ARC West short course and online learning materials survey

Authors: Rob Grieve, Julie Mytton, Zoe Trinder-Widdess

Introduction / Background

The ARC West Training and Capacity Building (TCB) team have been running regular free online face to face short courses and providing online learning materials since 2015, which have attracted more than 2,500 course attendances.

Training and capacity building at ARC West mainly promotes the development of skills in understanding, using and producing evidence for the health and social care, public health and commissioning workforce, as well as the voluntary sector. The training portfolio also includes four well received communications courses.

In the year 1 April 2022 to 31 March 2023, a total of 297 participants attended 22 short training courses, which were mainly live online training, with two courses run in person at Whitefriars. The online courses reached a wide geographical audience, with ~50% of participants from outside of the area, including attendees from Staburo GmbH (Research Institute in Munich), Bern University, Makerere University (Uganda) and HEPS Uganda.

New courses introduced for 2022/2023 included Health Economics, Quantitative Evaluation of non-randomised studies, Introduction to Realist Evaluation, Infographics and Developing your communication Strategy. For those courses with course evaluations available, most had an overall rating of between three and four (maximum), five courses receiving an overall rating of four.

To ensure that our courses and online learning materials continue to be fit for purpose and meet participants' needs we conducted a survey.

The purpose of the survey was to:

1. evaluate our current short courses and online learning materials
2. enable us to meet future learning needs by identifying what type of courses and/or online learning materials participants would like in the future.

Method

Members of the ARC West TCB and communications team designed an online MS forms survey with 11 questions. The survey was promoted through a news story published on the ARC West website and Twitter feed. We also approached potential participants via our previous course participants mailing list.

The survey was conducted from Wednesday 8 March to Monday 10 April 2023.

Results

Ninety-two people responded to the survey.

Participant characteristics

Most participants (79/92, 86%) use or produce research evidence in their job roles. Just over half of the respondents were employed in the Health and Social Care sector (47/92, 51%) with the next largest employment sector in Academia (29/92, 32%) (Fig.1).
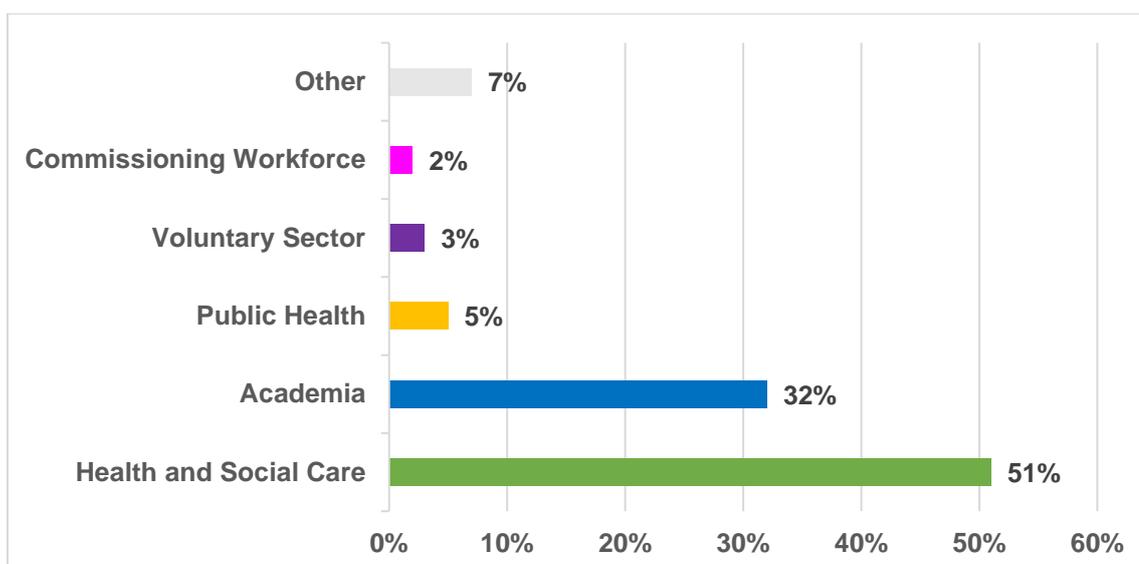

Fig. 1. Participant employment sector. Figures are presented as a % of valid responses, (n =92 responses to this question).

