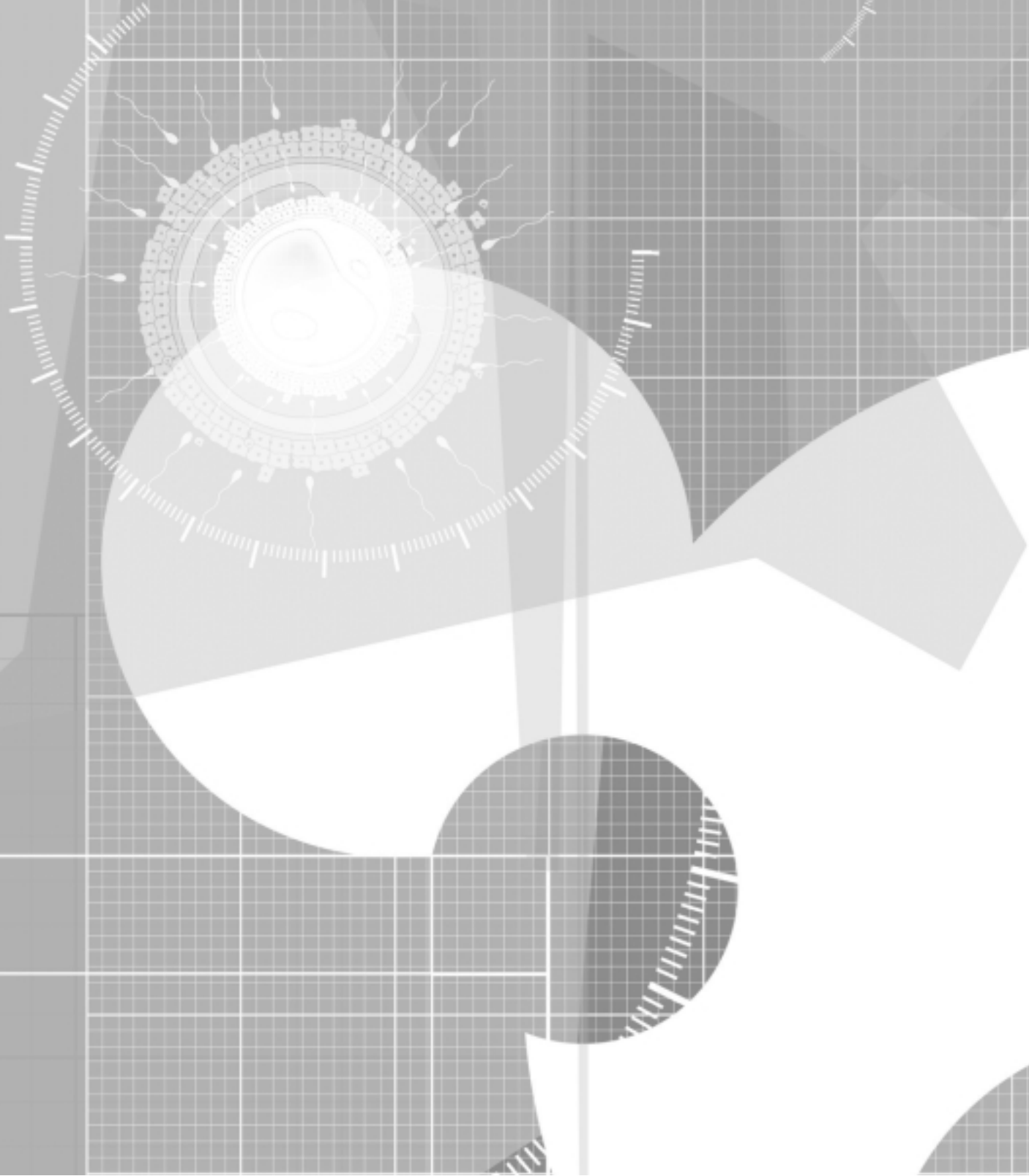




R E S E A R C H D E P A R T M E N T

Research Strategy for COPE Foundation







Foreword

COPE Foundation's Research Strategy 2006-2010 recognises the importance of high quality research as a vital part of its services and identified as its main priority 'to promote and enhance knowledge and research on intellectual disability, services and intervention so that in this way we can contribute positively to our knowledge about the nature and causes of intellectual disability and to the improvement of the quality of life of clients and the quality of services we provide to them...' The publication of this Research Strategy is a significant and positive move to achieve this. One way which the strategy can help to improve services is by enhancing strategic planning and directing goals towards critical evaluation of the services we provide. COPE Foundation is committed to promoting research on intellectual disability services that will influence and shape future services.

