



KCSC | **KING'S** | School of Social Work
King's Community Support Centre

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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Carrie Smith, Laura Herbert, M.K. Arundel, Jane Sanders,
Stephanie Baird, Sarah MacGowan, Kelly Brander



School of Social Work, King's University College at Western University

socialwork.kings.uwo.ca

socialwork@kings.uwo.ca

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A WELCOME MESSAGE



M.K. ARUNDEL

BSW (Hons.), MSW, RSW

KCSC Creator and Director,
Manager, Professional
Practicum Education, in the
School of Social Work at King's
University College at Western
University

Welcome to the King's Community Support Centre (KCSC)!

As the Director of the KCSC, I am pleased to present this Executive Summary, which highlights the tremendous work and dedication of the team as well as the invaluable partnerships we have developed.

Our mission is to provide a safe and supportive environment that promotes healing and personal growth while at the same time fostering the development of students into skilled social work professionals. Each member of the team plays a vital role in achieving this mission, and I am proud of the incredible work that has been accomplished thus far.

I want to express my gratitude to our most important stakeholders, those in need who place their trust in our service. It is our intention that with your courage and our commitment, together we will make a positive impact in your life and the community.

As we move forward, I want to thank our community partners for your collaborative spirit in service to our community of those most vulnerable and for joining us in this important work. Together, we can create lasting change and build a brighter future for those we serve.

Yours in service,

M.K. Arundel

INTRODUCTION

TO THE KING'S COMMUNITY SUPPORT CENTRE

The King's Community Support Centre (KCSC) provides social work support to those most vulnerable in the London community while providing rich and relevant social work practicums to **Bachelor of Social Work (BSW)** and **Master of Social Work (MSW)** students. The program was developed by King's School of Social Work's Professional Practicum Education program in response to the city's Health and Homelessness Whole of Community System Response plan.



Did you know?

The KCSC program is managed out of King's University College School of Social Work Professional Practicum Education Office.

THE STUDENT EXPERIENCE

The King's Community Support Centre offers professional practicum experiences for both Bachelor of Social Work (BSW) and Master of Social Work (MSW) students at King's. There are options for both regular and block placements with KCSC.

KCSC offers a rich experience in direct social work practice, research, and program development. Social work students who are placed with the KCSC gain experience in conducting intakes, performing assessments, facilitating groups, developing resources, and offering counselling to individuals requiring support.

Students engage in weekly peer supervision sessions and bi-weekly individual supervision with the KCSC program clinical supervisor.



Students who have been placed with the KCSC have found it a valuable learning opportunity, giving them a chance to gain new skills in psychotherapeutic approaches, public engagement, community-based social work, research, and knowledge mobilization.

In addition to providing counselling support, students can engage in the research, program evaluation and program development as the program expands. This is an exciting opportunity for students to be involved in developing a new program, learn research skills, and have their efforts recognized in research publications.

MEET THE KCSC TEAM



M.K. ARUNDEL BSW (Hons.), MSW, RSW

M.K. is the creator and Director of the KCSC program and the Manager, Professional Practicum Education, in the School of Social Work at King's University College at Western University. As a social worker with over 15 years' experience in the London region, her areas of focus have included clinical assessment, consultation, family mediation and conflict resolution, counselling support, youth mental health, and overall leadership all within the context of the justice system. In her role as an educator of professional social work practice, she has been honoured to influence the next generation of social workers and to be able to develop the KCSC as a rich learning opportunity for students while contributing to her passion of creating opportunities for healthier families and communities.



KELLY BRANDER MSW, RSW

Kelly Brander is the Clinical Supervisor for the King's Community Support Centre. Kelly brings over 30 years of experience with the Children's Aid Society of London and Middlesex. She is an alumna of the University of Windsor and Western University, with BSW and MSW degrees and a Certificate in Addiction Studies.

Kelly is passionate about working with individuals beginning their professional journeys and is excited about King's initiatives with community partners.



DR. CARRIE SMITH MSW, PhD, RSW

Dr. Carrie Smith is the lead researcher for KCSC Counselling Support and an Associate Professor in the School of Social Work at King's. Carrie worked at various child welfare organizations for more than ten years, as a child protection worker and a supervisor of research and evaluation. Her research and evaluation interests broadly include the long-term consequences of child maltreatment (in particular, on economic outcomes), child abuse prevention, and program evaluation. She has published in the areas of child welfare organizational structure and decisions for vulnerable children, supporting new workers, duty to report, evidence-informed practice, and ethical considerations for collecting data from vulnerable children.