The range of roles was varied, and many participants held multiple roles. Of those participants who said they only had one role, the commonest role was as a researcher (28/92, 30%). A similar proportion (32/92, 35%) held other roles. (Fig.2). See appendix 1 for a full list of roles.
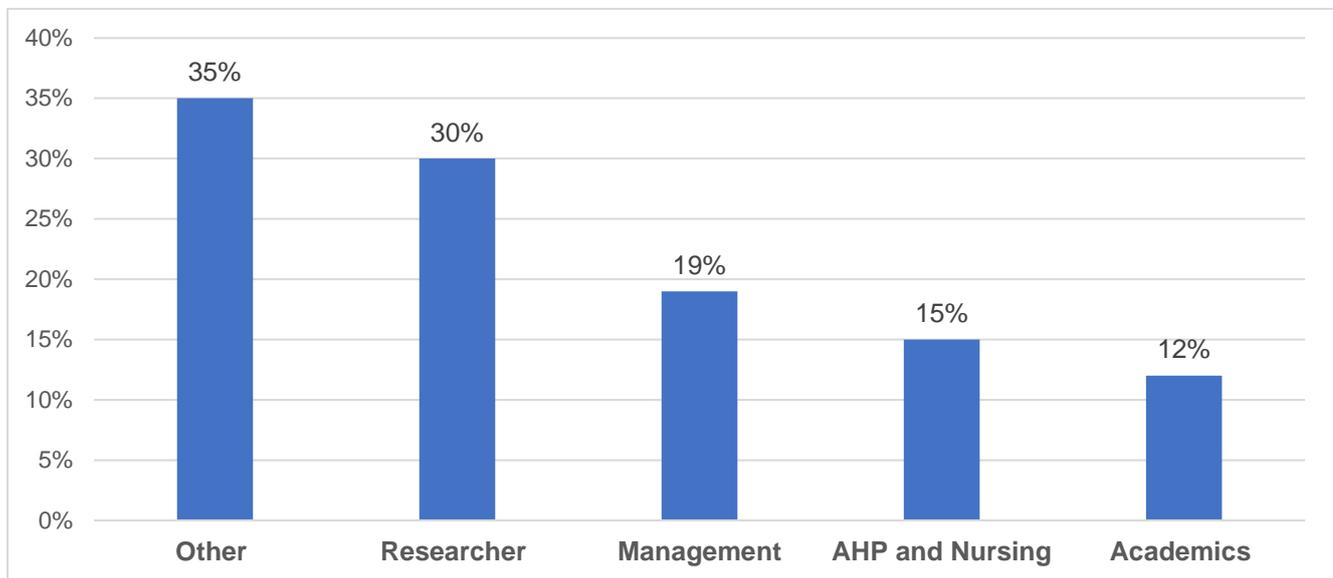

Fig. 2. Overview of participant roles, (n=92 responses to this question).

Interest in attending a course and delivery preference

Between 38 to 62% of respondents were interested in attending a short course related to one of the four **research themes** (Healthier childhoods, Integrated and optimal care, Mental health and Public health and prevention) and preferred an online delivery.

Similarly, 48 to 56% of respondents were interested in attending a short course related to one of the four **methodological themes** (Applied data science, Behavioural and qualitative science, Evidence and health economics) and preferred an online delivery.