The Research Strategy of COPE Foundation sets out an action plan to promote and develop intellectual disability research that helps us to understand the nature of intellectual disability and how it affects the lives of our clients and their families. We believe that as part of this strategy, we must foster our own intellectual disability research community which focuses on the current and key issues in intellectual disability today.

Another strategic approach to research shall be to develop research that has relevance for all people involved in our services. This includes having accessible information about research available to our clients and their families and ensuring that they have as wide an involvement as possible where appropriate. The research strategy outlines how this may be achieved. It also aims to ensure greater collaboration and communication among the wider community including peer organisations, peer researchers, academic institutions and advocates of those with intellectual disability.

It is hoped that this strategy has outlined and accounted for the changing and complex needs of our client population and staff and will prove a useful resource in shaping the focus of research over the next five years in COPE Foundation.

Maura Nash
Chief Executive
January 2006



Introduction

Since the establishment of COPE Foundation in the 1950s, there has been a commitment to research and evaluation. Research has been a common activity among staff over the decades (see the COPE Foundation Research Directory 1970-2000) with diverse research activity being carried out from time to time. The research function within COPE Foundation was further developed in recent years with the inception of the Research Department in 1998. Since then it has been very successful at building on this research culture within the Foundation and has overseen many important research topics conducted within COPE Foundation and in partnership with other national organisations (see COPE Foundation Research Directories 2000; 2006).

As we enter a new arena with the development of our Health Services, the Research Department understood the need to critically evaluate its place within the provision of services and draw up a research plan or strategy to move forward over the next five years. This is in line with all health services in Ireland now having an obligation to have a research or a strategic plan in place to guide activities and services.

It is widely accepted that high quality research enhances strategic planning and service delivery. It is of equal importance to the policy maker, the practitioner and the user of the service (Mental Health Commission Research Strategy, 2005).

Current Research Activity

To date much research has been conducted in COPE Foundation (for details see the Research Directories, 2000 and 2006).

Much of this has been on a small scale. For example, small-scale survey type research, evaluation of training programmes, audits, and satisfaction questionnaires. Many have had small numbers in the study and therefore have been clearly specific to a unit or site within COPE Foundation. The time therefore has come for COPE Foundation to expand its research horizons and consider large-scale projects perhaps with a partnership approach.



Background to Research Strategy

The Health Service Reform Programme announced in June 2003 represented the most ambitious programme of change for the Irish Health Services since the establishment of the Health Boards 35 years ago.

The Reform Programme addressed a range of structural, organisational, financial, systems and management reforms to help modernise the health services so that they can provide more effectively and efficiently for the needs of patients/service users. The reforms are designed to achieve a health service that provides high quality patient care, better value for money and improved health care management (<http://www.healthreform.ie/>). The Health Strategy recognised that all decisions whether financial or clinical must be based on the best available evidence. Therefore future health service decisions will be based on research findings statistical, qualitative or quantitative data and /or other documented trends and behaviours.

In a climate of accountability, transparency and priority budgeting there is a need for services to develop evidence-based practice, which focuses on quality of service and value for money. This essentially should translate to better services for clients and more input from clients and their families in how services are run.

A search for Research Strategy in the new Health Services Executive revealed that there is indeed a Research Strategy in place for Children's services. Their main goal is to develop a strategic approach to research and development in children's services. (www.hebe.ie)

To date no strategy has been found that sets objectives for disability research in the HSE. The National Disability Authority (NDA) has developed a strategic plan for the organisation (2004-2006) but this reflects priorities for the organisation as a whole and not simply national disability research priorities.

It is against this background that COPE Foundation developed this research strategy. The purpose of which is to set research priorities or goals in intellectual disability research for the years 2006-2010. Firstly this document will outline the structure of services for people with disabilities in Ireland.

Health services for people with disabilities

Health Service Executive (HSE) Areas in Ireland provide a range of services for people with intellectual, physical and sensory disabilities or autism. These services include basic health services as well as assessment, rehabilitation, income maintenance, community care and residential care.

