



# Social Work Practice Research

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# A focus on research in practice

1. Social workers as 'natural' researchers
2. Embedding research in practice
3. Embedding practice in research
4. Being research receptive
5. Being research literate
6. Some examples
7. Reclaiming the support of researchers
8. What next?



# Natural researchers?



# Three reasons why social workers are 'natural' researchers

- They are curious
- They combine humanities, sciences and arts
- They aren't afraid to challenge

How do we know this?  
Other professionals tell us  
so



# But embedding research in practice is not easy



Evidence is that research is hard to translate to practice

- It is not specific enough
- It is not conclusive
- It is about another context
- To implement requires system change
- From 'bench' to 'bedside' takes too long (social work equivalent? Pilot to Procedures?) and things change
- It is 'nobody's baby'

# And part of the problem is that research is not embedded in practice



- Pilots or experiments are in unreal world with no competing priorities
- Experiments – or similar – may be short-term
- Research question is unclear
- There is no agreement on what ‘good’ looks like (eg avoid admission, reduce neglect)

# Being research receptive

What should a social worker bother to look at research?

Probably not a typical academic article or book !

Maybe a tweet? Blog?  
Being on the front line?  
Coming from practice?

*Less authority more authenticity*



*Too long, too waffly, too much on methods, too indecisive, always call for more research...*

# Some examples: Elaine

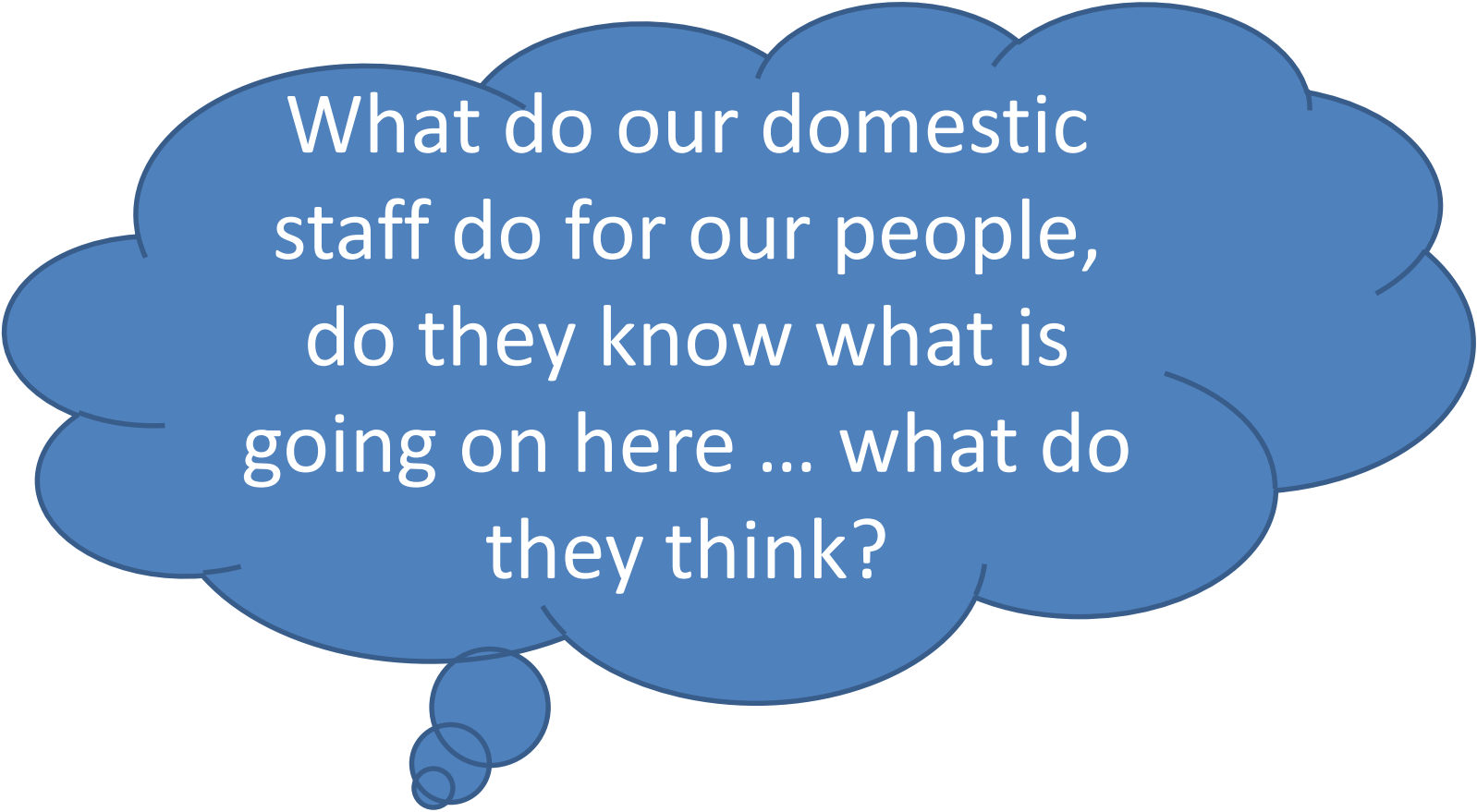
What should we do at the care home when a resident (with Alzheimer's) thinks another resident is their spouse and wants to hold their hand or more? What about the real spouse when they visit?



