the CADR website attracted 21 responses, 14% of the total.

\(^1\) The Audit is available at this link.
1.2 Respondent demographics – the research end-users

Given the above, it is unsurprising that most respondents identified themselves as ‘service provider’ and ‘practitioner’. However, a range of research end-users completed the survey, nearly 40% being people with disability, carers and family members. ‘Others’ included volunteers, teachers, sector development professionals and project managers.
2. **PRIORITY AREAS**

The survey identified six clearly preferred priority topic areas which, in order from most votes to least, were:

1. Working collaboratively with mainstream health services to achieve wellbeing outcomes
2. Pathways to employment for young people with disability
3. Supporting the experience, expertise and knowledge of carers
4. Supporting citizenship with person centred active support
5. Supporting a rural and remote workforce for disability
6. Best practice strategies for self-advocacy

The top six priority areas each received at least 40 votes.

A culturally proficient workforce, promoting the co-production of research and employer perspectives of disability employment were the equal seventh, eighth and ninth most selected options. Positive nutrition, the justice system and natural disaster preparedness all received less than 20 votes.
2.1 Top topic areas as analysed by the different end-user groups

Respondents were able to select as many topics as they wanted, so results were analysed by the most commonly selected topic areas within each user group. The top six topic areas remain the same with this analysis, however their order of preference changes. This break down of end-user groups will help us identify the appropriate target audiences and the sought after action outcomes for the Research to Action Guides.

Among people with disability, the top three most popular topic areas were:
1. Working collaboratively with health services
2. Pathways to employment for young people with disability
3. Best practice strategies for self-advocacy

For carers and family members, the most important topics differ slightly, being:
1. Supporting the experience, expertise and knowledge of carers
2. Pathways to employment for young people with disability
3. Working collaboratively with health services

Interestingly, practitioners shared their top three with carers and family members, though ‘supporting citizenship’ came an equal third.

Advocates evenly selected ‘pathways to employment for young people with disability’ and ‘best practice strategies for self-advocacy’, and were next most likely to select ‘supporting citizenship’. Advocates were the only group for whom working with the health system was not a ‘top three’ issue.

Researchers had a clear top 3 choices:
1. Pathways to employment for young people with disability
2. Best practice strategies for self-advocacy
3. Working collaboratively with health services

Researchers were the most likely group to suggest an ‘other’ topic. The suggestions for other topics are described below. Policy makers shared their preferences with researchers, though in a different order, identifying health first, followed by pathways to employment.

Service providers selected:
1. Working collaboratively with health services
2. Pathways to employment for young people with disability
3. Supporting a rural and remote workforce for disability

Service providers were the only end-user group to identify the rural and remote workforce topic as a top three topic, however it was selected frequently enough by other respondents to make it into the top six most popular topics.

When arranged by most commonly selected within each end-user group, the top six order of topics is as follows:
1. Pathways to employment for young people with disability
2. Working collaboratively with health services
3. Best practice strategies for self-advocacy
4. Supporting citizenship with person centred active support
5. Supporting a rural and remote workforce for disability
6. Supporting the experience, expertise and knowledge of carers
2.2 Suggestions for other topics

Housing and early intervention were highlights of the additional topics suggested by survey respondents. As mentioned in the discussion paper, these topics are being addressed elsewhere in the sector, for example by the NDIA. Housing and early intervention will be revisited during the next Research to Action consultation period, depending on the sector research and policy context at that time.

Among the other topics suggested, education featured most. In particular, this referred to best practice in educating students with disability and working collaboratively with the education system.

Also of note were suggestions to extend the proposed topics. For example, the focus on carers should be shifted to include family members such as siblings, and other people who may not identify as carers but who play important roles. Extra suggestions were made concerning rural and remote disability support. In particular, research translation was recommended around the characteristics of compounding disadvantage and vulnerability for people with disability in rural, remote and very remote areas. The impacts of this disadvantage on effective self-advocacy and the potential of innovative solutions to achieving reasonable and necessary support in these areas were noted.

2.3 Comments by phone interview on the top six topics

Forging pathways to employment for young people with disability was a challenge common to the constituents of all the organisations that participated in interviews, and this topic was considered as a high priority. Barriers related to the need for evidence included low expectations, employer misinformation and the attitudes of and engagement of school staff. It was felt that all stakeholders in the pathway to employment face limitations and challenges, and access to reliable information was a key factor in addressing these.

