



SWEDISH AGENCY FOR HEALTH  
TECHNOLOGY ASSESSMENT AND  
ASSESSMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES

**FORTE:**

Swedish Research Council for  
Health, Working Life and Welfare

# PRIORITIES FOR RESEARCH ON SOCIAL SERVICES

Perspectives from users, policy-makers and  
practitioners

# Preface

In partnership with the Swedish Agency for Health Technology Assessment and Assessment of Social Services (SBU), Forte has investigated what social services managers, service user organisations and interest groups consider the most urgent research questions in the social services. The goal is to improve the usefulness of the research by helping to ensure that the scientific knowledge generated is relevant and addresses the needs of those most affected by the research.

The project is part of Forte's national programme on applied welfare research, which aims to strengthen client and practice-oriented research that can be applied in social services to improve the life situation and circumstances of the users. The results of this report are to be used as a basis for the programme and research funding calls as well as for SBU's focus on forthcoming systematic reviews and evidence maps in the field of social services.

The project managers were Stella Jacobson at Forte and Therese Åström, Marie Österberg and Gunilla Fahlström at SBU. Forte and SBU collaborated with Regional Cooperation and Support Structures (RSS), the National Liaison for Knowledge Management in Social Services (NSK-S) and the Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions (SALAR) in developing and distributing the questionnaires to determine the research questions and their priority. A large number of social services managers and representatives of service user organisations and interest groups has been involved in the project and put forward the research questions that they consider, from their perspective, important for future research. A working group with representatives of social services, user organisations and interest groups subsequently reached consensus on a final list of the top ten research questions. This report is a translation from the original report in Swedish. Appendices referred to in the text are in Swedish.

Forte and SBU would like to thank everyone who has taken part in the process.



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Appendices 1-7 and data from the survey of research needs, are only available in swedish,  
[www.forte.se/publikation/prioriteringar-forskning-om-socialtjansten](http://www.forte.se/publikation/prioriteringar-forskning-om-socialtjansten)

# Summary

Forte and SBU have investigated what social services professionals and users consider important research questions. The work involved a national survey to identify research questions as well as a priority setting process to establish their priority. The priority setting was conducted in two stages, through an online questionnaire and a workshop. At the workshop, a working group of 12 representatives from social services and from service user organisations and interest groups reached consensus on a final list of the 10 most important research questions in social services. The project was based on the James Lind Alliance's method.

The 10 most important research questions in social services are:

- How can social services work on implementing, disinvestment and introducing evidence-based knowledge?
- What methods can be used to follow up on interventions?
- How can the participation/involvement of service users and their relatives be developed within social services in order to improve the situation for the users/clients and the working practices of social services?
- What are the effects and experiences of digitalisation in social services?
- What are the effects of third sector welfare provision?
- What are the effects of early (universal) interventions?
- What are the success factors for and obstacles to effective and functional collaboration?
- What problems/needs currently lack a social services intervention?
- What are the effects of existing and new interventions/methods for the needs of different clients and users?
- How reliable are standardised assessment methods when it comes to assessing the needs of clients/users and/or their relatives?

These results are primarily aimed at researchers and research funding bodies. The aim is to enhance research on important topics. This research can either be primary research, if a systematic review is present on that specific topic, or systematic review. As far as we know, this project is the most extensive survey of social services research needs ever to have been conducted in Sweden. The study is unique in that representatives of both social services and service users took part in the same survey of research needs and priorities.

# Introduction

Previous investigations and reports have highlighted significant gaps in evidence within the social services. The Swedish Government therefore initiated a 10-year national programme for applied welfare research in its Research Bill “Collaborating for knowledge – for society’s challenges and strengthened competitiveness” 2016 (Government Bill 2016/17:50, in Swedish). Applied welfare was defined primarily as operations in the field of social services. The Government commissioned the Research Council for Health, Working Life and Welfare (Forte) to set up and run the programme (Government Decision U2017/02404/F). The purpose of the programme is to strengthen client and practice-oriented research within the social services, to facilitate collaboration between researchers and practitioners and to increase the participation/involvement of service users<sup>1</sup> and their relatives.

