

Quality Matters

Issue #1 June 2026



A note from our Director: Professor Karen Jones

Welcome to the first edition of the QSO PRU Newsletter. We hope this newsletter will provide a regular opportunity to share updates, insights and achievements from across the PRU, as well as highlight the excellent work being undertaken by our teams and collaborators. We aim to release new issues quarterly, our next issue is due September 2026.

In this edition, we celebrate several important milestones.

- Our colleagues working on the **Martha's Rule** project recently submitted their interim report, marking a significant step forward.
- Interviews for the qualitative strand of the **Better Care Fund** project have begun, and recruitment continues (please do share the flyer below with your contacts).
- The team working on the **Developing Indicators for Integrated Care** project are starting recruitment and will be using NIHR Be Part of Research to help with this process.
- The team working on the **Carers Outcomes** project are busy analysing study data and generating valuable insights.

We hope you enjoy reading this edition and learning more about the breadth of work taking place across the QSO PRU. We are organising an in person meeting towards the end of the year, so look out for that.

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Meet the Researcher: An Interview with Jinbao Zhang



Which QSO PRU project are you working on?

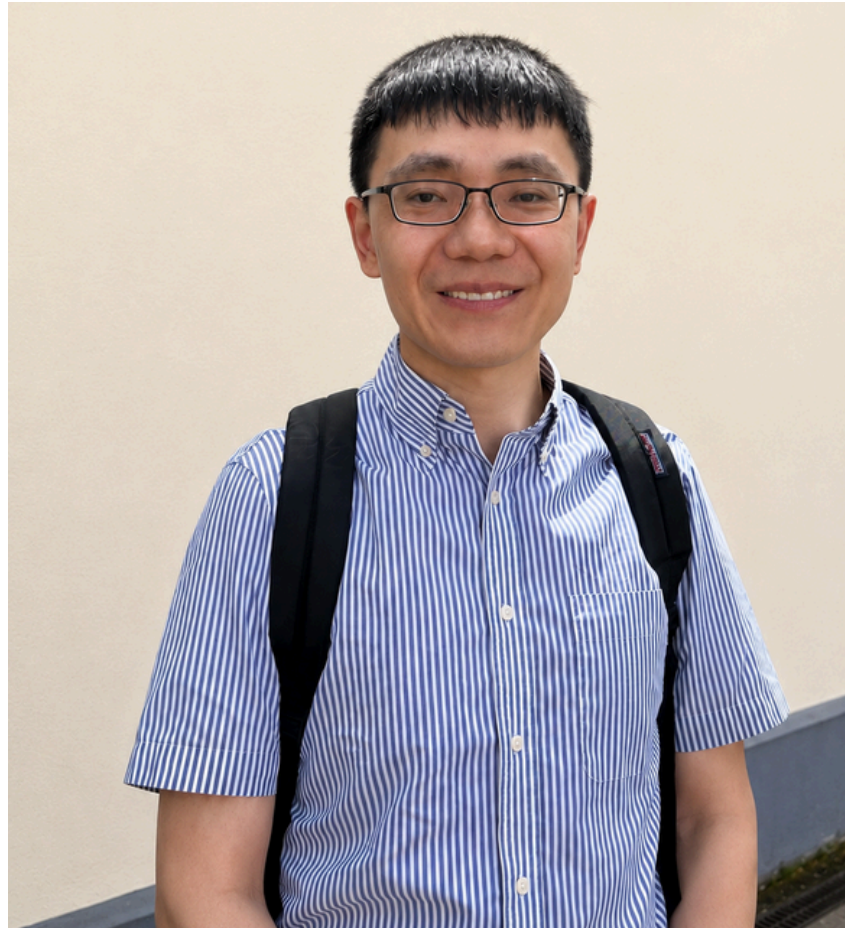
I'm working on the "System-level evaluation of the Better Care Fund [BCF]" project.

Can you summarise your research in one or two sentences?