DR. JANE SANDERS MSW, PhD, RSW

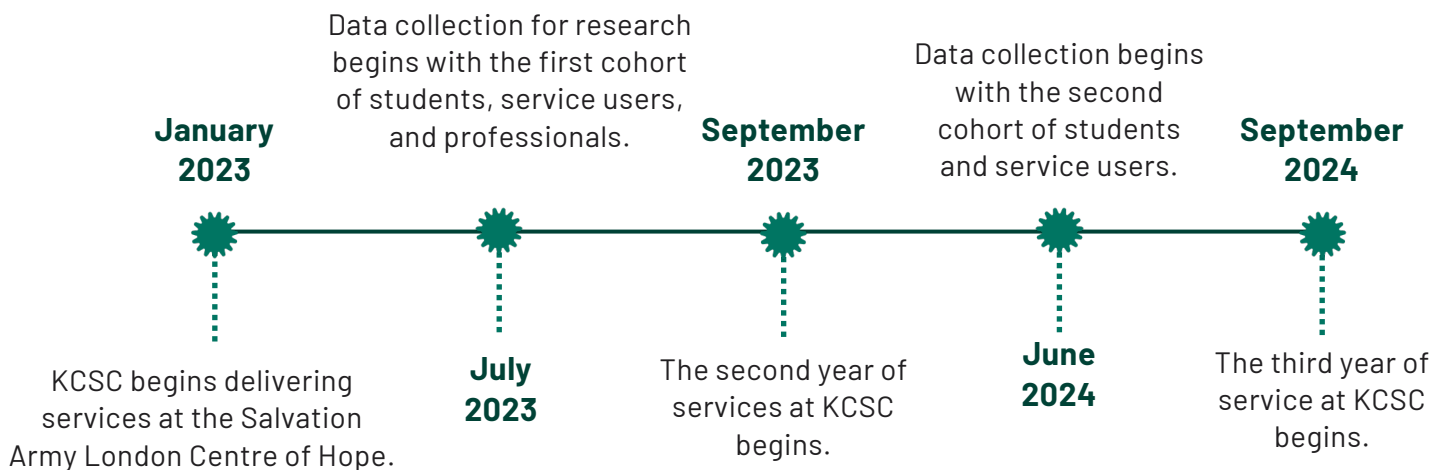
Dr. Jane Sanders is the lead researcher for KCSC Workforce Development, an Associate Professor and Graduate Program Chair in the School of Social Work at King's. She has over 25 years of social work experience with children, youth, and families across multiple settings including child welfare, domestic violence, child and family community services, hospital-based child and adolescent mental health, and school social work. Jane has been a practicum instructor and faculty coordinator in multiple social work programs. In addition to her research with KCSC, Jane's research focuses on the impact of trauma and expanded forms of adversity (including systemic racism, inequality and community violence) on academics, with a particular focus on adverse experiences of students who have been suspended or expelled from school. Her research generally falls within two broad areas of focus: 1) child and family mental health with subspecialties in early adversity and school success, and 2) clinical practice and education.



DR. STEPHANIE BAIRD MSW, PhD, RSW

Dr. Stephanie Baird is a KCSC research team member and is an Associate Professor in the School of Social Work at King's. Stephanie's research and teaching interests build on more than twenty years of clinical and community social work experience. Her practice experience has informed her program of research, which seeks to critically examine social work practice models to ensure they address the complexity of service users' identities and experiences, and the impacts of multiple levels of oppression and marginalization on individual experiences. Broadly, the focus of her research responds to three key areas: 1) gender-based violence and trauma, 2) social work practice and intervention research, and 3) social work education and practicum education.

KCSC BY THE NUMBERS



191

Referrals received to the King's Community Support Centre



25

Bachelor of Social Work and Master of Social Work students completed a practicum at KCSC



19

Students provided with opportunities to develop research skills in areas such as data collection and analysis, manuscript preparation, and conference presentations



31

Service users, non-service users, professionals, and practicum students shared their experiences as part of the KCSC research



3

Conference presentations to audiences at the local, national, and international levels, including the [16th Asian Conference in Education](#) in Tokyo, Japan; the [Canadian Association for Social Work Education \(CASWE-ACFTS\) Annual Conference](#) in Montreal, Quebec, and [King's Research Week](#) in London, Ontario

Note: All statistics are for the 2023-2024 fiscal year.



RESEARCH SNAPSHOT

An Exploration of the Impact of KCSC Counselling Support

INTRODUCTION

Individuals experiencing homelessness or those in precarious housing situations are more likely to experience mental health issues due to systemic factors such as waitlists, existing gaps in housing policy, long-standing underfunding, a worsening overdose crisis, and scarcity of mental health resources (CMHA, 2021; Hwang, 2001). Mental health issues can precede the onset of homelessness, or worsen due to factors such as lack of income and employment (CMHA, 2022). Community-based mental health programs play a vital role in addressing these causes of hardship by providing needed social and emotional support and connecting with other community services that can assist in meeting needs.