Forte’s assignment includes working with relevant actors to develop a system for identifying and prioritising research needs in order to promote research that is relevant and addresses the needs of those most affected by the research. Forte has held a number of workshops and meetings in order to identify the most important research areas from different perspectives. These were presented in a strategic research agenda which is a roadmap for the research programme (Forte 2019). In order to get a more comprehensive understanding of the needs for research as seen by those who work in social services and recipients of social services, Forte and the Swedish Agency for Health Technology Assessment and Assessment of Social Services (SBU) came together in a joint project to map these research needs.

The project was conducted in two stages: 1) survey of research needs and 2) prioritisation of research questions. The project is based on a questionnaire sent to people who work in social services, people with professional or private experience of social services, service user organisations and interest groups, followed by a workshop for a working group of representatives from social services and from service user organisations and interest groups. The project resulted in a list of the 10 most important research questions.

The approach has been broad, covering every operational area within social services and all aspects of social services, such as interventions, assessments, working practices, organisation, management, leadership and so on.

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<sup>1</sup> Various terms exist for people who are or have been recipients of social services interventions and measures, including client, customer and consumer, but all these terms have their limitations. In this document, we use the term user or client to refer to people with personal experience of social services or of different types of social problems. In a broader sense, it may also cover carers, relatives or people at risk.

# Purpose

To find out what actors within the various areas of social services – professionals and users – consider to be important research needs and how they prioritise these.

The project also aims to establish whether the method used to identify and prioritise research needs in social services is a suitable approach.

# Who may find the results useful?

The results of the survey and the prioritisation of research needs are primarily aimed at researchers and research funding bodies. Professionals within social services and other welfare actors, decision-makers in the field of social services and users and their relatives are also relevant target groups. The results can be used by systematic review/HTA (or STA) producers, as SBU, when deciding on important topics. It can also be used by organisations or agencies, as the National Board of health and welfare in Sweden, to identify areas for systematic follow up.

# Method

In this project, Forte and SBU adopted a well-established method developed by the James Lind Alliance (JLA – The James Lind Alliance Guidebook). JLA is a British organisation that works on identifying and prioritising scientific uncertainties primarily within healthcare, but also in the area of social work (Department of Health and Social Care 2018). The goal of JLA's work is for patients and users to jointly agree with professionals on the most important research questions.

The method is based on a questionnaire that surveys research needs, as well as a priority setting based on a consensus process (SALAR 2009) which combines an open survey with a consensus workshop (often described as a modified Delphi process). The workshop is an important step in establishing the priorities, as a working group of professionals and user representatives meet to share their opinions and arguments and put forward an agreed list of the top priority research questions.

This section provides an overview of the method for surveying and prioritising research needs (see also Figure 1). See Appendix 1 (in Swedish) for a more detailed description of the methodology.



Figure 1. **Overview of the steps in the project.**

## Survey of research needs

A questionnaire was used to conduct the survey of research needs. The questionnaire (Appendix 2, in Swedish) was sent to all 290 municipalities in Sweden, along with a selection of 125 service user organisations and interest groups, primarily at national level (Appendix 3, in Swedish). In addition to the mailing, there was an opportunity for social services managers at a three-day conference for social services managers (Socialchefsdagarna 2018) to complete the questionnaire in situ.

Respondents were asked what research needs they saw in social services, based on professional or personal experience. The questionnaire was designed around open-ended responses and was divided into six overall areas to provide the respondents with some guidance:

- 1 Assessment and case management
- 2 Interventions and activities
- 3 Early, preventive, outreach initiatives
- 4 Collaboration
- 5 Community planning/structural social issues
- 6 Social services organisation

There was also a space to describe research needs that were not considered to fit in any of the above areas.

The questionnaire responses were analysed and collated into general research questions and more specific underlying questions. Some of the responses required a certain amount of interpretation and reformulation into research questions. For example, if a

response only stated a specific social services intervention, the response was reformulated into a research question about the effects and experiences of the intervention.

Operational areas and specific groups of people with varying difficulties and support needs were linked to the underlying questions in order to reduce the overall number of questions.

## Research questions prioritised in a two step process

To establish which of the research questions were most important, a list of priorities was produced in two steps according to JLA's consensus method.

