



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

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

2024 – 2025

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MEET KCSC TEAM



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

M.K. is the creator and Director of 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 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 BA, BSW, MSW, PhD, RSW

Dr. Jane Sanders is the lead researcher for KCSC Workforce Development, an Associate Professor, and Interim Director and Graduate Chair of 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.



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

We are pleased to share this year's KCSC Executive Summary, highlighting the continued growth, impact, and innovation of KCSC's efforts to support our community.

We extend our deepest gratitude to our generous donors for placing their trust and support in a program that is deeply committed to improving the lives of those most in need in our community. Your contributions are not just financial investments—they are powerful acts of compassion that drive real change. Thank you for being a vital part of this important work.

This year, we proudly hosted a student-led professional development event, The Duality of Grief which brought together over 200 helping professionals—an inspiring testament to the strength of our community and our shared commitment to advancing practice, knowledge, and care.

Our capacity to deliver services has grown significantly, allowing us to meet increasing demand while continuing to provide rich, hands-on learning opportunities for our social work students. These experiences prepare them to enter the profession with compassion, skill, and a strong sense of purpose.

Our valued research team continues to lead efforts that inform service provision and support for our community of helping professionals. Your dedication has been instrumental in advancing research that leads to evidence-based solutions and meaningful change.

We are especially encouraged by the expansion of our partnerships—each collaboration bringing deeper insight, broader reach, and more integrated approaches to addressing the needs of our most vulnerable populations. Thank you to all our partners for walking alongside us in this vital work.

As we close another impactful year at KCSC, it is both heartwarming and affirming to witness the trust placed in our student counselors by those seeking support. The engagement speaks volumes about the meaningful connections being formed and the safe, supportive spaces our students help create.

Together, we continue to move forward with purpose—guided by knowledge, empathy, and the unwavering belief in the power of community.

Yours in Service,

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INTRODUCTION

TO KING'S COMMUNITY SUPPORT CENTRE

OVERVIEW

King's Community Support Centre (KCSC) provides social work support to marginalized populations in the London community while offering rich social work practicums to **Bachelor of Social Work (BSW)** and **Master of Social Work (MSW)** students. The program was developed by King's University College School of Social Work's Professional Practicum Education Program in response to the City of London's **Health and Homelessness Whole of Community System Response Plan**. Students who have been placed with KCSC have found it a valuable learning opportunity, giving them a chance to hone skills in therapeutic approaches, community-based social work, research, and knowledge mobilization.

KCSC PROGRAM UPDATES

From 2024-2025, KCSC expanded its workforce development program for frontline workers to include one-on-one counselling and an annual professional development event. KCSC also expanded its counselling services outside of shelter.

KCSC's new community partners this year include St. John the Evangelist Anglican Church, Rotholme Family Shelter, and Youth Opportunities Unlimited. We have supported individuals accessing St. John's outreach program, families staying at Rotholme, and youth at Youth Opportunities Unlimited shelters.

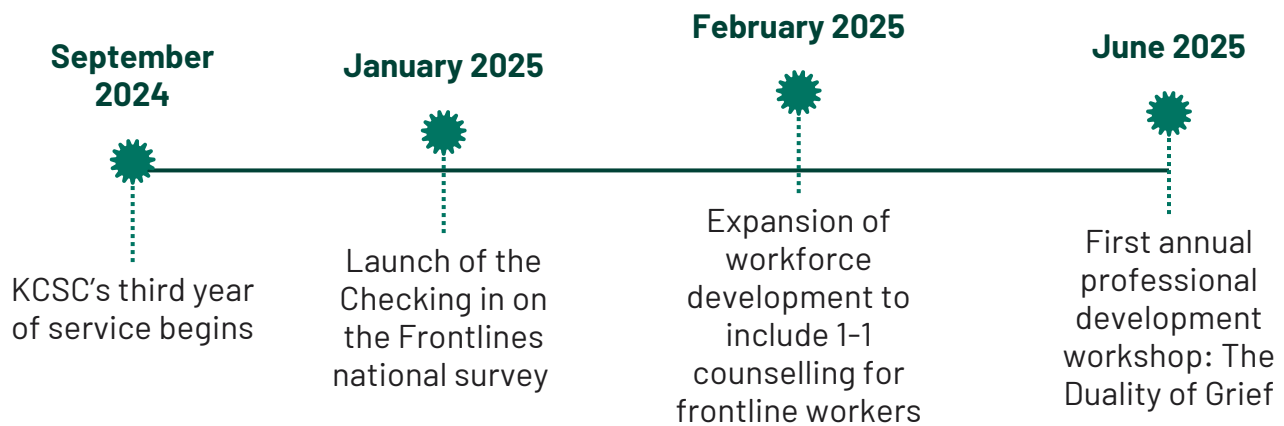
WHY IS KCSC UNIQUE?