Voluntary organisations

In addition to the HSE, many of the health services for people with disabilities are provided by voluntary organisations, usually with financial support from Health Service Executive (HSE) Areas. There is a wide range of national and local organisations that provide services. There are umbrella organisations for people with physical, sensory and intellectual disabilities or autism and support



groups for people suffering from particular illnesses. Most of these organisations also campaign for the rights of people with disabilities. There are also a number of organisations that devote themselves exclusively to promoting the rights of people with disabilities.

Ireland's Intellectual Disability Database (IDD) was established in 1995. It is a database of information about people who are receiving intellectual disability services in this country or who are in need of these services. The objective of the database is to ensure that accurate information is available about the needs of people with intellectual disabilities. Services are planned and co-ordinated on the basis of the information contained in the database.

Why do we need a Research Strategy?

As outlined above, with the restructuring of the Health Services, there is a greater need for development of evidence -based practice and the demonstration of value-for money service delivery. Services should be able to show that they have examined their services objectively and that the funding they receive is diverted towards initiatives that meet the criteria for value for money and quality services.

Furthermore the use of objective data to measure outcomes and justify funding decisions such as the use of the IDD is now widely accepted. In addition all disability services have now accepted that person centred planning (PCP) is a basic requirement for the development of services for the individual client that is based on the individual's strengths and needs. The PCP process is a relatively new one and there is a need to evaluate whether or not this system actually improves the quality of life of service users/clients and the quality of services they receive.

(a) Definition of Research

What is Research?

Research is the systematic design, collection, interpretation, reporting and/or publishing of any such information relating directly or indirectly to any activity of COPE Foundation from time to time (COPE Foundation Research Department Objectives, Policies and Procedures).

- o Research is a diverse and multifaceted set of activities which embrace a wide range of intellectual and practical endeavours
- o These include theoretical studies, experimental work and surveys, evaluation of a service or programme, verification, further analysis, and extension of earlier work
- o The objective is to extend human knowledge and our understanding of the nature of Intellectual Disability (ID) and the lives of people with Intellectual Disability and to share this knowledge with others working in the ID field.
- o Outputs of research include the publication of a report, presentations at COPE Foundation staff research seminars, presentations at other relevant national and international conferences and seminars and publication in the COPE Foundation Research Newsletter 'Research News'. Outcomes should never take priority over critical and ethical research procedures.



(b) Research Practice

Best practice in the design, implementation and interpretation and reporting of research is a must. This practice builds on the trust between researchers, the clients, their families and the general public. Ethical issues and standards are of paramount importance in conducting research. Inclusive methodologies must be used where appropriate (for example see NDA 2002; D'Eath et al 2005).

Best practices facilitate the external processes of peer review, verification of data and repeatability. This enables objective parties to judge the validity of new contributions to knowledge and understanding (Tierney, 2004). The guidelines for best research practice within COPE foundation have been set out in their policy document 2004 (Tierney, 2004).

(c) Evidence-Based Practice

Much research evidence in the disability field has come from international research particularly from the UK and the US. Although much research has been conducted in the field of intellectual disability in Ireland a limited number of studies has been reproduced in peer-reviewed journals. Therefore there is a need to build up a picture of ID research in an Irish context. There is also a need to produce high quality research of international standard that creates a picture of where we are at with disability services in Ireland. There is a need for confidence in the provision of services and a need to be objective about evaluating the services we provide. The way to do this is through high quality research of international standard.

Moreover, from an organisational perspective we need to have clear objectives for applied research that are in line with the organisation's goals and mission statement. This evidence base provides a solid formation for moving forward.

(d) What are our Strengths?

COPE Foundation has had a clear organisational research function since 1998. The Department as mentioned has been in existence since 1998 and since that time has built up a body of research relating to its clients and the services it provides. This has contributed to an active research culture among staff at COPE Foundation and has built up the research skills and expertise of staff at the same time. There has been much evidence of staff evaluating their work practices and the services which they provide to their clients. A glance at the research project profile of COPE Foundation over the past five years alone is evidence of this. In addition, COPE Foundation have contributed to national projects, which have examined the quality of life of young people with disabilities and have contributed at a national level to the development of policies and practices in the field of intellectual disability. Alongside these activities, researchers have been active in their dissemination of results from projects at local, regional, national and international levels. Some examples of conferences where COPE Foundation staff have presented include, IASSID International World Congress in France, Bild International Conference in Cork, PSI annual conferences, NDA annual conferences, CEDCE



International conference in Dublin, EASE International conferences in Helsinki and Barcelona, in addition to the COPE Foundation bi-annual research seminars.

