



West Northamptonshire Council

Research Skills Development Strategy

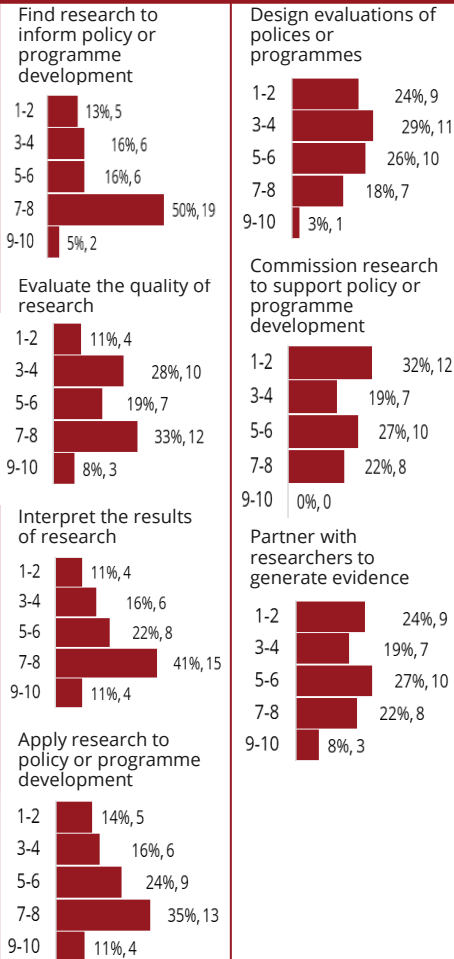


Current Capability and Capacity*

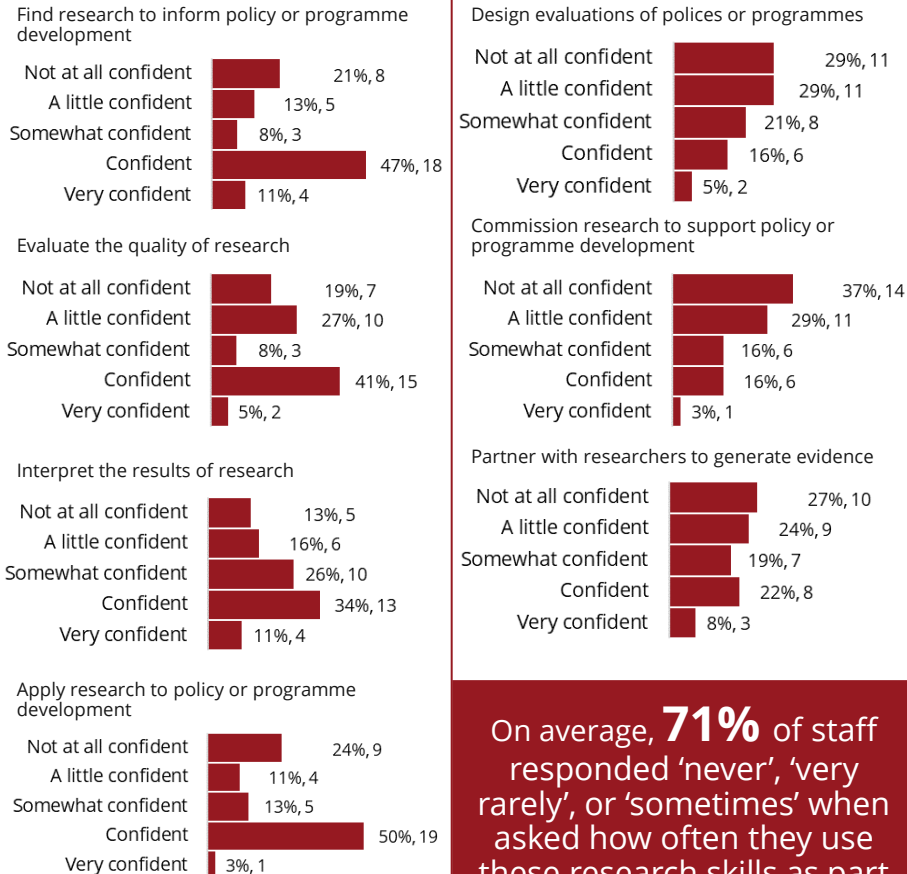
- **42%** of WNC staff have not received any formal research methods or skills training (16 out of 38).
- **92%** hold at least an undergraduate degree (32 out of 37), which suggests some experience of conducting research, with **74%** gaining their last qualification within the last 10 years (28 out of 38).
- **61%** were not currently involved in any research projects.
- In terms of facilitating research activities:
 - **39%** responded that **Senior Management** were **'very supportive'** (15 out of 38).
 - **47%** responded that **Line Management** were **'very supportive'** (18 out of 38).
 - **34%** responded that their **Colleagues** were **'very supportive'** (13 out of 38).

