

Lucy Charrington, Speech and Language Therapist, East Lothian Community Hospital

First Steps into Research Gateway Award



Tell us a bit about yourself and your career to date

I qualified in 2012 from Queen Margaret University. I have worked in NHS Tayside and NHS Lothian, in acute and community teams. I work with adults who have communication and/or swallowing difficulties, and their families and carers. In 2018-19 I completed a module through Newcastle University in 'Advanced Evidence-based Practice in Dysphagia' in which I did a literature review examining the Role of Speech and Language Therapy in End of Life Care.

Currently I work in the East Lothian Community Hospital, a six-ward hospital where I am involved in stroke rehabilitation, and work in Neurology and Medicine of the Elderly, as well as

supporting patients and families towards the end of life.

What is the focus of your Gateway Award?

I will be based with Professor Catriona Kennedy, Queens Nursing Institute Professor of Community Nursing, Robert Gordon University and will be focusing on using qualitative research methods to review health and social projects.

We have already started working together and I will continue to the end of November 2023.

What motivated you to apply for this Gateway Award?

I am interested in how research, and research methods can inform and improve clinical services. Undertaking an experimental undergraduate dissertation sparked my interest in research, but I knew I wanted to first gain clinical experience, so

that research activities could grow out of my clinical experience.

First Steps into Research looked like the perfect opportunity to explore how to make this happen!

When I spotted Prof Kennedy's group's work in the area of palliative care, and especially after meeting her, I felt sure that I had found a good match.

What are you hoping to get out of the award you have received?

Mainly, I aim to build my understanding of thematic analysis, and how it could be used or adapted to help to identify the service needs and preferences of a speech and language therapy client group. We'll be looking at how the Anchor

Family Support Service Project in Shetland is evaluated. We'll also look at a systematic review of qualitative literature around family carers of people receiving palliative care.

I plan to attend the Palliative Care Congress in Edinburgh in March to engage more with qualitative research in this area.

What difference do you think having this funded support will make to your understanding of research?

So far I have been able to attend a project meeting and a journal club, so I am starting to get an insider's view of techniques and processes for gathering and analysing data, and more generally, how research happens.

Also, without the protected time which this award allows, I don't think I would have the time or head space to make progress. A supportive mentor, deadlines and supportive peers also help a lot!

What do you hope to do in the future and how do you think this Gateway Award will help you achieve this?

I hope that in the future we can embed some thematic analysis techniques into our discussions with patients, to help make our services more impactful for them.

Also, I think that First Steps will help me to make an informed decision as to whether to develop a research role in my career over the coming years.

Any other thoughts?

My line manager has been enthusiastic about my project, and has contributed ideas about how to make it relevant for our service, as well as useful for my learning. This has helped motivate me and give me a sense of purpose.

Thank you for the opportunity and here's to Cohort 1!

For more information please contact:
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