For our 13 current short courses, most participants (54 to 68%) were interested in attending and preferred online compared to in person delivery.
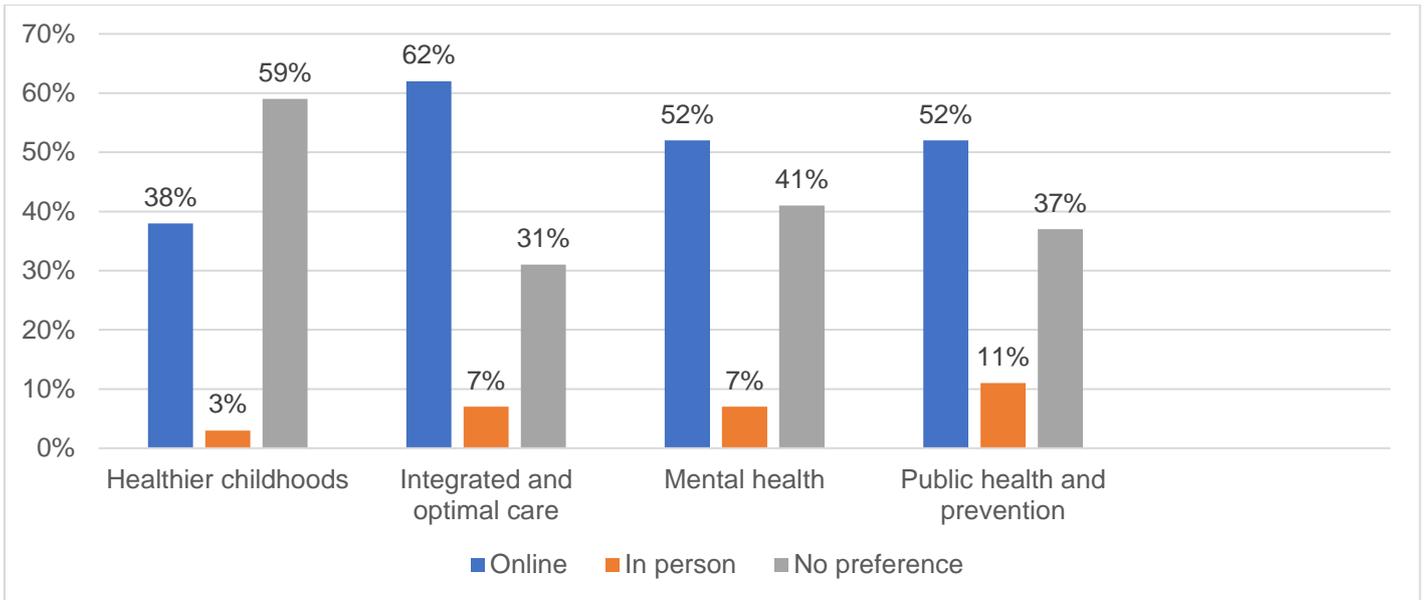
Fig.3. Interest in attending a course and delivery preference for one of the four research themes, (n=81 responses to this question).
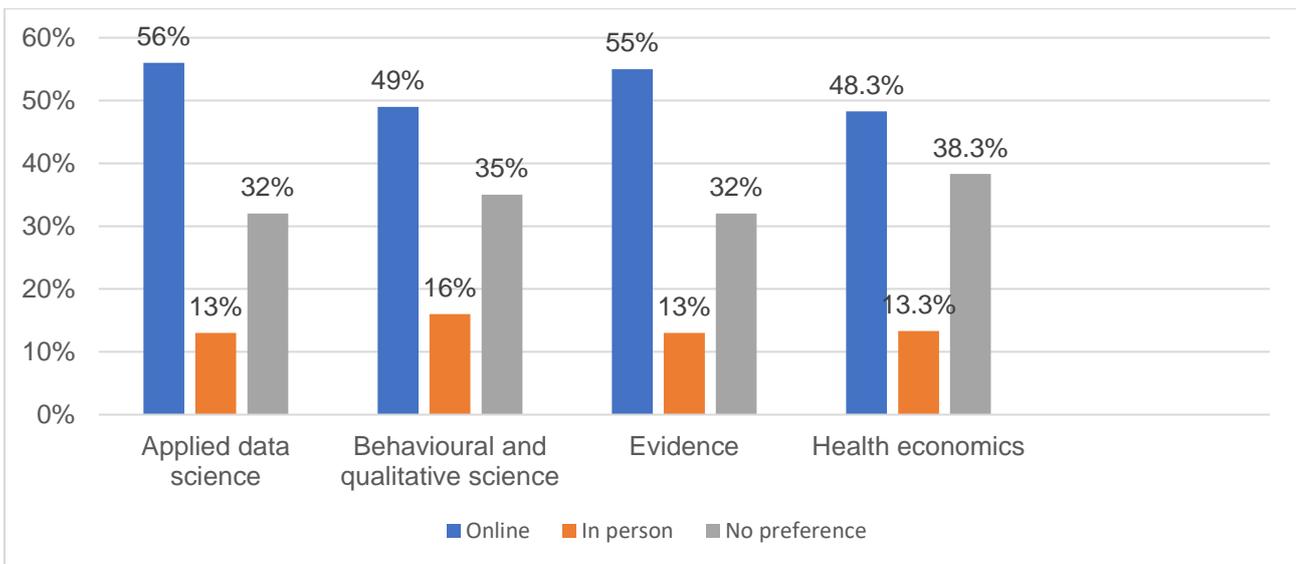