The first stage was an online survey featuring the research topics that had been compiled from the survey. The research questions and underlying questions were sent to the same recipients as before. The questionnaire was also published as an open link on the websites of SBU and Forte and disseminated via newsletters and social media in order to generate as many responses as possible. The recipients were also encouraged to pass the questionnaire on to their colleagues or the organisation's members.

The survey's respondents were asked to choose 10 research questions from the list. The responses were then used to compile a shorter list of the top research questions, based on the number of votes, in order to create a more manageable list of research questions to take into the next stage of the process. Since there was a risk of the group with the lowest number of respondents being disadvantaged, the top 10 research questions from each group were combined. To obtain a larger shortlist to take forward, any research question that had received 45 or more votes was also included, even if it was not among the top ten of any of the groups.

For the second step, SBU and Forte brought together a working group of 12 people: six representatives from social services and six representatives of service user organisations and interest groups. The working group was once again tasked with choosing what they considered to be the 10 most important research questions from the shortlist.

The final priority setting was conducted during a one day workshop at which the working group met to discuss and agree on a final list of the 10 highest priority research questions. The workshop comprised two steps. Firstly, the participants held discussions in small groups and drew up their own list. This was followed by a whole-group discussion, during which the participants argued their way towards a final top 10 list of research questions.

# Results

## Survey of research needs

The collation of the questionnaire responses resulted in a total list of 159 general research questions. All the general questions and any underlying questions can be found in Appendix 4 (in Swedish).

As far as we can tell, the responses raised the vast majority of the questions/problems that social services encounter, covering all the major operational areas. This indicates



**TOTAL**  
**159**  
research  
questions



that the material from the survey is reasonably comprehensive.

A total of 124 social services managers and 44 service user organisations and interest groups answered all or parts of the questionnaire. This equates to a response rate of around 40 percent (43 for social services managers and 35 for service user organisations and interest groups). 33 responses were obtained during Socialchefsdagarna, the conference for social services managers. People from different professional categories answered the questionnaire at the conference, including operational developers, public authority staff and staff at residential care homes for children and young persons. The results reported here include responses from the Socialchefsdagarna conference.

The social services managers submitted a total of 673 responses in the seven sections of the questionnaire, while service user organisations and interest groups provided 223 responses. Both groups submitted the most responses in two areas: interventions and activities, and assessment and case management. The area with the least number of responses was community planning/structural social issues. The respondents were able to describe several different research needs in each area, but the number of research questions per area and response has not been calculated.

There were similarities and differences concerning what the different groups raised in their responses. Both the service user organisations/interest groups and the social services managers emphasised research needs associated with needs assessment, user participation, collaboration between different agencies and competence within social services. Questions associated with early intervention were something that the service user organisations and interest groups stressed, while the social services managers focused more on research into management and leadership within social services. Another difference between the groups was that the service user organisations identified more research needs associated with specific groups of people, while the social services managers wanted more research into different methods.

The amount of text that the respondents wrote differed across the general sections in the questionnaire, both within and between the groups. The social services managers wrote the most text in the areas of social services organisation, while the service user organisations and interest groups wrote most under interventions and activities. On average, representatives of the service user organisations and interest groups wrote twice as much text as the social services managers. It should, however, be pointed out that the amount of text does not necessarily reflect the number of research questions generated. Some of the responses from the service user organisations and interest groups were more comments on the organisation and working practices of social services, which were not clear research questions, but rather views directed at social services (all the responses are available at [www.forte.se/publikation/prioriteringar-forskning-om-socialtjansten](http://www.forte.se/publikation/prioriteringar-forskning-om-socialtjansten), in Swedish).

## Prioritisation of research questions

### *1. Priority setting based on the online questionnaire*

The collation of the questionnaire responses in preparation for prioritisation of the research questions resulted in a shortlist of the 32 highest ranking research questions, which then progressed to the priority setting process (Appendix 6, in Swedish).

A total of 584 people completed the questionnaire. The larger number of responses for this questionnaire can be explained in part by the fact that the questionnaire was open

and had a wider distribution, but it may also be because it was easier to select research questions from an existing list than to describe them oneself.

