

Implementation Podcast Episode 1 Meeting Recording



Laura Spence 4:59

Hi everyone, welcome to making Research Real a series of podcasts recorded by the South, West and South Coast Region Research School Network. My name is Laura Spence and I'm the director of the Gloucestershire Research School and I'm joined today by my cohosts.



Jonathan EATON 5:13

I'm jon.eaton, director of Kingsbridge Research School.



Rodgers, John 5:16

And I'm John Rodgers, director of Cornwall Research School.



Jonathan EATON 6:23

This is the first in a series of podcasts looking at the new implementation guidance, and in today's episode we're joined by Doctor Darren Moore from the School of Education at the University of Exeter and Professor Jonathan Sharples from the EEF.



Laura Spence 2:02

Yeah.

So on her, on our panel today we have two guest speakers.

Professor Sharples, would you like to start with introducing yourself?



Jonathan 2:11

Yeah.

Hi, Laura.

Hi.

Yeah, my name's Jonathan Sharples.

I'm based at the Education Department Foundation and University College London and I kind of sit in the murky spaces between Research policy and practice.

And yeah, been leading.

Yes, work around implementation over the last five years and one of the authors on EEFs new Schools guide to implementation.



Laura Spence 2:38

Great.

Thank you.

And Darren Moore, would you like to introduce yourself now?

Moore, Darren 2:41

MD

Yet thanks, Laura.

My name is Darren Moore.

I'm a senior lecturer at the University of Exeter and I led on the evidence review that informed the guns report.

Laura Spence 2:51

LS

Brilliant.

Thank you so much both for being here today and thank you, John and John for also joining us.

I'm gonna start with the first question.

This is more of a general start.

I think that will be really useful for our listeners to here today.

Can you tell us a little bit about the process and journey of creating this new guide and the evidence behind it?

And we start with you please, Jonathan.

Jonathan 3:10

J

Yeah, I mean the, I guess the context we have is over the last 10 years before that, I would even go back further.

There's been this quite significant culture change in education towards engagement with the Research, so most schools in England now draw on resources like the Teaching Learning Toolkit, guidance reports and other kind of evidence based resources from other organizations.

And I would say English schools are some of the most Research engaged in the world, but at the same time, over that kind of period, we've learned that that awareness, that happens and engagement with Research doesn't necessarily by itself translate into changes in practice.

Laura Spence 3:42

LS

Umm.

Jonathan 3:51

J

And the process of effective implementation is critical for turning that interest and awareness of evidence into tangible changes in practice and practice in schools.

And of course, then pupil outcomes as a result of that.

So yeah, 2018, we we wrote a guidance report that tried to unpack.

The process is effective implementation and it's become one of the most widely used resources, I guess, because that's a constant consideration.

LS **Laura Spence** 4:19
Umm.

J **Jonathan** 4:22
Whatever particular thing you're looking to implement and that that guy's report focused on this process for implementation, this structured process of implementation and that was useful in getting to Schools, think a bit more about how they manage and navigate change and and yeah, so, but that was it was five years ago, it was wasn't based on a specific review at the time.

It was based on some existing reviews that I've been involved in and other people have been involved in, so we wanted to update it and we wanted to capture the latest evidence from this topic and conduct a really comprehensive review of research that could inform a kind of real, significant update to this guidance report.

And then yes, so that's why we started working with Darren and colleagues at Exeter of the Universe and Plymouth and and Cardiff universities to to try and kind of really get her kind of good idea of what's going on.

And in terms of effective implementation in schools and and look across a range of different fields.

LS **Laura Spence** 5:27
That's great.

Thank you so much.

Darren, have you got anything you'd like to add there about the process and the journey?

MD **Moore, Darren** 5:32
Yeah.

So the evidence review was a large one.

I think we worked out that we looked at over 3000 papers over the course of it, 300 studies helped us shape kind of the final review that informed the guidance report.

LS **Laura Spence** 5:40
Wow.