Self-rated research skills

(1 – lowest, 10 – highest)



Current self-confidence in knowledge and skills



On average, **71%** of staff responded 'never', 'very rarely', or 'sometimes' when asked how often they use these research skills as part of their job.

* Based on 38 WNC respondents



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Facilitators and Barriers to Engaging in Research

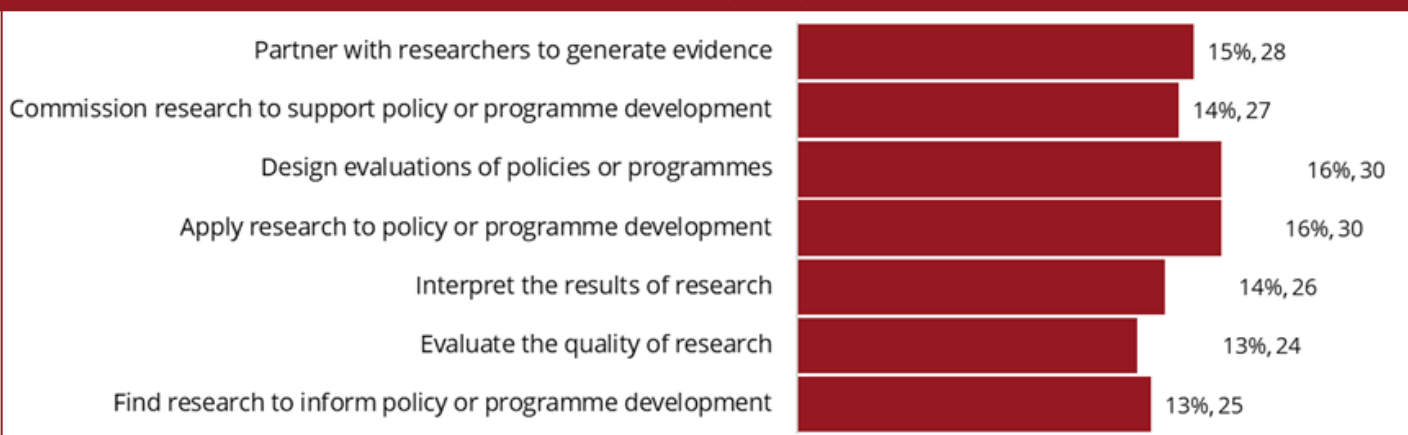
- Staff were asked to select **5 factors that are core facilitators**, and **5 factors that are core barriers**, to engaging in research in the future, from a list of commonly reported factors.

 Facilitators	Barriers 
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Being interested in research Relevance of research to your job Relevance of local authority sector Line management support Having the skills or confidence to get involved in research 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Time to engage with research Money to support research Availability of other resources to support research Knowledge about how to get involved in research Access to expert advice
<p>Organisational support to engage with research had an almost even split between facilitator (11 votes), barrier (13 votes), and neither a barrier or facilitator (12 votes)</p>	

Interest in Receiving Research Skill Training

- 95%** of staff **'may be interested'** (66%) or were **'very interested'** (29%) about engaging in research training in the future (out of 38).

Staff were interested in receiving training on the following topics: (could select multiple responses)





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Research Training Package Design

- Staff were asked a series of questions to help design the delivery of the training.