Of those who responded, 372 (64 percent) stated that they were representatives of social services, and 65 were representatives of service user organisations and interest groups, while 24 were actual users or their relatives (15 percent in total). The two groups; service user organisations/interest groups and users/relatives, were combined in the analysis. 123 people (21 percent) chose the category “other”, which included people working in research and development, regions, public authorities, operations such as home support, activities under the Act concerning Support and Service for Persons with Certain Functional Impairments (LSS) and at women’s shelters, but also schools, the health service, researchers and private providers of social welfare interventions.

The number of votes per research question varied from 0–135. All the research questions except one received at least one vote from one of the groups. A total of 18 research questions appeared in the collation of the top 10 research questions from each of the groups (Appendix 5, in Swedish).

Four research questions appeared in the top 10 of all three groups:

- What are the effects of existing and new interventions/methods for the needs of different clients and users?
- What are the success factors for and obstacles to effective and functional collaboration?
- How can the participation/involvement of service users and their relatives be developed within social services in order to improve the situation for the users/clients and the working practices of social services?
- What are the effects of collaboration between different agencies?

Each group had two or three research questions that did not appear in any of the other groups’ top 10, and there were three or four research questions that were chosen by two of the three groups.

The research question with the highest proportion of votes among representatives of social services was “How can society’s resources work together to lay the foundation for preventive measures?”. The corresponding question in the user group was “How can user participation/involvement be developed within social services in order to improve the situation for the users/clients and the working practices of social services?” and in the “other” group it was “What are the success factors for and obstacles to effective and functional collaboration?”.

Because the different groups have varying roles and perspectives, it is also to be expected that different research questions will be put forward by the different groups.

In addition to the 18 research questions that appeared in the groups’ top 10 lists, another 14 research questions that received 45 or more votes were also added to the shortlist. All the research questions in all three groups’ top 10 lists were among the research questions that had received 45 or more votes overall, except for one research question that the user group chose.



## 2. *Final priority setting in a workshop*

During a workshop, the working group agreed on a final joint list of the 10 most important research questions (Table 1 and Appendix 7, in Swedish).

At the workshop, the participants first worked in three small, mixed groups. Each group drew up its own top 10 list and ranked the research questions from 1–10 (one of the groups did not do the ranking).

The lists were then combined. Four of the questions that were not chosen were proposed as underlying questions relating to other research questions with which they partially overlapped.

After priority setting in the smaller groups, the whole working group discussed the research questions that remained. The working group started with the ranking list and discarded the five research questions that had received the lowest points. Then the group discussed the remaining questions and agreed on the final list of 10 research questions.

The group reworded one question to instead read “implementing, disinvestment and introducing evidence-based knowledge” instead of “implementing, disinvestment and introducing research”. Two research question was put together so that it covered the participation/involvement of both users and their relatives.

The working group chose not to rank the final list from 1 to 10. They found it difficult to say that one area was more important than the other due to the broad and general nature of the research questions. Several of the research questions overlapped each other to some extent. However, the working group considered the four following research questions to be particularly important, since **implementing, disinvestment and introducing evidence-based knowledge, follow-up of interventions and the participation/involvement of users and their relatives** are fundamental in ensuring that the work of social services is fit for purpose and leads to improvements for the users. Follow-up is, for example, essential in identifying the effects of different interventions for the users, but the group felt that not enough of this was being done. This view also applies to non-municipal providers of interventions.

The rapid rise of **digital technology** is considered another particularly important subject for future research. Digitalisation represents a paradigm shift for social welfare actors, but there is a risk of certain groups such as people with disabilities and older people being excluded. It is also important that digital technology is properly designed from a user perspective. The group discussed the difficulty of conducting research in an area that is developing so quickly, and how it therefore may be more important to research the actual restructuring of working practices and how this affects the operation and the users, rather than focusing on the technology itself.

The effects of **third sector welfare provision** was seen as an important area of research, since society is dependent on other actors that perform social work, and the issue of what competence is needed can have a major influence on the outcomes of interventions. In addition to third sector organisations, there are other service providers such as private or partially private/non-profit organisations.