Fig. 4. Interest in attending a course and delivery preference for one of the four methodological teams (n=83 responses to this question).
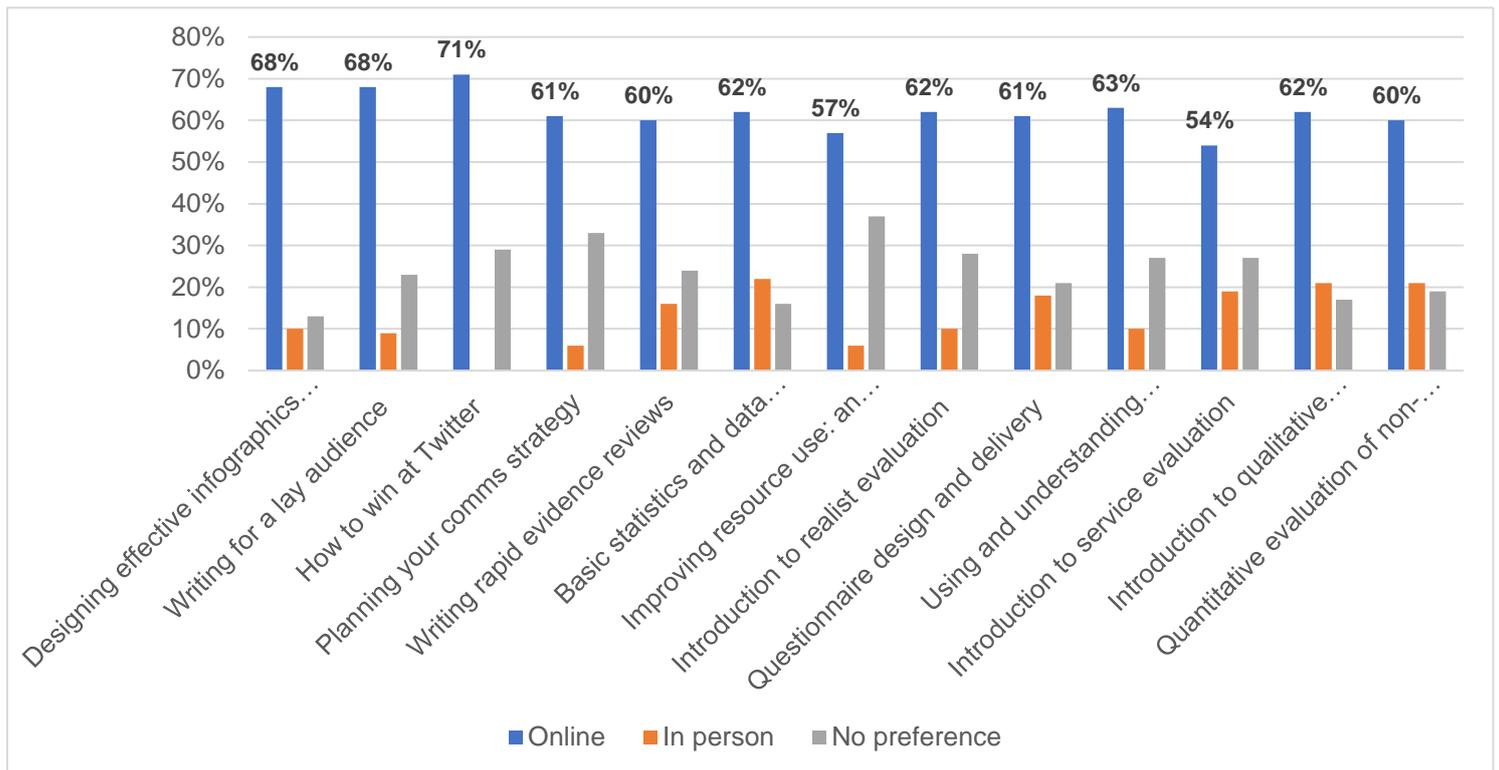
Fig. 5. Interest in attending a current short course and delivery preference, (n=87 responses to this question).