- It provides no-cost, low-barrier counselling sessions
- It has been curated to provide support to service users in strengthening mental health and honing skills to find and/or maintain stable housing
- It is designed to address the significant issue of waitlists for services in our community
- It provides opportunities for social work students seeking practicums in the community
- It is a university-community partnership
- It utilizes a participatory action research approach
- It offers resources to support and augment the skills of frontline workers



Thank you to Salvation Army, London Centre of Hope for our new sign!

KCSC BY THE NUMBERS



70%↑

Increase in referrals received by KCSC from last year (324 vs 191)



884

Counselling sessions completed



124

Welcome Weekdays offering drop-in community and social support



3796

Welcome Weekday visitors



25

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



9052

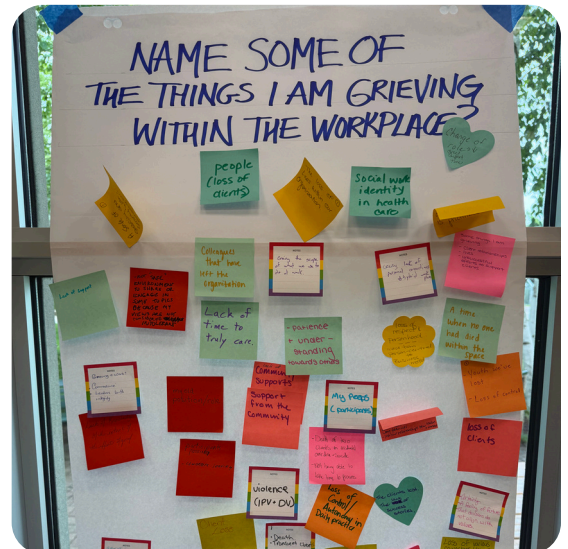
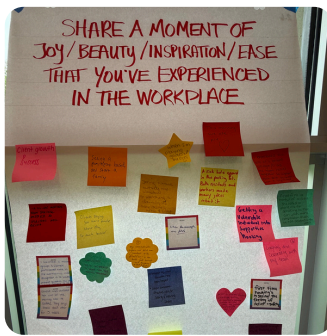
Hours of practicum completed at KCSC

Note: All statistics are from August 1st, 2024 to July 31st, 2025

THE DUALITY OF GRIEF: A PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT EVENT

Over 200 helping professionals. 15 outstanding student leaders. Two powerful days of learning.

In June 2025, KCSC hosted a **free** professional development event at King's University College, drawing over **200** helping professionals across the sector! With insight from co-facilitator Cheryl Wituik of Mourning Breaks and academic expertise from King's Department of Thanatology, Dr. Eunice Gorman, and School of Social Work, Dr. Laura Lewis, the event tackled the vital topic of **grief** and **loss**—blending deep scholarship with practical relevance. Supported by 15 passionate BSW and MSW students, the day was a shining example of **leadership**, **compassion**, and **professionalism**. King's and KCSC continue to be recognized as a hub for **collaboration**, **innovation**, and **impact**—and we're so proud of the students, staff, and partners who made this day unforgettable.





RESEARCH SNAPSHOT

An Exploration of the Impact of KCSC Counselling Support

OVERVIEW

Since the program's inception, we have been engaged in research to determine the impact of the program on service users and student learning. We have completed semi-structured interviews with service users, students and program administrators. Our research, led by Dr. Carrie Smith, embraces both participatory action research and integrated knowledge translation by including students in all aspects of the study development and design. Over 30 students have co-produced the research by participating in research design, ethics applications, data collection, analysis, and dissemination of findings. This collaborative work has served as a foundation for future research, informing the ongoing expansion of KCSC and our work with vulnerable communities while contributing to the evidence base of effective interventions for individuals experiencing poverty, housing insecurity and related issues.

PROCESS

We are in the process of completing analysis of 20 service user interviews. Preliminary analysis provides rich descriptions of experiences of those who access KCSC services. They described their experiences of homelessness, sharing their feelings of a lack of safety and being under-resourced.

Participants described the impact of KCSC services as providing a safe space where they feel respected and can "open up" about the challenges they are facing.

Service users also spoke at length about how the program addresses service gaps by providing accessible support, assistance with system navigation and for some, access to counselling for the first time.

We will continue to analyze data and interviews from students and program administrators in order to demonstrate the impact of KCSC.

"We need more affordable housing. Either the government's got to cut back rent... Because \$1100 for a 1-bedroom is absolutely ridiculous. Either they got to cut back rent or increase the money that we're given. OW you get \$700.00 a month. You can't live on that."

"I felt listened to, understood and respected, I definitely didn't feel like I was being looked down on. I was being talked to, not talked at which is very helpful for me."