The group added housing planning, or in fact community planning in a broader sense, to the question about **early interventions**. Not everyone agreed that this question should include community planning, which is broader than only including the activities and responsibilities of social services. There was a view, however, that everything

is interrelated and that the costs at later stages can end up being borne by social services. Society needs to work with more of a preventive focus in order to reduce the need for treatment or other interventions.

**Collaboration** was considered important, as some users have many different contacts within the welfare system, but the view was that this does not always function well. The group also felt it was important to find people who have not been identified in the social safety net by the welfare actors, such as people with addictions and mental health issues, where the division of responsibilities between the health service and social services is unclear. The participants discussed the existence of groups that currently lack interventions, such as adults with neuropsychiatric conditions who live at home, children who do not feel able to attend school or people who are excluded from society.

More research into **the effects of new and existing interventions** was considered another priority area, due to the importance of knowing what interventions are effective and for which target groups. One user group specifically mentioned was children who experience domestic violence. The question of what components of various treatment methods are effective, and the question concerning the effects of non-institutional interventions compared with institutional ones were both added as underlying questions.

Finally, there was a demand for research into the reliability and validity of **standardised assessment methods**. It is important to establish the value of standardised assessment methods in identifying the user's needs, and in terms of time spent on administration. Assessment is part of the assessment-treatment-follow-up chain in evidence-based practice.

The working group also discussed how studies from other countries need to be placed in a Swedish context since they are not always comparable.

Top 10	Area
How can social services work on implementing, disinvestment and introducing evidence-based knowledge?	Management
What methods can be used to follow up on interventions?	Treatment
How can the participation/involvement of service users and their relatives be developed within social services in order to improve the situation for the users/clients and the working practices of social services?	Participation
What are the effects and experiences of digitalisation in social services?	Digitalisation
What are the effects of third sector welfare provision?	Social policy
What are the effects of early (universal) interventions?	Prevention
What are the success factors for and obstacles to effective and functional collaboration?	Collaboration
What problems/needs currently lack a social services response?	Treatment
What are the effects of existing end new interventions/methods for the needs of different clients and users?	Treatment
How reliable are standardised assessment methods when it comes to assessing the needs of clients/users and/or their relatives?	Assessment

Table 1. **The 10 most important research questions, as chosen from the 159 research questions collated from the survey of research needs within social services.**

# Summarizing discussion

In this project actors within the various areas of social services have described the research questions that apply for them and prioritised the 10 most important of those questions (Table 1 and Appendix 7, in Swedish). Research is often funded with public money, which makes it democratically important to let the parties concerned have their voices heard. In addition, the words “on a basis of democracy” appear in the opening paragraph of the Swedish Social Services Act. The code of ethics for social workers in Sweden also addresses the importance of actively participating in the build-up of knowledge within social services (Akademikerförbundet SSR 2017).

Similar work on the prioritisation of research questions within social services has been conducted in the UK, although this was limited to social work for adults (Department of Health and Social Care 2018). The results are therefore not entirely comparable, since this present project has covered every operational area within social services and all aspects of social services, such as interventions, assessments, working practices, organisation, management, leadership and so on. There are also differences between social services in the UK and in Sweden, not least in terms of legislation, which may have an impact on priority setting. However, the list of priority research questions from the UK also contained questions about user participation/involvement, digitalisation and collaboration.

## Limitations

As far as we know, this project is the most extensive survey of research needs within social services ever to have been conducted in Sweden. The study is unique in that representatives of both social services and service users took part in the same surveys of research needs and priorities. The project has imposed a number of limitations which are important to note.

One limitation is that during the initial survey stage, we deviated from the JLA methodology by largely focusing on social services managers and service user organisations and interest groups. The main reasons for this limitation are the wide and complex areas of social services and the resources that analysis and collation of broader material would require. It would, however, be desirable to also ascertain the research needs among those who work directly with users in social services, and among users and their relatives. The project has taken a broad perspective with regard to service user organisations and interest groups and, with their central organisational roles, social services managers should have good insight into all the activities of social services and thus have an overview of the need for more knowledge.