THE KCSC PROGRAM

The KCSC is a new and innovative program created to respond to the significant community need for social support. The first stage was a partnership between the Salvation Army London Centre of Hope and King's University College's School of Social Work. It aims to address community needs by:

- Providing no-cost, low-barrier counselling services to shelter service users to better equip them for sustainable housing
- Providing practicum opportunities to undergraduate and graduate level social work students

WHY IS KCSC UNIQUE?

- It provides an unlimited number of no-cost counselling sessions
- It has been curated specifically to provide services to individuals experiencing homelessness or at risk of homelessness
- It is designed to address the significant issue of waitlists for services in our community
- It provides opportunities for students seeking placement in the community to complete their training programs
- It is a university-community partnership
- It utilizes a participatory action research approach

OBJECTIVE

The objective of this research is to examine the KCSC program from service users' perspectives. The following research questions were used to reach this objective:

1. What are the experiences of KCSC service users?
2. What is the impact of the KCSC for service users?
3. Does the KCSC address longstanding gaps in service provision?

RESEARCH SNAPSHOT, CONTINUED: KCSC COUNSELLING SUPPORT

METHODS

Qualitative data were gathered through semi-structured interviews of service users who received counselling support between January and July 2023, the first year KCSC operated. This study embraces both participatory action research (PAR) by including King's students in the study development and design as well as integrated knowledge translation (IKT) through the involvement of community partners, KCSC and the King's School of Social Work Professional Practicum Education Office in developing the KCSC program and research.

All service users involved in years one and two of the the KCSC program were offered the opportunity to provide informed consent to participate in the study. Service user participants were compensated for time and any expenses, through \$35 cash or a \$35 President's Choice gift card provided upon completion of the interview questions.

The majority of the semi-structured interviews were conducted in person at the KCSC clinic at the Salvation Army Centre of Hope, London by members of the research team. Interviews were also conducted by phone/Zoom based on service user preference. Interviews were audio recorded with informed consent.



PARTICIPANTS

KCSC service user participants included adults (age 18+) who received services from KCSC (n=23). Service users were diverse in terms of age, gender, sexual orientation, race, religion, ability, and education. The majority of participants were between the ages of 50 and 75 (n=16, 69.5%). Slightly more than half (or 60%) of the participants identified their gender as male (n=14), 26.1% (n=6) as female, and 13.0% (n=3) as non-binary. About 30% of the sample identified their sexual orientation as gay, other or preferred not to say (n=7). The vast majority of participants were white (n=19, 82.6%), while 13.0% (n=3) indicated they were mixed race. Slightly less than half of participants identified themselves as Catholic or Christian (n=11). More than half of participants identified their health as fair or poor (n=13, 56.5%) and 43.5% of the sample described themselves as having a disability.



RESEARCH SNAPSHOT, CONTINUED: KCSC COUNSELLING SUPPORT

FINDINGS

EXPERIENCES OF SERVICE USERS

GAPS IN SYSTEM KNOWLEDGE

Participants spoke about the ways in which lack of knowledge about the systems around them has impacted their ability to receive essential supports.

LACK OF SAFETY

Participants discussed how safety concerns in their immediate environments impacted their daily lives.

BEING UNDER-RESOURCED

Participants shared how being under-resourced served as a contributing factor to homelessness.

ONGOING IMPACTS OF TRAUMA

Participants spoke about the multitude of ways in which they were impacted by experiences of past or ongoing traumas.

"I don't think I've reached out, because I don't know where to reach."

"Yeah, too many [drug users]... and believe me, that is a safety concern [...] real bad safety concern."

"There is hardly any work for anybody, and there's nowhere to live, because nobody can afford it."

"No one is in public school saying, 'Well, I want to grow up, and be an addict, and homeless, and live on the streets.' It's an unfortunate by-product generally of some type of abuse or trauma [...]"

IMPACT OF KCSC SERVICES

A SAFE SPACE

Participants spoke about how the KCSC provided a safe, comfortable space separate from their day-to-day living environment.

FEELING RESPECTED

In addition to feelings of safety, KCSC participants shared that the KCSC was a space where they felt respected.

BEING ABLE TO "OPEN UP"

Participants also described the KCSC as a space where they were able to "open up", and share experiences that they had been unable to explore in the past.

"And as long as the center is open, I'm going to keep coming back. I love it here. [...] It gives me a chance to escape everything."