"I'm glad it's here. Because I don't even want to think about where I would be mentally if it wasn't."

"Yeah, whatever I need, I just come here. And she put in a word for me to get my room upstairs. And it happened a week later."



RESEARCH SNAPSHOT

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

The Checking in on the Frontlines study is a mixed methods exploration of the experiences and resource needs of service providers and organizational leaders in the health and homelessness sector, conducted by a team, led by Dr. Jane Sanders, from the School of Social Work at King's University College at Western. The overall aim of this research is to address the significant gap in our attention to the needs of this workforce, and findings will support systemic change across and beyond London. Thirty-two participants (17 direct service workers, 15 organizational leaders) engaged in focus groups and interviews. This knowledge, along with prior surveys, community consultation and review of literature, informed a national online survey completed by 1,324 individuals between January and June 2025.

Preliminary analysis

Participants told stories of the impact to well-being and experiences of moral distress, significantly impacted by resource limitations, staff feel unable to do the right thing and provide adequate support due to systemic constraints. The national survey found that 44% (n=583) of respondents experienced moral distress weekly to monthly; only 15% (n=194) had never experienced moral distress.

Funding instability and inadequate housing were identified as resource barriers to the work. Twenty three percent (n=298) of survey respondents identified not having adequate resources to do their job, with an additional 41% (n=555) identifying they only partially had the necessary resources.

Safety, the work was at times described as distressing, challenging, and a safety risk. While 50% (n=673) of those surveyed identified their organization had safety protocols, 36% (n=478) felt more was needed.

Participants reported inadequate pay, emotional strain, and a lack of access to mental health benefits, noting challenges included high caseloads, bureaucratic hurdles, difficulties navigating funding/grants, public stigma, and staffing shortages. Of survey respondents 26% (n=343) earned under \$50,000 annually; 40% (n=528) could meet daily needs for food and shelter but not save or cover additional health costs. Sixty-seven percent (n=892) identified that their compensation was inadequate for the work and associated risks.

Supervisory support was inconsistent for both service providers and leaders. Notably, 46% (n=603) of those surveyed had only 1–5 years experience in the sector; highlighting the need for support.

Despite these issues, a deep commitment to this work was expressed in focus groups and only 5% (n=55 of 1,079) of survey participants planned to leave the field within two years, underscoring this workforce's dedication despite significant challenges. This represents an opportunity to address these challenges and support their dedication to those caught in the health and homelessness crisis.

UPCOMING PUBLICATIONS

WHAT'S COMING NEXT FOR KCSC RESEARCH?

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



KCSC 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 KCSC program, and the impacts on their learning. To date, 17 students have contributed their experiences. We will continue collecting data from students to inform program development and share findings in presentations and publications.

King's Community Support Centre (KCSC): Checking in on the Frontlines



In order to provide evidence-based services to the workforce through KCSC, we engaged in research to understand their needs while providing essential services. We are in the process of analyzing findings from our mixed methods study (focus groups and a national survey) of the experiences and resource needs of service providers and organizational leaders at the frontlines of the health and homelessness sector. The information shared by those at the frontline will be incorporated in a variety of knowledge sharing strategies, including presentations, inclusion in the Health and Homelessness report, and publications.

Upcoming Publications

- Baird, S., Smith, C., Sanders, J., Arundel, M.K., *Herbert, L., *Schwass, C., *MacGowan, S. (in progress). King's Community Support Centre: An Exploration of Social Work Student Experience.
- Sanders, J.E., *Logan, P., Smith, C., Baird, S., Arundel, M.K., . (in progress). Supervision at the frontlines'
- Sanders, J.E., *Logan, P., Smith, C., Baird, S., Arundel, M.K., . (in progress). Safety, moral distress and funding while working with those most vulnerable to homelessness
- Sanders, J.E., *Logan, P., Smith, C., Baird, S., Arundel, M.K., . (in progress). Social contexts of practice, implications for those working at the frontlines of the health and homelessness sector
- Smith, C., Baird, S., Sanders, J., Arundel, M.K., *Herbert, L., *MacGowan, S., & *Schwass, C., (in progress). King's Community Support Centre: An Exploration of Service User Experiences.
- Smith, C., Baird, S., Sanders, J., Arundel, M.K., *Herbert, L., & *Schwass, C. (in progress). King's Community Support Centre: An Exploration of Community Impact.
- Smith, C., Baird, S., Sanders, J., Arundel, M.K., & *Herbert, L. (in progress). King's Community Support Centre: A Process Evaluation of an Innovative University-Community Partnership
- Smith C., Baird, S., Sanders, J., Arundel, M.K., *Herbert, L., (in progress). Lessons from co-creating a qualitative participatory action study of a student-led counselling clinic.



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

KCSC STUDENTS

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

KCSC DONORS

Again, to our donors, thank you for your generosity!

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