For resource reasons, we have not conducted a full survey of current research in order to verify that the research questions represent gaps in scientific knowledge. However, SBU and the National Board of Health and Welfare have published a large number of reports in this field ([www.sbu.se/sv/publikationer/socialtjanst/](http://www.sbu.se/sv/publikationer/socialtjanst/)). The reports have stated a need for further research relating to the majority of the questions. In addition to primary studies, systematic reviews may be applicable for some questions, rather than more individual studies. The gaps in scientific knowledge need to be verified before new research is initiated and explained in the application for research funding.

## Survey of research needs

The survey is unique in that it takes a holistic approach to social services, but this was also a complicating factor, since the proposed research questions were wide-ranging and some responses were phrased in quite general terms. It is possible that we would have received more detailed responses if the survey had been limited to a particular target group, such as children in care or adults with an addiction, or to specific operational areas. There is, however, no reason why such priority setting processes cannot be conducted at a later stage, with this general priority setting providing useful support. We considered it important, in this first stage, to adopt a holistic approach to research needs in social services in order to obtain an overview of key areas for future research.

The questionnaire was sent to social services managers in every Swedish municipality via the registrar's office. The response rate was nevertheless low (43 percent), possibly due in part to the fact that, for various reasons, the mailing did not reach all social services managers. It may also be due to the perceived complexity of the questionnaire, lack of time or not being accustomed to considering research needs. There were comments from social services managers and service user organisations and interest groups to the effect that the questionnaire was difficult, too broad and time-consuming. At the same time, many respondents stated that the questionnaire was good and important.

The response rate was low despite close collaboration with NSK-S, SALAR and RSS. An earlier investigation made by the National Board of Health and Welfare, a survey of knowledge needs in social services that was conducted without the involvement of these actors and targeted a random selection of social services unit managers achieved a similar response rate to our survey (National Board of Health and Welfare 2015). The surveys are not, however, entirely comparable and we do not know what the response rate would have been like without any collaboration in our survey. The response rate was also low among service user organisations and interest groups (around 30 percent). There was no equivalent collaboration with service user organisations and interest groups on disseminating information about the questionnaire among these organisations.

Another factor was the design of the questionnaire for the survey of research needs. There are pros and cons to both open-ended and closed-ended questions. We opted for more open questions to avoid guiding the respondents in a predetermined direction. In order to provide some guidance for the respondents, the questionnaire was divided into certain general themes, with examples provided for the sake of clarity (Appendix 2, in Swedish). The examples did to some extent feed into the responses, as several social services managers only wrote the words that were given as an example, without any further explanation or elucidation.

## Prioritisation of research questions – a democratic but difficult process

The prioritisation of the research questions differed partially between the online priority setting and the final top 10 list. Some of the research questions that many people voted for did not make it onto the final list and other questions were included despite not previously receiving the most votes.



**Different perspectives important**

This demonstrates the dynamic when a working group with different perspectives comes together to discuss which questions they consider to be most important. Reconciling these different perspectives is a key element of the consensus process.

The working group considered all the research questions to be important and found it difficult to put them in order of priority, largely because the questions covered social services in their entirety. In the process of finalising the top 10 list, several questions were merged together – more than were deleted. One lesson is that a broad field also leads to more general (non-specific) questions. General questions are, however, relevant to future calls for proposals, as researchers have the scope to narrow them down into more researchable questions. The underlying questions are more specific and name various target groups, which may provide further support for the research community in addressing research needs.

## A useful method for identifying and prioritising research needs

In addition to identifying important research questions in social services from a professional and user perspective, the project aimed to establish whether this method is suitable for identifying and prioritising research needs in social services. The advantage of this method over, for example, focus groups is that we reached a larger group of people. Focus groups may be preferable for obtaining more comprehensive and in-depth responses to various questions, but there is also a risk that the same people will keep being asked and having their say. An important feature of the method is the combination of a questionnaire and a workshop to prompt interaction between different people. This provides an opportunity to discuss and justify the choice of research questions, and to see things from new perspectives that may influence the final choice of research questions.

The challenges of this approach lie in its consumption of time and resources, as well as the difficulty of obtaining clear responses in the survey, coupled with the risk that only a few people will respond. Involving so many people, as we have done in this project, is a new approach for us as governmental agencies.