"I felt listened to, heard, and respected."

"I would recommend [KCSC] to anybody, 'cause they've been such a help for me. We sit and talk... like that's a big thing with me, being able to sit and open up like I do now. I never did before."

ADDRESSING SERVICE GAPS

ACCESSIBLE SUPPORT

Participants highlighted the accessibility of the KCSC, expressing that support was readily available when needed and flexible enough to meet participants' needs.

SYSTEM NAVIGATION

Participants highlighted that support received via the KCSC assisted them in effectively navigating systems, a barrier often cited to receiving effective support.

"FIRST TIMES"

Participants often described their experiences with the KCSC as a "first time" or a "start" on their journeys, wherein they were in a place to begin receiving the supports they needed.

"I knew that if I needed to talk, that I could come down and make an appointment or just walk in and say, 'I'm having a hard day.' I think it's a great resource... it was appreciated that when I needed to talk to somebody, there was somebody there."

"For me, I need help navigating the system, because the system changes every other day."

I was able to sit and talk to [counsellor] and get a lot of the stuff that I haven't talked about ever."



RESEARCH SNAPSHOT

Checking in on the Frontlines: A Mixed Methods Study of the Needs of Workers at the Frontlines of Human Services

KCSC'S WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT AND FRONTLINE SUPPORT PROGRAM

Frontline workers and organizational leaders who are supporting people experiencing/or at risk of homelessness and other vulnerable populations are a professional group supporting a low resourced community of service users. The Workforce Development and Frontline Support component of KCSC provides BSW and MSW practicum students with an opportunity to support service providers and organizational leaders within the health and homelessness sector across London. It is focused on exploring and addressing the needs and experiences of the workforce through research, program development and service delivery. More specifically, creating and implementing workforce development initiatives such as a community of practice, professional development opportunities, and other events. As the program evolves, one-on-

one counselling support for frontline workers will be introduced.

To ensure KCSC is engaged in evidence-informed service delivery to service providers and organizational leaders in the health and homelessness sector, we have launched an exploratory convergent multistage mixed methods study in which the first stage informs the subsequent stages of data collection (Fetters et al., 2013). Therefore, this study began with qualitative data gathered through focus groups and interviews of service providers (n=17) and organizational leaders (n=15) in the London area and beyond and will conclude with a national online survey. This will inform our understanding of the experiences and needs of the frontline workers and organizational leaders working in the health and homelessness sector.



This research will attempt to address a significant gap in attention to the needs of the workforce in this sector. This knowledge will inform the greater research community generally and more specifically, will inform the KCSC's Workforce Development and Frontline Support Program in providing support to frontline service providers and organization leaders in the human services sector.

RESEARCH SNAPSHOT, CONTINUED: CHECKING IN ON THE FRONTLINES

OBJECTIVES

The objectives of this study are to develop an understanding of the needs of direct service providers and organizational leaders supporting work within the homelessness sector. This study will seek to answer the following research questions:

- 1) What are the experiences and needs of the service providers and organizational leaders in doing this work?
- 2) What are the available resources for frontline workers and organizational leaders?
- 3) What are the resource challenges for frontline workers and organizational leaders?
- 4) What supports are currently available to the frontline workers and organizational leaders?
- 5) What supports are needed for the frontline workers and organizational leaders?

METHODS

This study involves an exploratory convergent multistage mixed methods design in which the first stage will inform the subsequent stages of data collection (Fetters et al., 2013). Mixed-method designs are frequently used to expand a scope of inquiry and improve the analytical power of applied research investigations (Sandelowski, 2000). Mixed methods approaches are especially effective in delineating results in applied fields of study (Lund, 2012). This study will also employ an integrated knowledge translation (IKT) approach and participatory action research (PAR) through community engagement, knowledge users engaged throughout the research process, and frontline

workers as participants, researchers, and students (Forchuk et al., 2011; Jull et al., 2017). IKT seeks to move from a researcher driven approach to a service driven approach to research in which research is co-produced and collaborative. The aim of IKT is to produce knowledge that is relevant and usable, to improve health and health systems (Preyde et al, 2013).

As described above, the first stage of this study included qualitative data gathered through focus groups and interviews with frontline service providers (n=17) and organizational leaders (n=15) to explore the experiences and needs of this frontline workforce. This data informed the second stage of the study, the development of an online national survey to understand the experiences and needs of frontline service providers and organizational leaders.