Knowledge acquisition and recommendation for courses/online learning materials

Four of our 13 courses attended by respondents, achieved a 100% "Very satisfied", 7 courses were rated from 44 to 70% for "Very satisfied", 5 courses were rated as "Satisfied" (20 to 44%), and 5 as "Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied" (5 to 50%) for knowledge gained. Only 5 responses from a total of 53 responses (9%) across all 13 courses included "Dissatisfied/Very dissatisfied" rating for knowledge acquisition. Knowledge satisfaction rates will be reported to each course individually.

For the eight examples of online learning materials, all were identified as "Very satisfied" (20 to 67%) or "Satisfied" (20 to 75%). Only two examples of online learning materials were also identified as "Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied" (25 to 60%).

The average score for recommending the online learning materials to a friend or colleague was 9/10 (57 responses), with a similar score in recommending online learning materials (35 responses).

Suggestions for short course and online learning materials

Seventy-one respondents offered ideas for short courses or online learning resources, 20 respondents stated they had no further suggestions for new short courses/online learning materials,

some stating they were happy with the present portfolio. The suggestions for future courses and online resources were comprehensive and divided into broad themes. Please see Table 1 for the full list of broad themes and short course and online learning material recommendations.

Research (general)
• Research ethics
• Implementation research
• Personalised care, applied to research
• Trauma-informed research practice
• Influencing the healthcare agenda through research
• Impact for published research
• Different routes to PhD
• Research for commissioners - OR how to get research to commissioners
• Practical approaches to tracking research impact
• Research finance
• Developing a research proposal
• How to use reference mangers and different types (NVIVO/ref manager)
• Conducting research involving the NHS
• Research methods, research processes and how to create and maintain effective studies
• Effective writing for research applications
• Available sources of funding for research
• Introductory courses are useful for ECRs or people new to a field/ method
• On online resource for effectively introducing a trial to potential participants
• How to set up studies
Clinician focussed
• Implementation for AHPs
• How to optimise sustainable implementation of evidence
• Research methods for clinicians
• How to use evidence in clinical practice
• Implementation in clinical practice
• Peer support from other clinical academics
• Something accessible for non-researchers/ nursing staff

PPI, engagement, inclusion, and diversity

- All aspects of PPIE

- Elements covering PPI and EDI at the research design stage

- How best to involve local people in the development and sustainability of their local community centre/hall or even council

- Any learning related to PPI

- Engaging groups that research typically fails to include

- Community engagement/citizen science

- How to include people who lack capacity in research studies

- Working with under-served communities

- PPIE training

Design, methodology and analysis

- Pre-testing of questionnaires (different methods) and research study design with focus on sample sizes and methods of recruitment.

- What is ethnography?

- A guide to different types of evaluations.

- What is inclusive (participatory) research?

- Access to a research methods/methodology community in a local AHSN (if not yours).

- Mixed methods evaluations

- Cognitive interviews to validate survey questions

- Intervention development

- "People in practice and long-time researchers have introductions and often even methods theory covered, they either need advance courses in their areas, or if wanting to expand skill sets they need workshops and examples in a new topic or method. My favourite courses have been where I did the work through the course and was given examples and templates."

- Systematic reviews. This could include synthesis and quality appraisal

- Meta analysis techniques

- Access to statistics and affordable statistical software (in particular multi variate analysis)

- Further statistical courses

- Qualitative data analysis

Communication

- Speaking to the media

- A course related to trial advertising for different audiences and using different media types

- How to encourage participation from under-represented minorities, including appropriate language to be used in comms messaging

- Essentially how to give good trial talks for those new to research

- Online infomercials of what we do, for public and partners, ideally developed with their input

Admin and business skills

- Managing Large documents

- How to build a business case for creating Clinical Academic AHP posts

- Workshops on using software - i.e NVivo, STATA, EXCEL

- Effective team working

- Report writing

- Writing a business case

Other comments

- "Some comms material promoting your educational offer."

- "Can you run the writing a comms strategy course more often."

- "As ever the success of these courses relies on the individual delivering them - I've been lucky enough to attend a couple of Zoe's courses, and she even specifically tailored the delivery of her plain English training for a group of MSc students I was working with. The content, Zoe's experience, (and of course her sparkling personality) were all perfect."