In addition some of these projects have been continued through to publication in peer-reviewed journals. This is an indication of the quality of the research being conducted.

On a wider national and international level, COPE Foundation Research Department is also a member of the National Federation of Voluntary Bodies National Research Sub-Committee and a Research Centre Member of IASSID.

Alongside an active Research Department and the development of an active research culture, COPE Foundation has an excellent library, which is a member of the national health care libraries. Access to journals and articles in the field of ID has contributed greatly to the development of an active research culture. The availability of a librarian who can assist with literature searches, order inter-library loans, etc. has meant that support services have contributed greatly to the completion of research projects and the encouragement of applied research projects across a broad multi-disciplinary spectrum.

A key ingredient in the Barrington (2004) research strategy was the supporting of staff through the research process by making practical resources available to them.

Good IT infrastructure within COPE Foundation has allowed researchers to have access to internet and other research resources making the task of the researcher more compatible with their work loads.

To date research policies and guidelines have been written and adopted to set a standard for excellence in research and adherence to best practice at all times for researchers irrespective of the topic under investigation. This is a strength that needs to be recognised. In an attempt to build on these strengths COPE Foundation have addressed the need to build a research strategy.

In addition, COPE Foundation has a Research Committee who meet at least quarterly to review research proposals and ensure that best practice in research is being adhered to at all times. The presence of a research ethics committee has certainly led to best practice being applied to all projects across the organisation and across diverse topics.

(e) Disseminating Research

To date COPE Foundation have been very prolific at disseminating research findings at local, national and international levels as outlined. This dissemination has taken many forms including the production of a quarterly Newsletter 'Research News' and the bi-annual research seminars open to all staff of COPE Foundation and staff of other interested parties in the intellectual disability arena. The dissemination of research findings at local national and international conferences as previously outlined has meant that research findings are disseminated widely to diverse and multi-disciplinary audiences. COPE Foundation has taken its place among international researchers to this extent.



(f) Ethics

The policy document (Codes of Ethics and Principles of Good Research Practice, 2004) has clearly outlined what research practices are considered ethical in the context of conducting research with people with ID. This policy document was developed with international best practice in mind and was developed with consideration to the guidelines as set out by WHO, IASSID and ESF etc. The document gives clear instructions to researchers undertaking or considering conducting research in COPE Foundation. These guidelines must be always considered when conducting research within COPE Foundation services. In addition this document must be updated as legal requirements and practices change (see Tierney, 2004)

(g) What are our Opportunities/Impediments?

For some time now, COPE Foundation have been looking to the future to develop more focused ideas about what research should mean for COPE Foundation. We have recognised the need to build on the research culture that has developed and instead of becoming complacent we recognise the need to expand and look to the future with our research strategy and priorities. In 2002 COPE Foundation adopted a new mission and vision statement and identified goals for the future of the organisation. It is within this context that we recognised the need to develop research goals in line with this vision, mission and goals.

The Research Strategy of COPE Foundation was developed with the vision, mission, and goals of COPE Foundation in mind.

Vision

'to enrich the community through the realisation and the full potential of all persons'

Mission

'fulfilling the potential of persons with an intellectual disability'

Goals

1. *to strive to provide and develop the best models of service and care for persons with intellectual disability*
2. *to lead and manage the business of COPE Foundation in the most effective and efficient manner in order to maximise the use of resources for the benefit of persons with intellectual disability and their families*
3. *to influence policy and best practice and to advocate for persons with intellectual disability and for their families'*



The National Context

There is no national policy devoted to intellectual disability research. Making Knowledge Work for Health-a Strategy for Health Research (Department of Health and Children, 2001) is the national strategy for health research. The importance of evidence based practice and encouraging health professionals to undertake research and evaluate their work was noted in this strategy. The need for a research and development function within the health services was also acknowledged.

However, there has been limited implementation of these recommendations and since the development of the new Health Services Executive the status of these priorities remain unclear. The HRB and the NDA remain the two statutory agencies with an agenda for disability research. However few priorities have been outlined to develop and implement intellectual disability research.

The Mental Health Commission (MHC) in their Research Strategy 2005 outlined the challenge for the Mental Health Commission in collaboration with all stakeholders to

- Promote research in the Irish mental health services
- Involve users
- Address the complexities and changing needs in mental health and encourage innovation and critical appraisal.