Information targeted at employers or schools must be grounded in a rights-based approach, to avoid the trap of type-casting all young people with disability as one ‘kind’ of employee.

It was emphasised that consultation with children and young people on a resource that concerns them will be important to the efficacy of a Research to Action Guide on this topic.

Interviewees felt that supporting citizenship with person-centred active support was important in the context of the NDIS. The message about this topic was that while the mainstream sector needs support and information to reflect upon and adopt the principles of the NDIS, research evidence should be used to empower key actors such as disability support workers to promote this broader inclusion. With regards to strategies for self-advocacy, a useful evidence-based resource would draw links from acute individual advocacy issues to the systemic barriers they reflect. Advocacy is an important part of how communities are influenced and changed, and for a Research to Action Guide to be appropriate, it would need to be clear that it isn’t necessarily the responsibility of people with disability to change their communities. These two topics therefore could be reconsidered and perhaps brought together.

Interviewees acknowledged that the experience, expertise and knowledge of carers is an issue that sits prominently within their communities. Particularly regarding Aboriginal communities, interviewees identified that the traditional role of carers and ‘informal care’ is accepted in the community, its associated issues normalised, and not often talked about. A Research to Action Guide supporting the expertise of carers would need to be nuanced around the different kinds of relationships associated with unpaid care.
3. FORMATS

Survey respondents were asked to select which formats would be most useful for a Research to Action Guide.

3.1 The order of preferred formats

Online Research to Action Guides were by far the most preferred option by all end-user groups. Audio visual resources were the second ranked option. These are exciting results, as there is great breadth of possibility for creating Research to Action Guides that are online and of mixed media.

‘Other’ format suggestions included community consultation, fact sheets and implementation guides. Survey respondents pointed out both that plain English and Easy English resources should always be available, and that oversimplifying information could be as unhelpful as failing to make it accessible. These suggestions will influence how we progress the Research to Action Guides.

![Research to Action Guide Format Preferences](image)

3.2 Comments by phone interview

Feedback about the most effective format for Research to Action Guides was that the constituents of the participating organisations are looking for:

- the ability to quickly locate what’s needed;
- information that is concise;
- resources that don’t explain too much, just key action points;
- ease of applicability; and
- full accessibility.
4. COMMUNITIES OF PRACTICE

Part of the process of creating Research to Action Guides will be to consult with subject matter experts who are keen to share their experience and knowledge. Communities of Practice will be built around the chosen priority topic areas. Community of Practice members will provide feedback on drafts and trial the Guides in the field. There is a need for a wide array of people to take part, including people with lived experience, people working in the sector, advocates and researchers.

Respondents were asked if they were interested in taking part in a community of practice on a topic selected for a Research to Action Guide. 58% of respondents selected at least one topic for which they would participate in a community of practice. The most popular topics for Research to Action Guides were also the most popular selected for participation in Communities of Practice. Supporting the experience and knowledge of carers and working collaboratively with the health system stood out, with over 30 nominations each.

5. NEXT STEPS

CADR has established a process for the creation of Research to Action Guides. This first round of Research to Action Guide topics are a ‘pilot’ for the process. Pilot Research to Action Guides on working collaboratively with the health system and a rural and remote workforce for disability are being launched in June 2016. Work has commenced on a ‘Pathways to Employment’ Research to Action Guide.

Taking on board the survey results and other feedback, CADR will commence work on topics based on supporting the experience and knowledge of carers, active support and self-advocacy. CADR will refine the relevant research questions and commence a scan of the existing Australian and International literature to establish whether there is enough evidence to create a meaningful resource on each topic. A search for existing related evidence-based products will be undertaken, and the final plans for Research to Action Guides will be provided to key stakeholders for feedback before subject matter experts are commissioned. Communities of Practice will be engaged throughout the drafting process.

From late 2016, an annual survey of disability end-users will enable us to update the list of priority topic areas for research to action activities, such as Guides and events.

Research to Action Guides will be freely available on the new Disability Knowledge Clearing House, at www.cadr.org.au, as they are published. More information about the Guides is available online, and feedback and ideas for future Guides can also be left at the website.

Please contact info@cadr.org.au with your thoughts and feedback.
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