MD **Moore, Darren** 5:48

It's large because of the range of research that helps try and explain what effective implementation in Schools might look like, given the range of approaches, the kind of schools that are all relevant, it would be a small review.

If you're only looking at the kind of evidence that says, what is the best way of implementing this one thing?

There's so many different ways of implementing things and something that we kind of

knew going in but found and was reiterated through the evidence is that kind of the context is really important and trying to kind of unpick what is underneath effective implementation means that you have to look across kind of this wide range of fields and different kinds of approaches.

So we kind of looked at it from different ways kind of thinking about theory, that's helped there, reviewed practice, talk to school leaders, those use the current guidance report and then this kind of ended up building what is a realist review.

So it's interested in and evidence informed program theory for the kind of key context underlying behaviours that lead to improved implementation.

And intervention outcomes and it's kind of that program theory that Jonathan and other authors of the Chinese report kind of took up in the update of the guidance report.



Rodgers, John 7:04

Thank you, Dara.

Very much.

I want to ask you a question about the behaviours.

Now the behaviours that underpin effective implementation are at the forefront of the guidance report.

Can you tell us a little bit about why it's important to focus on the social aspect of change?



Moore, Darren 7:21

Well, what we learned from the evidence, unsurprisingly, implementation is school and Schools is complex school settings kind of.

And the people and groups within them interact with whatever the approach might be that's being implemented and that kind of interaction is gonna affect the choice and use of particular implementation strategies or tools.

So it's very much not just the thing that you're putting in place, but very much the people who are involved or are gonna receive whatever this new approach might be.

So the evidence that we reviewed kind of shows how implementation is fundamentally kind of a collaborative social process.

It involves the people have kind of how they think, behave, how they interact in terms of putting in place and approach an approach might be wonderful in isolation, but how it's gonna uh be put in place in different kind of school context means that kind of have to be aware of that and kind of this social nature how people are gonna think about what might be a new approach.

So getting kind of the interactions right between the people is essential on top of what is a good evidence informed approach.



Jonathan EATON 8:40

So let's dig into some of the behaviors in the guidance port.

One of those is unite.

So question for Jonathan is uniting about more than shared knowledge.

 **Jonathan** 8:52

And yes, it is and so.

So I think one of the things that emerged in this review and one of these kind of key behaviors was which you say about the need to unite and poor implementation can often be traced to different values, different understandings, different practices amongst those people who are implementing and that kind of ambiguity means that people might appear on the same page when they're not.

So actions that align and unite people are really key driver of effective implementation and but that ranges that kind of UNITING who as a spectrum of things, so UM and if you think about it, the kind of highest level and there's this necessity to try and unite values that relate to to an approach and that they kind of underpinning values that apply to that approach and you can unite a kind of the vision for what you want to achieve around implementation and that and that's also important.

 **Laura Spence** 10:12

Umm.

 **Jonathan** 10:12

And that vision and values means in terms of what exactly has been implemented, how will that, how?

How will something be implemented?

What kind of outcomes are you looking for, both at the end, but also is kind of along the way?

And uniting the kind of precise skills and practices that emerge when you're implementing an approach you know, using things like professional development to kind of really build some consistency and coherence around a new had a good to you that you might be introducing and as well as uniting around the implementation processes themselves.

So for example, having a kind of shared understanding about what's expected across an implementation process, or uniting around why your monitoring with an implementation and having this kind of shared understanding that then you know you're monitoring implementation to, to kind of improve, not monitoring implementation for some kind of punitive accountability function.

So yeah, uniting for me is the kind of almost like the beating heart of it, if you're like.

And the only should be really thinking about that from a whole spectrum of things right from the kind of values that really underpin and approach, right down to the kind of precise practices and implementation processes that you're going to be using.

 **Rodgers, John** 11:29

Darren the second behavior is about engaging and the guidance suggests that engaging people should go beyond potentially superficial consultation.

So could you talk to us a little bit about how schools could engage people in a more meaningful way?

Moore, Darren 11:46

MD

Yeah, sure.