...The ultimate aim of the mental health research strategy is to promote a mental health research community that is dynamic, productive and innovative producing high quality research that is responsive to service needs, involves users, helps create services that are evidenced based, and which impacts positively on how mental health services in Ireland are planned, implemented and evaluated. This research strategy encompasses all mental health services all disciplines involved in providing mental health services; service users and carers, voluntary organisations and other organisations involved in mental health and related research. The MHC have outlined a series of actions in order to achieve this aim (MHC, 2005; page 12).

There are many barriers to conducting research in the area of disability in Ireland. At policy level the Health Research Strategy has not been implemented to any significant degree leaving a vacuum in terms of direction, funding and priority setting. **There is no national strategy for intellectual disability research in Ireland.** There is in addition, little capacity or incentive for researchers to pursue research in this area. There is a lack of support at a national level and often the implementation of findings is left to motivated and interested parties. Often the research is carried out by a professional with an already very full work schedule.

It is hoped that the future will produce a national strategy for intellectual disability research in Ireland.



The International Context

A search for research strategies in the UK linked to disability revealed that Nottinghamshire mental health care, learning disability and psychiatric services has as their R&D strategy *'to increase the quality and relevance of research activity and to contribute to the NHS knowledge base in all areas of its clinical work. ...and to increase external research grant income and to publish our work widely'*.

(www.nottinghamshirehealthcare.nhs.uk/research/)

Similarly the Disability Rights Commission in the UK have as their mission ... *'to contribute to the creation of an authoritative evidence base in discrimination against disabled people in Britain, and to play a key role in identifying barriers to inclusion and identifying how these can be removed'*

(www.drc-gb.org/publicationsandreports/researchunit)

In the United States the centre for Disability Policy and Research in the University of Washington has as its mission *to shape disability policy and service delivery through research.*

These are only a few examples of the types of research strategies that have been developed internationally in the area of disability research.

In conclusion

The need for a research strategy is clear. Evidently Ireland lags behind our International peers in the need to develop research priorities for Intellectual Disability Research. Without clear signposts research into disability particularly intellectual disability will never become a priority. Without being labelled as such it will fail to receive adequate funding and resources in the future. Future research endeavours will be the responsibility only of those motivated and interested parties.

The Process

In the development of this Research Strategy discussions took place to determine what constitutes a Research Strategy. Also questions were raised as to the key elements which must be included when devising a five year research plan.

With careful consideration to documents already in existence based on national and international best practice COPE Foundation decided to use Dr. Ruth Barrington's 10 Key ingredients for an effective Research Strategy as a structure for this document. Her key ingredients were;

1. What are we trying to do with a Research strategy?
2. Why is Research important?
3. What research is happening at the moment?
4. What are the key issues for research in the future?
5. What are the main impediments to research?
6. On a national level what are the priorities?
7. What are the strengths in your agency?



8. What natural alliances are there? Think Globally Act Locally!
9. What are the critical areas for support that people require?
10. Support people in research through seminars, dissemination training etc.

(Dr. Ruth Barrington (HRB) The Key Ingredients in a Research Strategy, 2004)

The research strategy outlined in this booklet has been developed with these key elements in mind.

Many stakeholders including staff members, the Research Committee and the executive of COPE Foundation considered the aforementioned elements. These consultations with the various stakeholders have been vital in establishing the priorities of the Research Department for the next five years (2006-2010). The Balanced Scorecard framework was used to group the broad goals under the perspectives of finance, customer, internal processes and learning and growth

Balanced Scorecard

The Balanced Scorecard is an agreed set of measures that provide managers/co-ordinators with a comprehensive, balanced and timely view of an organisation's performance. It is also used as a strategic management system to:

- Clarify and translate vision and strategy
- Communicate (internal and external) and link strategic objectives and measures
- Plan, set targets and align strategic initiatives
- Enhance strategic feedback and learning

As part of the balanced scorecard methodology, the COPE Foundation Research Strategy will now be considered with these perspectives as a framework. The research goals for the next 5 years will be considered from within these perspectives. It should be noted that the balanced scorecard framework will be utilised as an audit of progress in achieving the more specific aims that flow from the general goals.

The overall aim of COPE Foundation Research Department is to promote and enhance knowledge and research on intellectual disability, services and intervention so that in this way we can contribute positively to our knowledge about the nature and causes of intellectual disability and to the improvement of the quality of life of clients and the quality of services we provide to them...