Preferred Delivery	Training Session Duration and Location	Preferred Times and Days
<p>95% of respondents wanted live taught workshops, lectures, and seminars.</p> <p>↓</p> <p>We will host a mix of in-person and online sessions and record these sessions, where possible, to upload them onto iLearn.</p>	<p>A one-off training session or a 2-4-week short course was the preferred length of training.</p> <p>↓</p> <p>We will deliver one-off live taught sessions and the free to access training on iLearn will have varied durations.</p> <p>↓</p> <p>One-off training sessions will last no more than 4-hours.</p>	<p>Mid-morning and mid-afternoon were the most preferred times for training.</p> <p>↓</p> <p>We will vary training times to ensure staff have the opportunity to access training.</p> <p>↓</p> <p>We will not deliver training after 3:00pm.</p>
<p>55% wanted self-directed online learning modules.</p> <p>↓</p> <p>We will provide a list of free to access online training, webinars, and guidance on iLearn.</p>	<p>68% preferred training at the council offices and 84% at the University of Northampton.</p> <p>↓</p> <p>We will offer in-person training at the WNC council offices and offer training at the University to allow networking with North Northants colleagues.</p>	<p>Tuesdays, Wednesdays, and Thursdays were the most popular day to attend training.</p> <p>↓</p> <p>We will vary training across these preferred days.</p>
<p>63% wanted one-to-one mentoring.</p> <p>↓</p> <p>We will offer a monthly drop-in for staff to discuss their research.</p>		

Communicating Training Sessions

Organisation and Department emails and **newsletters** and through **management** are how staff currently hear about upcoming training.

↓

We will **communicate upcoming training** via these **channels**, as well as have an **intranet page.**

When will training start?

- **Free to access training on iLearn** will be launched at the start of **October 2024.**
 - **Monthly Drop-ins** will launch at the end of **October 2024.**
 - **In-person training** will launch in **November 2024.**



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Sustaining the Development of a Local Authority Research Culture

- There is growing evidence on how to effectively improve research culture and grow the use of research within local authorities.
- The National Institute for Health and Care Research (NIHR) have invested in local authorities to support their use of research and explore the mechanisms that are needed to enhance councils' research cultures.
 - Evidence reports and guidance can be found here: <https://www.nihr.ac.uk/exploring-how-support-local-government-health-research>
 - Find out more about NIHR's support, research, and grants for local authorities: <https://www.nihr.ac.uk/about-us/what-we-do/working-with-partners/local-authorities>
- [Professor Joanne Cooke](#), has also provided evidence of how to develop research cultures, capability and capacity. Some of her evidence is used below to inform possible actions:

Action	Responsibility	Progress
Model positive behaviour, disseminate research findings, and feel you are making a difference.	As part of this training package, Dr Declan Ryan and Dr Tash Bayes will collate case studies from WNC staff to publicise on the intranet page.	Staff who provided their contact information in the skills survey have been contacted to start the case study development.
Develop skills and confidence through training and opportunities to apply skills.	WNC have secured funding for Dr Declan and Dr Tash Bayes to develop this first iteration of research skills training.	Training will be launching in October 2024 and will run until March 2025.
Grow partnerships and collaborations.	Senior leaders and officers continue to grow partnerships with the academic and voluntary sector.	Networking opportunities are being explored to ensure all WNC staff have the chance to meet and collaborate with our academic and voluntary sector stakeholders.
Release resource, liberate talent, and learn by doing.	WNC officers are developing research projects, placements, and guest lectures for students at the University of Northampton so officers can get involved in research activity.	Developments have started in the Public Health Team and aim to branch out into other departments. WNC management have secured funding from NIHR to recruit a 2-year Research Practitioner.