I mean the very short answer you kind of captured in the question in terms of going beyond superficial one off consultation, trying to capture everybody's view at the same time in the same way.

I think there's probably three ways that the evidence would suggest that you can go a little bit beyond that.

One is in terms of kind of the points in time when you're going to engage those who might be involved in implementation or affected by it.

So kind of both early on in terms of what might be part of the issues, what are potential barriers if we're gonna put in place a particular approach, then engaging people in terms of what does it look like now we're about to or we're starting to roll out this practice as well as kind of later on thinking in terms of and kind of how, how it's being taken in practice, whether it's gonna be sustained or not.

I think thinking about the kinds of people and some of the research into implementation strategies would suggest that schools should be engaging students who are going to be kind of affected or receiving the approach parents if they're gonna be involved or play a part in how this new approach is gonna be kind of evaluated or thought about.

But also staff who might not necessarily be delivering an approach that kind of affected by it because it's impacting colleagues, students in their setting as well.

So kind of thinking about the different ways of involving those different people, but also thinking about the different ways of collecting whatever data you might have around engagement.

So it's not kind of just the one off survey, some of the Research talks about how implementation teams, if we're putting them in place, ought to be representative and can kind of reach out to different kinds of people in different kind of ways to kind of feed into some of the decision making process or kind of problem solving that needs to take place as we're planning implementation.

Laura Spence 13:55

LS

Brilliant.

Thank you.

And I'm just thinking that we've talked about you inviting, we've talked about engaging. If we think about reflecting, Darren is reflecting something that happens throughout implementation.

Moore, Darren 14:06

MD

Yeah, very much.

But it's not to say that that wouldn't be the case for UNITING.

ENGAGING as well as we probably hinted at in previous answers, I think some of the reason why it might be important to kind of highlight that reflecting is something that's happening throughout ways.

Because and perhaps there's more obvious evidence around reflecting in terms of an approach has been put into practice.

And how are people responding to it?

But the reflection that kind of underlies thinking about implementation all the way along could be reflecting about what are the needs kind of in our setting in terms of new approaches that might be put in place.

Reflecting on what that approach is, how well it fits our settings, evidence behind it, reflecting on common people's needs in terms of if we're gonna put this in place and give it the best chance, what does that look like as well as reflecting on how is it affecting people?

Is it kind of hitting outcomes of people happy about this?

Are they putting it in place?

Are they doing it?

Kind of in the way that is needed if we're gonna reach people outcomes as well.

So it's kind of happening across the phases of implementation and it's also quite it's more directed than the other two behaviors in the evidence because reflection is something that is kind of inherently there in thinking about data and decision making.

LS

Laura Spence 15:25

Umm.

MD

Moore, Darren 15:32

But part of kind of this and the other behaviors is thinking about how it underpins lots of the action and thinking that's going on in implementation.

LS

Laura Spence 15:41

That's great.

Thank you, Darren.

Jonathan, did you want to come in there?

J

Jonathan 15:45

Yeah, it's, umm, I think it's one of the questions that people been asking about, what's the where the boundaries, you know, what are the differences between some of these?

LS

Laura Spence 15:52

Umm.

J Jonathan 15:54

Some of these behaviors and, and I think one of the things that we're realizing as we're talking about this, is that engaging and is a kind of gateway, if you're like, into uniting and reflecting.

So and for example, discussing actually engaging people in discussing implementation plans, you need to do that to build this shared understanding of what's been implemented, why and how.

You know, if if you're not going to be able to kind of unite without having engaging people proactively in that and equally if reflection, it's gonna be hard to reflect, adapt and improve.

And implementation without actively engaging people.

Kind of throughout that in that process and throughout the plantation.

So there's a kind of the scene, something how Gateway engaging kind of acts as a sort of way into engaging and reflecting at the same time.

There's value outside.

It's not the only purpose of engaging so engaging people with implementation in itself is important.

So you engage people to gather perspectives on current practices, you engage to solve problems collaboratively, to share tasks and effort.

And also there's evidence that engaging itself proactively generates only ship and buy in as people feel actively involved in implementation.