# Rebecca:

If patient passports are such a good idea (to transfer information about people who can't communicate) why don't we use them ?

# Clare:

A large, blue, cloud-like thought bubble with a black outline, containing white text. Three smaller blue circles of decreasing size trail from the bottom left of the main bubble.

What do our domestic staff do for our people, do they know what is going on here ... what do they think?



other  
people



pressing

What did these have in common?

4 'P's



puzzling



possible

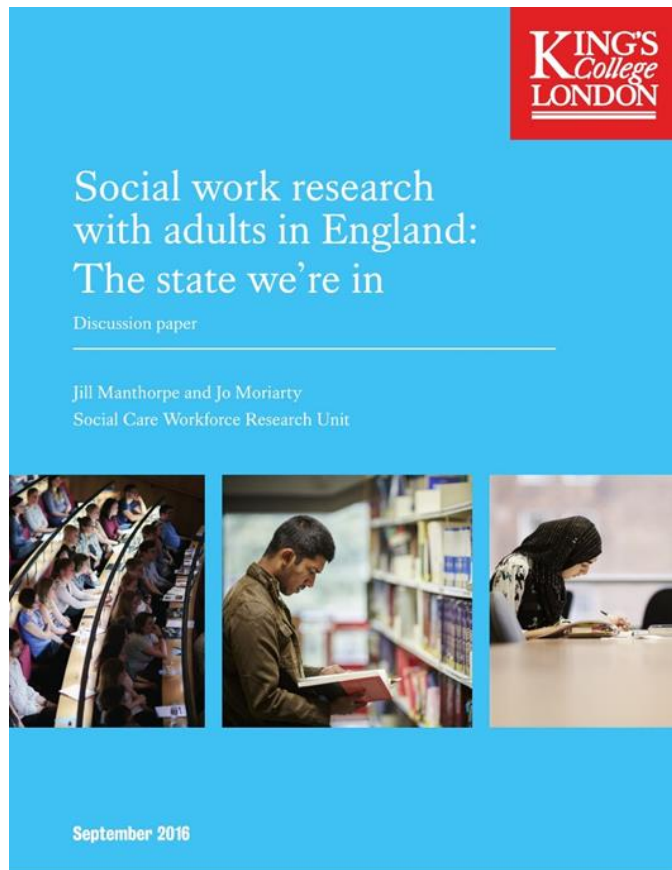
# Reclaiming the support of researchers to practice research

- Are academics easy to work with?
- Why do they always say things need time?
- Why do we have to do so much preparation when we know what we want to do?
- Why do they make things so complicated?



**This Initiative will test them too..**

# End thoughts



- This is a global initiative – we are looking to you
- A huge investment
- Carefully managing expectations
- High ambitions
- Building blocks are in place
- Great stakeholder commitment
- **We wish you well**



## Research Excellence Framework

The Research Excellence Framework (REF) is the new system for assessing the quality of research in UK higher education institutions.

The [results](#) of the 2014 REF were published on 18 December 2014.

