



The Joseph Rowntree Foundation

Ask a Researcher supports research and policy staff with insight into unpaid carers' experiences

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Emma Wincup

Research Manager - Qualitative
Joseph Rowntree Foundation

Background:

[Working to solve poverty in the UK](#)

The Joseph Rowntree Foundation (JRF) is an independent social change organisation working to solve UK poverty. The organisation, which has been in membership with The Knowledge Exchange (TKE, previously the Idox Information Service) since 2007, is split into multiple business units, including an insights and policy team which includes research and policy staff, and the JRF Housing Trust which is a registered housing association and care provider.

Challenge:

[Creating a detailed picture of unpaid carer experiences in the UK](#)

In 2020 the organisation was involved in a co-produced project to explore the experience of unpaid carers in the UK. The project involved a number of different stakeholder groups, some empirical research, and lots of engagement with carers with experience of unpaid care as well as professionals and academics who also work in this area to help create a comprehensive picture of unpaid carer experiences in the UK. The project sought to identify experiences of unpaid care in general, particularly of those who come from groups which were underrepresented in the existing literature – those unpaid carers who are often among the least visible and furthest from the additional support which is available.

Solution:

[Comprehensive access to existing literature on unpaid carers](#)

As part of their work leading the 'discovery' phase of the project, the staff at JRF approached the TKE team to scope out existing literature and themes on the topic, submitting an *Ask a Researcher* request looking at the existing literature on unpaid carers. This was a key foundational task in the development of the research project. It helped JRF research and policy staff identify existing research and literature, key themes and gaps in the literature, and anticipate future challenges which may come up in the stakeholder engagement phase, which would come later.



Outcome:

Unlocked detailed insight around a broad policy area

The work done by TKE helped to give insight to staff on a topic which was not a usual area of coverage for JRF. The search results covered material from journal articles, as well as grey literature from across the UK. This included online reports and research from carer organisations in the third and voluntary sector, and reviews published by research centres who had completed research in similar topic areas.

Emma Wincup, Research Manager – Qualitative comments, “The *Ask a Researcher* service has been a really good starting point to get into a broad policy area which was a new topic of interest for us as an organisation. The search found some material we were already aware of, but other things that we weren’t. The grey literature coverage, which you wouldn’t get from academic repositories, was particularly useful.”

The search was used by the staff at JRF to help springboard the rest of the project, helping them to identify groups who have been excluded from existing literature and recurring themes and issues from the literature which it was important to take forward and develop as part of the project. This discovery phase fed into subsequent discussions with unpaid carers who participated in stakeholder enquiry sessions to share their experiences in subsequent phases of the project.

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The Knowledge Exchange:

We have a skilled team of researchers and information management specialists within our TKE team who are able to respond to bespoke search requests across a range of topics including housing, planning, transport and social services.

Access to our bespoke *Ask a Researcher* service is available to our full subscription members at no extra cost.

Call us now on 0333 011 1200 or email marketing@idoxgroup.com to find out more about the *Ask a Researcher* service and to arrange a demo for your team.

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