So so kind of while these behaviors and these sort of behavioral mechanisms interact dynamic dynamically, they you know they're also important distinct drivers of implementation in and of themselves.

 **Rodgers, John** 17:32

Brilliant.

Thank you very much.

This next question is actually for both of you, Jonathan and Darren and perhaps we'll start with you.

Darren, where would you suggest school start with using this guidance.

 **Moore, Darren** 17:45

Umm, I think a couple of things that would be useful in terms of speaking to kind of people about the evidence review and how it informs the guidance.

And perhaps unsurprisingly, when we were conducting the research with school leaders, there were lots of examples of here's something that we've put in place and been able to sustain.

So kind of some positive reports around implementation gone well.

That's really useful.

There's lots to learn from that, but I think a way in might be an honest assessment

between examples of approaches that have kind of stood the test of time versus those that might have fizzled out.

Or perhaps we're not even sure if people are still using it in the same way, or at all.

And then thinking about what resonates across the three behaviors UNITING, ENGAGING, reflecting in terms of what might help explain this difference between something that has kind of stood the test of time perhaps evolved versus something that might have fizzled out.

Think the other way might be to have a look at some of the implementation strategies towards the end of the guidance and then kind of think about one in isolation in relation to an approach and then think about how would this strategy look if I was really thinking about how do I engage unite and have the people involved reflect on this kind of in putting in place this strategy to help put in place in your approach would be a couple of thoughts I had.



Rodgers, John 19:13

Right.

Thank you, Darren.

Jonathan, any any further advice?



Jonathan 19:16

Yeah, I mean it.

It's so those are familiar with the previous guidance report.

No, that we've retained the kind of the phased process from that previous guidance report.

And I think the reason for doing that is that it provides this kind of practical structure to help schools kind of do implementation for whatever that word.

But I think the evidence that's come out of this review and that the other two recommend, that's the third recommendation now and the guidance report.

But the things we've been talking about today and the kind of key findings from this review around these cross cutting behaviors and and these key contextual factors really the way we can describe and that is that the process might help you do implementation, but they really get under the skin of how you do that well.

So these are things to focus on, the drives kind of effective implementation and they're the kind of driver quality implementation in terms of where you start.



Laura Spence 20:03

Umm.



Jonathan 20:11

I mean, I think ideally the best thing to do is try and see these three things kind of interacting effectively.

So and.

But I do think there are different ways in which you could use the guidance report. One that we had on the A member of the panel, we had a a matley there, Angela O'Brien.

And she looked at these and said, actually, for me or the behaves in the contextual factors give me these kind of guiding principles that I can use, and by themselves, they're enough for me.

I think other people I think I've seen it, they would start.

They like the idea of the process.

It gives them a structure.

It helps them to kind of work through, as Darren was saying, kind of practical implementation activities and strategies in a kind of organized way.

So I think it's also fine to kind of, you know, start at that point and then, but if you're gonna do that, it's really important to keep sight of these cross cutting behaviors and contextual factors and making sure that these are kind of infused and woven through and are kind of being attended to as you're kind of working through that process.

So I don't think there's any kind of single write single necessarily path in which you can use this.

But umm yeah, I think adopt you.

We wanna the still value.

I think in having this structured process, you know it's all the things we've previously been saying still stand, you know, implementations of process, not an event to think about doing the right thing at the right time.

But I think, and I think this, there's really what's exciting for me about this new guidance report is that these kind of behaviors and contextual factors are really kind of like cross cutting sort of evidence based principles that underpin doing that process well.

LS

Laura Spence 21:50

Right.

Thank you so much.

That's been so useful, and I think this is kind of a really useful closing question for our listeners today.

Listen, question is open to everybody.

What would you say has been your biggest learning from this process and what are you most proud of?

And we'll start with you, Darren, if that's OK.

MD

Moore, Darren 22:08

Yeah, that big questions I would I.

LS

Laura Spence 22:10

Absolutely.