This objective is achieved by four strategic objectives as laid out below.



1. Financial perspective/ Funding

Funding will be secured so that the Research Department will have the necessary resources to engage in research activities that contribute positively to our knowledge in the field of intellectual disability.

This will be achieved by:

- 1 producing annual plans for research activities and securing agreed budgets to conduct research projects to the highest standard.
- 2 being vigilant of local, state and international grants and making applications for these funds, where appropriate.
- 3 attracting grants and funding by adhering to best international practice with supporting documentation such as a defined research strategy and guidelines for conducting research, written code of ethics, etc. These will be reviewed internally on a regular basis.
- 4 attracting grants and funding via involvement in collaborative type large-scale national projects with a partnership approach
- 5 evaluating all projects objectively to determine whether research recommendations that have been agreed and implemented have made a difference to the quality of service provided to clients.

2. Customer perspective

The question remains 'who is the customer of the Research Department'? For the purposes of this research strategy we have identified three customers for the Research Department.

- I. The person with the disability (and their families and advocates where appropriate)
- II. The staff members of COPE foundation (or the potential researchers)
- III. Disability peer organisations and fellow researchers and colleagues national and international.

I. The Client:

As laid down by COPE Foundation's Mission Statement there is an increased commitment by the Research Department to facilitate the realisation of the full potential of all persons with intellectual disability and promoting their best interests. This means involving users of services in all aspects of research, not just as subjects or participants.



For the client/service user who is at the heart of research activities our aim is to increase our understanding of intellectual disability; its nature and interventions and thereby contribute positively to the lives of people with disability by influencing change. This change will ultimately improve the lives of people with disabilities who attend our services.

This will be achieved by:

1. involving a variety of clients, with varying ability levels in a variety of research projects
2. increasing the number of participatory research projects by involving clients as far as is possible and practicable in research projects that concern them. These two objectives may be considered in the following ways;
 - o Organising an annual service-users' research day.
 - o Promoting and conducting research that looks at client issues.
 - o influencing policy and best practice by researching areas of service delivery within COPE Foundation.
3. involving users at various stages of a research project.
4. involving family members or advocates in any research topics that involves their family member in so far as practicable and is in accordance with the wishes of that person

II. The Staff Member

The aim of the Research Department is to facilitate and encourage staff to engage in Research at a variety of levels and expertise.

This will be achieved by:

1. striving to support, encourage and provide training and development in research methodologies and related topics
2. enhancing professional development through research training
3. ensuring adherence to best practice for all staff in conducting research
4. providing training in appropriate research methodologies, e.g., through research seminar training days
5. providing advice and consultation on research proposal development, statistical analysis, report writing and at each stage of the research project life
6. giving careful consideration to the resources which staff need to engage in research (e.g., time allocation, where appropriate or needed, or access to resources such as the library or internet etc.)
7. recruiting and retaining staff throughout the organisation who have an interest in conducting research.



III Peer Researchers; colleagues / other disability organisations etc.

COPE foundation will undertake to consult, recognise and maintain partnerships with peers in disability research, other national and international organisations etc.

This will be achieved by:

1. continuing to develop partnerships with national and international organisations and increasing dialogue with fellow researchers in Ireland, Europe and internationally.
2. continuing to develop the research activities and links made with other organisations.
3. increasing the number of collaborative research projects.
4. engaging with universities in conducting research. This shall add to the academic reputation of the Department and the organisation.
5. influencing national policy by forwarding submissions to key policy makers on key research related issues.
6. developing positive relationships with government departments, statutory and other voluntary bodies
7. encouraging collaborative research across disciplines and specialities

Partnership

A partnership approach should take account of these three customers. A partnership approach to intellectual disability research is one which would involve service providers, researchers, service users and carers, academic institutions, voluntary bodies and the healthcare industry working together through research to enhance the body of knowledge and encourage greater dialogue. This shall lead to a wider body of knowledge and greater dialogue between researchers. This would serve to increase understanding of the nature of intellectual disability and consequently how best to enhance the quality of lives and the quality of service we provide to people with intellectual disability



3. Internal Processes perspective

The Research Department shall aim to ensure that the highest possible standard is maintained in research conducted within COPE Foundation. The Research Department will strive to develop and implement the best practice in research taking cognisance of national and international standards and relevant legislation.