- "Better publicity of courses, I've worked in research delivery for 13 years and only just found out about your courses."

- "Depends on who the target audience is, if it's ECRs or Midcareer researchers or partner organisations and their staff or the public."

- "Continue to do what you're doing with appropriately pitched learning materials for clinicians doing service evaluation."

Table 1: Responses for short course and online learning resources suggestions (n=91 responses to this question).

Key take home messages

Please see results section for specific descriptive statistics.

o Most participants in this survey used or produced research evidence in their present role, with just over half employed in the Health and Social Care sector, with the next largest employment sector in Academia. The range of roles was varied, with many participants holding multiple roles.

- Most respondents in this survey were interested in attending our current short courses. There was a clear majority preference for online compared to in person delivery.
- The knowledge satisfaction rate for our short courses and online learning resources was high.
- Most respondents were likely (average 9/10) to recommend a short course or online learning materials to a friend or colleague.
- The response rate and suggestions for further short courses and online learning materials was comprehensive and is the evidence needed to inform future training and research capacity building at ARC West.

Overall, our portfolio of short courses and online learning materials is meeting the needs of our partners and others in the health and care sector. This survey has helped us further identify the type of courses and/or online learning materials participants would like in the future.

Next steps

Members of the ARC West TCB team will meet to review the findings of this survey and decide:
- Should we maintain our present portfolio of courses and online learning materials?
- How can we improve our present portfolio provision?
- From the many suggestions which course/online learning resources should we introduce in future?
- Is there any research, clinical, public or patient groups that are underrepresented in out TCB portfolio?
- Disseminate this survey report to the wider ARC team and encourage feedback and further TCB suggestions.

Acknowledgements

Thank you to all respondents for taking the time to input into this survey and proving us with valuable insights into our TCB provision. Thanks to our Training Co-ordinator Jon Kerslake for helping design and distribute the survey.

Academics (n=11)	AHP and Nursing (n=14)	Management (n=18)	Researcher (n=28)	Other (n=32)
Senior lecturer Senior lecturer Senior lecturer Senior lecturer Lecturer Professor Academic Researcher and Academic in healthcare Professor Lecturer Lecturer	Speech & Language Therapist Physiotherapist Physiotherapist Physiotherapist Dietitian Physiotherapist Consultant - Physiotherapist Occupational Therapist Radiographer Physiotherapist Occupational therapist Radiographer Consultant Occupational Therapist/ Advanced Physiotherapy Practitioner in Primary Care	Senior trial manager Communications Manager Operations Manager Clinical Trials Programme Manager Centre Manager Trial Manager Project Manager Chief Operating Officer Chief Operating Officer Project Manager Programme Manager Programme Manager Programme Manager Programme Manager R&D Manager Programme Manager Director of Allied Health Professionals Head of Research & Development for Therapy	Senior Research Evaluator Research Fellow Senior Research Fellow Senior Research Fellow Research sister Research Fellow Senior Research Associate Research Fellow Senior Research Associate Head of Research Research student Researcher Research Nurse Senior Research Associate PPIE or PV lead clinical research practitioner Research nurse Researcher Research Research Practitioner Early researcher* Research nurse Research physiotherapist Senior Clinical Research Practitioner OT Therapy Research Assistant Research Practitioner Researcher ARC NCE PCAF Fellow Evaluation Trial Portfolio Lead	Public involvement coordinator SPCR Programme Officer Centre Administrator and Communications Officer Patient and Public Involvement Associate Lay advisor Public Health Principal- Intelligence Librarian PPI contributor Communications and Engagement and Clinical Effectiveness NIHR Research Design Service Comms Officer Administrator Senior and ICS advanced practice lead IGRT and SABR advanced practice therapeutic Simulation Fellow ICS Lead for Advanced Practice Senior eating disorders clinician Clinical Lead for team of BCFS at the RNHRD/RUH and Public Involvement Lead for Learning and Teaching College of Health Science and Society UWE Art Psychotherapist Health Protection Practitioner Lead Health Promotion Project Officer GP Technical Officer Science Writer PhD student Consultant colorectal cancer surgeon

Table 2: Survey participant role.