PARTICIPANTS

Recruitment for Stage 1 focused on two groups: 1) frontline workers working in the areas of homelessness and human services to vulnerable people sector and 2) organizational leaders in this sector. Stage 1 recruitment began with a convenience sample from the Built for Zero conference where the study was introduced and, with informed consent, focus groups were held for each of the two participant populations. In partnership with the City of London's Health and Homelessness Whole of Community System Response, including their Workforce Development Table, Indigenous Reference Table, and Strategy and Accountability Table, and The Centre for Research on Health Equity & Social Inclusion (CRHESI) at Western, subsequent opportunities to be involved in additional focus groups or interviews continued in-person and remotely to the point of saturation (Charmaz, 2006).

RESEARCH SNAPSHOT, CONTINUED: CHECKING IN ON THE FRONTLINES

MEASURES

Stage 1: A semi-structured focus group/interview guide was used in the Stage 1 focus groups and/or interviews and demographic questionnaire.

Stage 2: The knowledge gathered through Stage 1, and a review of the literature in social work and related disciplines such as nursing led to the development of an online survey instrument to elicit information on the experiences and needs of the frontline workers and organizational leaders across Canada in doing this work. A draft version of the online survey will be pilot-tested by a purposive sample of approximately 30 service providers and organizational leaders that will be developed in consultation with key stakeholders, including but not limited to The Canadian Alliance to End Homelessness, the City of London's Health and Homelessness Whole of Community System Response, including their Workforce Development Table, Indigenous Reference Table, and Strategy and Accountability Table and CRHESI. This will further aid in the development of the survey before the final version is distributed across Canada. This pilot testing, particularly by those who had contributed their knowledge through the focus groups, will enhance the ability of the tool, and therefore the research, to meet the needs of the community as well as provide a form of member-checking by stage 1 participants.

DATA ANALYSIS

Qualitative data will be analysed through reflexive thematic analysis (TA; Braun & Clarke, 2021). Quantitative data will be analysed through descriptive demographics as well as more advanced statistical analysis as appropriate for the data generated.

PROGRESS TO DATE

The first stage of this study is now complete with data gathered through focus groups and/or individual interviews. Through a partnership with Build for Zero and the Canadian Alliance to End Homelessness, two focus groups were held at the Built for Zero conference in London Ontario on March 27th, 2024. Recruitment for these focus groups was focused on both frontline workers and leaders in the area of homelessness and high-acuity populations. Focus groups for these two groups (frontline and leaders) were held separately. Online and in-person focus groups continued beyond the Built for Zero conference for participants in London and across Canada. On July 31, 2024, three final focus groups were held in London, Ontario. Recruitment for these focus groups was facilitated through ongoing partnerships with the City of London's Health and Homelessness Whole of Community System Response, including their Workforce Development Table, Indigenous Reference Table, and Strategy and Accountability Table, as well as, CRHESI. This stage 1 data collection continued as needed to inform the development of the online survey for service providers and organizational leaders and to the point of saturation of themes in the reflexive thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2021).

We are now in Stage 2, and an online survey, informed by the information collected in Stage 1, has been developed for distribution to service providers and organizational leaders across Canada. The survey is ready for pilot testing by a selection of approximately 30 local and national service providers and organizational leaders.

RESEARCH PREVIEW

WHAT'S COMING NEXT FOR KCSC RESEARCH?



The research snapshots above are part of a larger program of research that seeks to understand the impact and experience of those involved with and receiving services from the KCSC, including service users, practicum students, and community professionals.

King's Community Support Centre (KCSC): An Exploration of the Student Learning Experience



The KCSC program offers professional practicum experiences to BSW and MSW students to prepare them for social work practice. Students completing their practicums at KCSC provide individual and group counselling, psychoeducational groups, social support, and assistance with system navigation. This research will describe the experiences of students participating on the KCSC program, and the impacts on their learning. To date, 17 students have contributed their experiences. We are going to continue to collect data from students and use these data to inform program development and share what we learn in presentations and publications.

King's Community Support Centre (KCSC): A Process Evaluation of an Innovative University-Community Partnership



The KCSC is an innovative, university-community partnership that provides immediate, accessible, no-cost, counselling and social work support to those experiencing homelessness or housing insecurity in the London community, also while providing field experience to social work students via professional practicums. This research will investigate the implementation of the KCSC program, to understand how the program is being delivered, the activities involved, and the context in which it operates. To date, nine professionals have contributed their experiences. This will provide information to inform program development, improve the efficacy of the program, and guide future initiatives.



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

KCSC STUDENTS

We would like to acknowledge the significant work of all KCSC students who have contributed to KCSC research. We could not have completed this important work without you.

COMMUNITY PARTNERS



The Salvation Army
London Centre of
Hope



The Unity Project for
Relief of Homelessness
in London



Mission Services of
London - Men's
Mission



Canadian Alliance to End Homelessness



City of London

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