Our project looks at whether joint working between the NHS and local councils through the BCF brings benefits for health and social care systems. We are especially interested in whether it helps use resources more effectively and supports timely hospital discharge.

What research methods do you use?

Our project initially focused on assessing the policy impact of the BCF. We employed quantitative methods, with a particular emphasis on causal inference approaches such as instrumental variable techniques. These methods helped us to identify whether the observed system-level improvements could be attributed to the BCF rather than to other confounding factors.



What does an average working day look like for you?

Most days, my work involves a mix of reading, data analysis, writing, and planning the next steps of the project. I spend time reading papers and reports, working with data, and writing up findings. I also learnt about new methods that helped me answer my research questions in a stronger way.

Part of my day is also about planning what comes next, such as deciding which analysis to run, preparing for meetings, discussing ideas with colleagues, setting timelines, and checking whether the project is on track. I like that my work includes both quiet, focused time and opportunities to think through ideas with others.

What have been your highlights so far while working on the PRU?

A highlight for me was attending a BCF mini-conference in June 2025 and sharing our project findings with policymakers from the Department of Health and Social Care. It was exciting to see our work being discussed outside the research team and to hear how it could be useful for policy and practice. I also enjoyed the chance to listen to different perspectives, understand what questions matter most to people working in this area, and meet other researchers working on similar topics. It made the project feel very relevant and showed how research can contribute to real discussions about health and social care.

What's next for your research within the PRU?

Next, I'll be working on a home care project about service quality and client choice. I'll look at whether improvements in service quality help home care agencies attract more clients. The findings could be useful for policymakers by showing how people use quality-rating information when choosing care, and whether these ratings guide their decisions. I hope the findings can also help show how quality ratings work in practice and how they might better support people's choices.

Why did you get into research?

I got into research because I wanted to do work that could make a difference. I'm interested in health and social care, and I like how research can help us understand what people need and how services can better support them. For me, the best part of research is that findings can be used in the real world. They can inform policy and practice, improve services, and hopefully benefit people's lives.

What do you enjoy doing outside of work?

I enjoy playing and watching badminton matches. I love the speed, skill, and excitement of the sport. I was recently inspired by Victor Lai from Canada, who won the men's singles title at the Super 1000 event in Indonesia at such a young age. It was amazing to see a young player compete with so much confidence and professionalism. I also enjoy reading, especially novels. It is one of my favourite ways to relax.

What's a fun or unexpected fact about you?

A fun fact about me is that I can spend hours watching badminton matches, not just the finals, but even the earlier rounds. I enjoy seeing how different players think, move, and adjust their strategy on court. Sometimes the earlier matches are just as exciting because you get to discover new players and follow their progress. It is also a nice way for me to relax and switch off.

Martha's Rule in Action: An Independent Evaluation



An independent evaluation examines how Martha's Rule is being introduced across three NHS Acute Hospitals, the key factors that help or hinder implementation, and stakeholders' experiences. The interim findings show patients, families and staff think that Martha's Rule strengthens communication and supports more collaborative care. However, in some groups, challenges were observed around awareness, access, communication, variation in use and added pressure on staff. This research provides valuable learning opportunities for future rollout and patient safety policy and has helped shape national guidance, including the Martha's Rule core standards.

You can download the report [here](#).

EDI Update

At a recent QSO PRU management meeting, we reflected on equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) across the PRU's projects. There was unanimous agreement that the EDI checklist has been a valuable tool, helping to embed EDI considerations throughout our work.

The discussion also highlighted several ongoing challenges, including recruitment and addressing the underrepresentation of certain demographic groups. Other barriers identified included accessibility limitations associated with some software platforms and constraints on incorporating EDI considerations when working within existing datasets.

Looking ahead, there remains a strong ambition to provide further EDI training and support opportunities, potentially through a dedicated webinar.