This will be achieved by:

1. adhering to a Research Strategy that will be regularly reviewed.
2. regularly monitoring and evaluating research projects through systems such as the Research Committee.
3. having an active Research Ethics Committee to ensure ethical procedures are adhered to (this committee will be the acting Research Committee)
4. developing systems for the implementation of research recommendations of all projects undertaken.
5. reviewing all research related policies with reference to new and existing legislation. The existing documents include
 - Research Proposal Form
 - Research Guidelines Document
 - Terms of Reference of Research Committee
 - Research Regulations
 - Research Resume Form
 - **These can be found as appendices A-E in the 'Code of Ethics and Policy Document' of the Research Department.**
6. observing the rules of legislation that apply to research and collection of data for example: Data Protection Act, Freedom Of Information, Disability Legislation, etc.
7. encouraging external research which adheres to best research guidelines and is in line with COPE Foundation's mission, vision and goals and consistent with the Research Strategy where appropriate
8. identifying specific research methodologies which have particular relevance to intellectual disability. For example longitudinal research, single subject research methodology, continuing research in the area of challenging behaviour, etc.
9. ongoing development of the Research Website



4. Learning and Growth perspective

Research findings shall reflect changing and improving services based on research findings and recommendations in COPE Foundation. The purpose of research within COPE Foundation is to expand our knowledge into the nature and causes of intellectual disability and the quality of our services which will ensure we reflect on our own practices. Through research we aim to educate staff peers and families about ID.

This will be achieved by:

1. providing opportunities for staff to continue their professional development by engaging in research.
2. continuing to present findings of COPE Foundation research at Bi-annual research seminars and national and international seminars and conferences
3. disseminating research findings through the Research Newsletter 'Research News'
4. increasing the number of peer-reviewed publications that arise from research conducted within COPE Foundation.
5. striving to increase the number of publications and articles in journals/ magazines.
6. encouraging the continuation of dissemination of research findings at seminars, conferences, etc.
7. reviewing research findings and research recommendations on an annual basis and translating them if appropriate into improved provision of service.
8. designing research projects to attract PhD standard students and conducting research in partnership with University Departments. Research to this level shall be actively encouraged among staff.
9. encouraging continuing links with universities and other third-level educational settings
10. consulting with clients/families/advocates on research priorities
11. awarding Research Awards to staff for excellence in research activity.



Summary and Conclusion

COPE Foundation is committed to promoting and encouraging research on intellectual disability services which influence and shape future services. This research strategy is intended to be an action plan in how to achieve this goal.

Since the establishment of COPE Foundation's Research Department much research has been conducted by staff but mostly on a small scale, therefore the time is ripe to expand our research horizons.

The reforms in the health services were designed to achieve a health service that provides high quality patient care, better value for money and improved health care management and all decisions will be made on best available evidence. The need for evidence-based practice and improved value for money service delivery has driven this research strategy. We need objective data to measure outcomes and justify funding decisions. As no research strategy to date has been developed for disability research in Ireland COPE Foundation decided to develop its own strategy with this goal in mind

This research strategy has outlined definitions of research and what constitutes best research practice within COPE Foundation. It has also been developed by examining our current strengths in this area and our opportunities for improvement.

In addition the research strategy has been developed with the vision, mission and goals of COPE Foundation in mind. These are outlined.

When developing the strategy it was necessary to examine the national and international context and determine what strategies were already developed to guide us through the process? We found that no national research strategy existed for intellectual disability and by developing one we put ourselves among the first organisation nationally to have done so.

The need for a research strategy was all too clear and evidently Ireland lags behind other countries in the need to develop research priorities in this area. The balance scorecard method was used as a framework to develop the research strategy. The balance scorecard method is a strategic management system which allows key stakeholders to clarify and translate vision and strategy, to communicate and link strategic objectives and measures, to plan, set targets and align strategic initiatives and to enhance feedback and learning. The strategy was developed by key stakeholders who considered the research priorities of COPE Foundation under four broad goals of finance, customer, internal processes and learning and growth. The research priorities are grouped under these broad perspectives.

It is also anticipated that this framework methodology may be utilised as an audit of progress in achieving the specific research goals. Within five years it should be possible to reflect on the activities of the Department and determine if the goals of the five year research plan have been achieved. It is also hoped that this strategy shall assist researchers in developing their research proposals in line with the goals of the organisation. In this manner COPE Foundations research shall reflect the ethos of fulfilling the potential of persons with an intellectual disability and ultimately enriching our wider community through the realisation of the full potential of all persons.



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