MD

Moore, Darren 22:11

So I would just go on something that's kind of between them.

There were times kind of over the 18 months plus that were kind of deep diving into research and maybe not seeing the wood for the trees, but talking to people who are in Schools or working with Schools around putting in place new approaches or reset studies and hearing about implementation challenges and kind of being able to help explain what might be going on in a practical way.

And it's kind of the thing that I've ended up most proud about in terms of the practical value of it, even though at times we were kind of swimming around in hundreds of research articles and trying to see where it would all go.

LS

Laura Spence 22:57

Absolutely.

Thank you.

And Jonathan Professor Jonathan Sharples.

J

Jonathan 23:03

I mean I think one of the things I hate is Research often turns out to be a lot harder and longer than you think.

And when we when we set out to do this, you know, we had this idea that we, you know, we'd Commissioner review, Galveston, new evidence.

You know Philip Hue gaps and you know we'll get it all wrapped up within a year or so, but it's been a it's been a three year project involving, if you look at across the team, the research team, the panel, other people that have been reviewed, at least 40 people have been involved in that.

And and I think for me that's so so to kind of pull it back for us.

Implementation has been a collaborative social process.

You know it's it's it's we talk about how you know, it's the aggregation of the cumulative effects of lots of different people that create something that's sort of bigger than any of their individual assets kind of combined.

So for me, that's the thing I'm most proud of.

It's the kind of coordinated actions of lots of different people to get at this point and yeah, and we're looking forward to now working with research schools, working with people out in Schools to, you know, to develop further kind of insights around how these theories and ideas play out in practice.

You know, collectively developing kind of tools, resources, case studies, exemplifications that we can kind of collectively use to to enact some of this sort of you know at across the across the system.

LS

Laura Spence 24:29

Right.

Thank you.

And Johnny, then I'll come to you now, if I may.

What's been your biggest learning during this process and what are you most proud of?

 **Jonathan EATON** 24:35

You come by surprise.

Probably the the I'll.

I'll just pick one aspect, but I think it's probably the flexibility of the process.

So I think if you looked at the previous guy in support it for better or worse, was quite a not you.

You could perhaps be interpreted as quite a sort of rigid step by step process, and I think what?

Well, this Update has really made me reflect on is in fact the process is a loose assemblage of implementation strategies which should be flexible and responsive to implementation in your context.

So it's, you know, I I feel like it's really driven by uh, the reflex behaviour.

So my learnings changed I think in terms of making the process responsive to the context you're implementing in.

So almost like adjusting your driving in response to road conditions and weather conditions and information about incoming traffic conditions on all that, so more responsive, more flexible, I think is my kind of take away.

 **Laura Spence** 25:42

Right.

Thank you.

And John Rodgers, I'm just thinking about you and I from a research school perspective.

Was there anything that you think is worth just adding before we close this podcast today?

 **Rodgers, John** 25:53

Umm, I'll tell you what I'm really looking forward to the research school network bringing some exemplification around how to exhibit a manifest these behaviors and and support Schools with that exemplification of of the, you know, the behaviors in action.

 **Laura Spence** 26:01

Umm.

 **Rodgers, John** 26:08

You know, I wanna see some really good examples and I think Darren referred to this earlier that you know Schools when reflecting together, we'll be able to think back at

those times of implementation when it has gone well and now we've got the language to sort of look back and say, oh, yeah, that's because we're united around a particular set of values or core components.

We we engage lots of different groups, you know, so that so I think exemplification, although the guidance is only a couple of weeks old will be there as people now have a language to look back over, good implementation periods in the past.

So anyway, so I'm excited about that space.



Laura Spence 26:45

Yeah, absolutely.

And I think from from my angle as a new research school, what's been astounding is being the level of excitement just from from schools that we work with and trusts and federations about this new guidance report.

So it's great to see that it's landing so well already only in the first few weeks.

Well, thank you so much everyone for your time today.

It's been really useful to hear your thoughts and reflections on the on the podcast, and we look forward to following up with our next podcast.

Thank you everyone.