[Express your interest here](#)

NIHR Brand Refresh

As many of you will be aware, the NIHR has recently introduced a brand refresh. As a result, we have been working hard to update our communications channels and materials to align with the new branding.

We now have a new logo, along with refreshed templates for reports, posters, and other communications materials. We continue to update the [QSO PRU website](#), too. Thank you for your patience as we ensure everything is updated correctly. And if you have any questions or spot anything that isn't quite right, please email us: Molly (m.lambourn@kent.ac.uk) or Amanda Roberts (A.S.Roberts@kent.ac.uk).

Please take some time to familiarise yourself with the rebrand and new resources. They are all available [here](#). 5

Patient and Public Involvement and Engagement



In NIHR QSO PRU, our vision is for meaningful [patient and public involvement](#) and engagement, where interactions between the public and researchers facilitate a process of two-way learning and subsequent improvement of the relevance, quality and value of the research and subsequent health and social care policy. Where possible, we are committed to involving the public from early research design and development, through to delivery and communication.

Any PPIE-related questions?

Contact Sarah Birch S.J.Birch@kent.ac.uk

Embedding PPIE in all we do

Our current area of focus is making sure that our PPIE members have an opportunity to be involved in dissemination activities. We are asking our project teams to consider any upcoming dissemination events and whether they can be supported by our Research Advisors.

Better Care Fund: Recruitment Open



System-level Evaluation of the Better Care Fund (BCF): A Qualitative Study We need your help to shape the future of BCF!

1. What is this study about?

Explore how the BCF has been delivered in local systems, such as:

- mechanisms of integration
- design & delivery of universal and targeted support via Support Programme
- enablers, barriers, and BCF impact

2. Who can take part?

- ✓ Local BCF leads, commissioners, and planners

please scan for more information →



3. What does taking part involve?

Participation is **completely voluntary**. Participants will take part in an **interview** (online, by telephone, or in person) lasting up to one hour **or** a focus group (up to 1.5 hours), between April-July. All information will be kept **confidential** and **anonymous**. We will **share with you any quotes** we would like to include in an output.

4. What happens next?

To participate or for any questions, please contact Lizzie Woodward (E.Welch@kent.ac.uk) and Georgios Mamolis (G.Mamolis@kent.ac.uk)

Conferences

In April, Michele Peters presented at the **International Conference for Integrated Care** in Birmingham. Her presentation, 'A Core Outcome Set to assess benefits of integration for people with complex health and care needs: Identifying what to measure' was well received.

Michele said:

'The conference was very stimulating with a lot of research and interest on measuring outcomes of integration. It was a good networking opportunity as the conference is attended by academics, front line professionals, policymakers, thinktanks, charities, and patients and carers.'

Michele has previously shared her top tips for presenting, see them [here](#).



Birmingham Library on Cetenary Square- Photo Credit: Michele Peters

Upcoming Events

We are excited to share some upcoming conferences where some project teams hope to be presenting:

- Health Services Research UK – 30th June to 1st July 2026
- The International Long-Term Care Policy Network (ILPN) – 9th to 11th September 2026
- International Forum for Quality and Safety - 20-22 April 2027

Please let us know if you have any exciting events planned so we can share the details with our QSO PRU colleagues.

DHSC Updates

In May, members of the management team met with DHSC and NIHR colleagues for the oversight meeting, chaired by Omar Idriss. The meeting provided Karen and Michele the opportunity to present updates on two of the QSO PRU projects: homecare choices and carer outcomes.

Call to action!

We are always looking for news to share! 'If you have any project news, updates or top tips we could include in our next issue or via our Instagram pages please email: Molly (m.lambourn@kent.ac.uk) or Amanda (A.S.Roberts@kent.ac.uk) to send in your QSO activities and updates.



Keep in touch



<http://www.qso.ac.uk/>



[quality_safety_outcomes](https://www.instagram.com/quality_safety_outcomes)



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QSO on Instagram



Birmingham Library on Centenary Square



Disclaimer

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