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DOI:

[10.18742/pub01-079](https://doi.org/10.18742/pub01-079)

Document Version

Publisher's PDF, also known as Version of record

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Citation for published version (APA):

Waterman, C., & Manthorpe, J. (2022). *Did it make a difference? Uses of the James Lind Alliance Adult Social Work research priorities partnership report*. NIHR Policy Research Unit in Health and Social Care Workforce, The Policy Institute, King's College London. <https://doi.org/10.18742/pub01-079>

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Did it make a difference? Uses of the James Lind Alliance Adult Social Work research priorities partnership report

April 2022 Chloe Waterman & Jill Manthorpe

Background

The JLA Report, Adult Social Work Research Priorities (2018)



The James Lind Alliance (JLA) 2018 social work report reflects questions asked by policymakers, service users, carers, and social workers about what matters to them. This work was promoted by the government's Chief Social Worker for adults at the Department of Health and Social Care, Lyn Romeo. Work started in 2016. Across England, people took part in group discussions, interviews, and surveys and hundreds of questions emerged.

The JLA team worked out which questions had already been answered by researchers, then a group of service users, carers and frontline social workers debated and then agreed about the order of importance of the unanswered questions. The final report was published in 2018. It contains 61 priorities, with a Top 10 (the most important) and Top 21 (next important).

This list of priorities shows researchers what gaps need to be addressed by research and what mattered most to service users, carers and frontline practitioners. The report is being used by people who give money to researchers (research funders) such as the National Institute for Health Research to guide their decisions.

For more information about how JLA work, see <https://www.jla.nihr.ac.uk/about-the-james-lind-alliance/downloads/JLA-PSP-process-final.pdf>

For a copy of the original report, see: <https://www.jla.nihr.ac.uk/priority-setting-partnerships/adult-social-work/downloads/Adult-Social-Work-PSP-final-report.pdf>

This Research

What we wanted to know:

'How has social work research responded to and changed since the 2018 James Lind Alliance priority setting report, and where do we need to focus now?'

What we aimed to do:

Find out what research has been done to address the priorities set in 2018 and how researchers have used the report.

What we did:

1. We looked at social work research conducted since 2018 to see if it is helping to answer any of the Top 10 or other priorities
 2. Spoke to 23 social work researchers to find out if they had used the James Lind Alliance report and the uses they made of it.
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What we found:

- 9/10 questions had been answered in part, but many of these need more research, as well as the questions in the long list
 - Most JLA questions were not directly used as research questions but helped inform ideas for research
 - A few social work researchers had not heard of the JLA social work report
 - Researchers felt positive about the report, used it when applying for funding for research, and some had been involved in the JLA work as advisers
 - For the future, researchers thought more studies are needed to increase diversity in social work research
 - The JLA report is respected, and the approach is trusted
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Our conclusions

The JLA report...



Uses a useful and respected process



Ensured frontline practitioners' and service users'/carers' voices are heard



Helps build research partnerships



Made research more relevant to policy makers

And...



New topics for prioritisation have emerged, others might always be current



Researchers think the JLA has made a difference - but we don't know of the research that was not funded

We thank all participants in this study for their time.

This study was funded by the National Institute for Health and Care Research (NIHR) Applied Research Collaboration (ARC) National Priorities Programme in Social Care and Social Work. The views expressed are those of the authors and not necessarily those of the NIHR or the Department of Health and Social Care.

The [full report is available on the King's website](#) and if there are any queries, please contact: chloe.waterman@kcl.ac.uk or jill.manthorpe@kcl.ac.uk