One possible criticism of the process of prioritising research questions and producing top 10 lists of research needs is that the lists only reflect the opinions of the participating individuals, rather than the wider populations that they represent, which could potentially lead to poor external validity. Putting together panels is a crucial and difficult stage in consensus processes. It would be possible to have multiple panels running in parallel in order to judge reliability, but no such procedure was used on this project. Similar work was carried out, however, when the strategic research agenda for the national programme on applied welfare research was developed by Forte (Forte 2019). The eight priority areas<sup>2</sup> presented in the agenda are a close match for the top 10 list.

The process of determining the agenda's priority areas was similar to the work on this project, except that it was based on hearings with various actors, including researchers, as a means of identifying the research areas. The fact that both these similar projects

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<sup>2</sup> Effects of interventions, Methods for needs assessment for individuals, Early/preventive measures of social services, Implementation and change management, Coherent service provision initiatives, User participation, Digitalisation and welfare technology products, Non-profit and entrepreneurial providers of social services

culminated in the same questions indicates a level of representativeness in the prioritised questions.

The participants in the working group were overwhelmingly positive about the work. Many of them, for example, commented on the benefit of being involved and exerting influence. A high value was placed on the importance of having different perspectives in the make-up of the working group. Some felt that it was somewhat easier to work in the smaller groups than in the full working group, as it allowed more space for discussions and a chance for everyone to have their say. In other words, the workshop demands a great deal of the participants to take up space in the group and make their voice heard, particularly in the plenary discussions. It also requires a moderator who can ensure that everyone has an opportunity to speak and influence proceedings.

In summary, the method is a useful approach for identifying and prioritising research needs. The work on the strategic research agenda demonstrated that hearings and workshops to identify research questions can ultimately lead to the same conclusion as this method. The material from the questionnaire containing the research questions and underlying questions is, however, more comprehensive and detailed than the documentation from the hearings that were held as part of the agenda work. The material should therefore be of use to both researchers and social services when it comes to knowledge development (see Appendices at [www.forte.se/publikation/prioriteringar-forskning-om-socialtjansten](http://www.forte.se/publikation/prioriteringar-forskning-om-socialtjansten), in Swedish).

## Next step

The results will provide support for work concerning the national programme on applied welfare research and granting research funding, and for SBU's work on compiling systematic reviews of relevant research. We encourage researchers to consider the presented results when planning future research and to state in their funding application to Forte that the research project for which they are seeking funding addresses one of the priority research questions. We also urge researchers to involve practitioners in their research, and we urge professionals who work on social services issues to read the results and establish contact with researchers in order to play an active role in the research process.



**A useful  
approach**



# Project team

Name	Role	Organisation
Stella Jacobson	Project manager	Forte
Therese Åström	Project manager	SBU
Gunilla Fahlström	Project manager	SBU
Marie Österberg	Project manager	SBU
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Emilie Löfgren-Jarl	Research administrator	Forte
Peter Carlsson	Intern, involved in analysis and collation of questionnaire responses	Stockholm University
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# Working group for prioritisation of research questions

Name	Organisation	Representing
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Maja Ahrman	National Organisation for Women's Shelters and Young Women's Shelters in Sweden (Roks)	Service user organisation/ interest group
Therese Reitan	National Union Against Alcohol and Drug Misuse (RFMA)	Service user organisation/ interest group
Patric Stoor Karlberg	Stadsmissionen	Service user organisation/ interest group
Frida Fröberg	Save the Children Sweden	Service user organisation/ interest group
Gustaf Bucht	Swedish Pensioners' Association	Service user organisation/ interest group
Staffan Näslund	Skellefteå Municipality	Social services
Camilla Blomqvist	Norra Hisingen, City of Gothenburg	Social services
Lena Holmlund	Gothenburg Region	Social services
Stefan Heinebäck	Nyköping Municipality	Social services
Lotta Wigen	Lidingö Municipality	Social services
Ingemar Ångman	Örebro Municipality	Social services

# Conflicts of interest

As required by SBU, participants in the working group have submitted declarations concerning conflicts of interest. These documents are available from SBU's secretariat. SBU has judged that the situations reported in the declarations are compatible with the requirements for objectivity and impartiality.

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