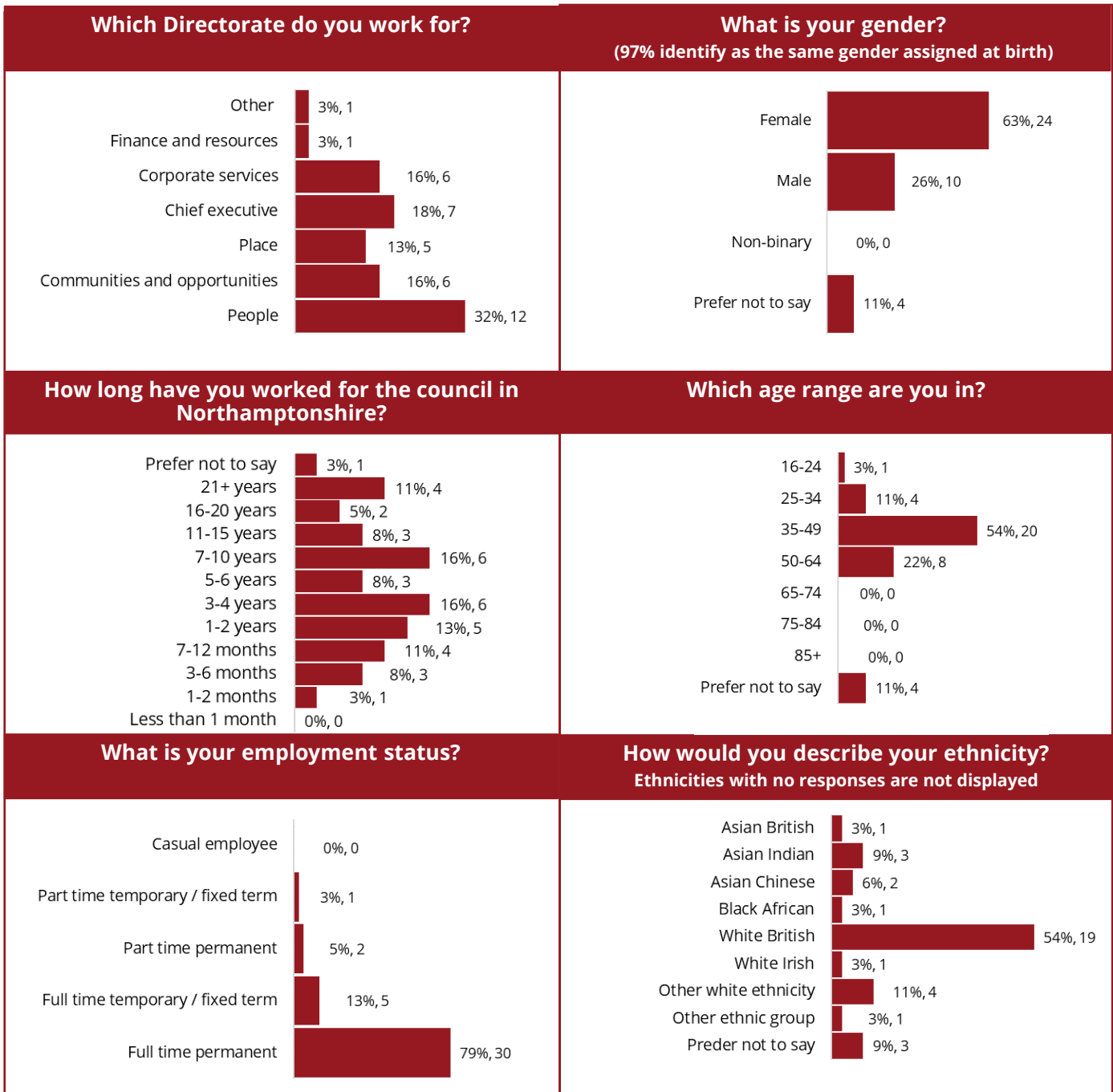
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Who informed the development of this training package?

- The University of Northampton distributed an online survey via council communication channels to staff in North and West Northamptonshire Councils.
- 38 members of staff from WNC responded, and they were representative of:





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Further information

- This strategy was written by Dr Declan Ryan and Dr Tash Bayes (University of Northampton) in partnership with Chloe Gay (West Northamptonshire Council).
- This strategy is part of a collaborative project between Integrated Care Northamptonshire, North Northamptonshire Council, West Northamptonshire Council, and the University of Northampton.
- This 12-month project (March 2024 – 2025) aims to implement the foundations of a research skills training programme within North and West Northamptonshire Councils and is funded by the East Midlands Clinical Research Network.

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**Sign-up to attending live training sessions by
visiting the Research Skills Intranet page.**

**Access free training to complete in your own time
and pace by visiting the Developing your
Evaluation Skills page on iLearn.**