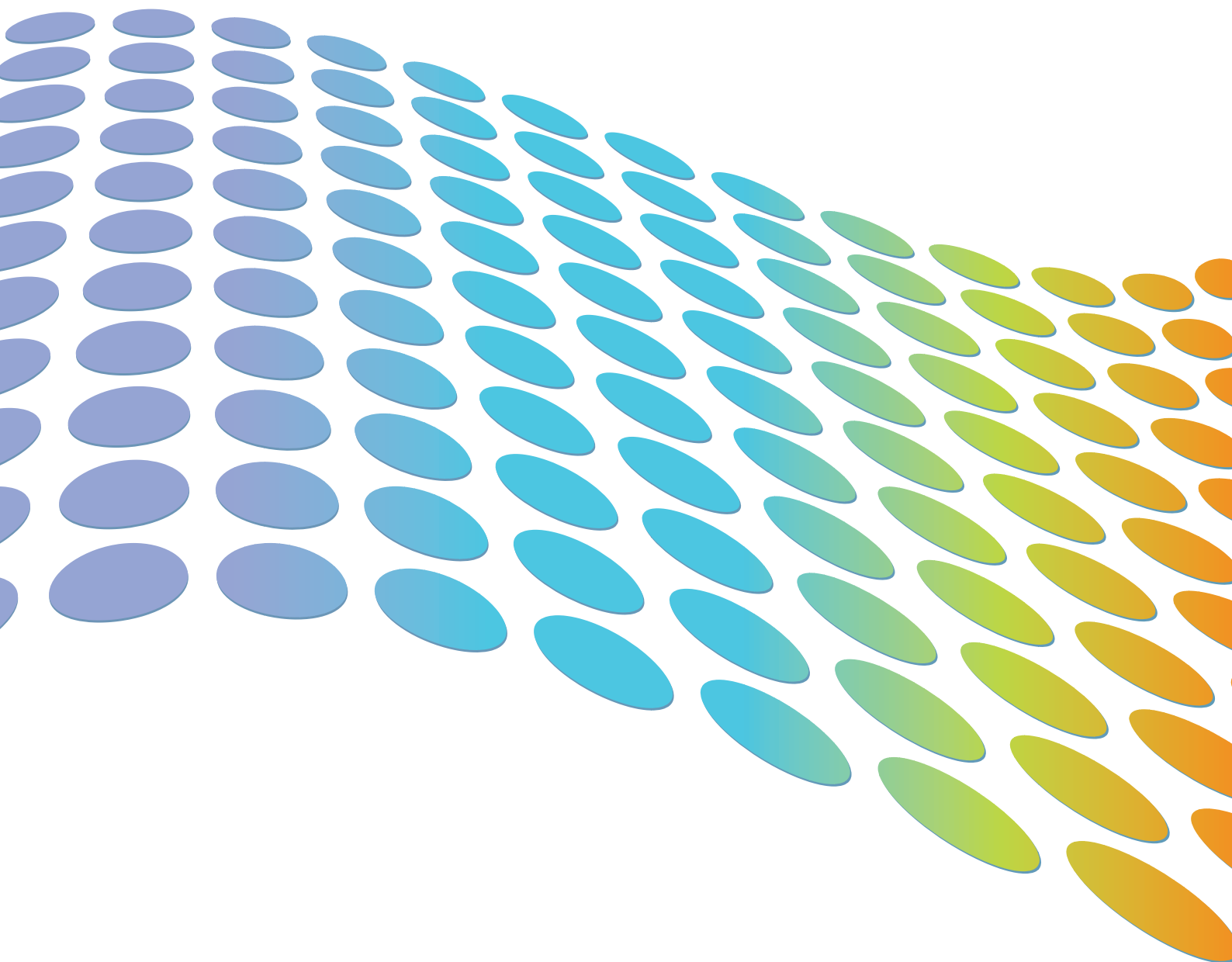


Centre for Research
on the Child and Family
Annual Report
2012





Centre for Research on the Child and Family

Annual Report 2012

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Centre aims and objectives

Aims

- To use research to advance understanding of children, youth and family life across the life course.
- To develop and disseminate research knowledge which will inform policy and practice, enhancing the well-being of children and families in their communities.
- To provide empirical evidence to governments, NGOs, the public and private sector to inform policy and practice decisions concerning the welfare of children, youth and families.
- To advance our knowledge of the effectiveness and efficiency of services across the statutory, voluntary and independent sectors.
- To work in collaboration with, or on behalf of, child and family agencies in the statutory, voluntary and private sectors regionally, nationally and internationally.

Objectives

- To seek funding to allow Centre members to undertake research which will contribute to the development of knowledge on children and families, and on the services which may enhance their well-being.
- To undertake commissioned research on a wide range of child and family issues, in particular with a view to relating research to theory, policy, law and practice.
- To develop new research methodologies which reflect the diversity of the issues which need to be addressed on behalf of children and families.
- To promote interdisciplinarity and inter-agency approaches in research and evaluation. In particular, to further explore ways of establishing the views of family members, and especially children, about services which affect them.
- To provide advice on research matters to those who offer services which contribute to the welfare of children and families.
- To disseminate the findings of research to policy makers, practitioners, lawyers, academic colleagues, parents, children, their carers and those who provide, plan or manage services which aim to enhance the welfare of children and their families.



This has been an important year for the Centre for Research on the Child and Family. We have been able to use our research to inform policy at national and international levels at a difficult time for services and for many families.

The Queen's speech in May 2012 has indicated how many of the areas in which we are involved as researchers are current political priorities. For example, the proposed Children and Families Bill will include a time limit of six months for courts to make a decision in care proceedings and important new provisions to speed up the use of adoption for children in care. There are also new proposals that parents will have access to flexible leave arrangements so that they can share the parenting responsibilities.

In addition to these legislative proposals there is a broader agenda for change in relation to the care system, and the Centre has been involved in the consultation process at the Department of Education in relation to commissioning, permanence in foster care and offending by children in care. There is also an agenda for change in child protection following the Munro report, to which the Centre's work on serious case reviews and children's participation in child protection will make a contribution.

In addition to the year's important developments in relation to the external policy environment, there are also important changes to the Centre's base at UEA.

From the 1st August 2012, the School of Social Work and Psychology will become two independent Schools of Social Work and of Psychology. The Centre will be based jointly in the two Schools, with a Co-Director in each, Professor Gillian Schofield in Social Work and Professor Margaret O'Brien in Psychology. The growth in psychology will mean that opportunities are arising to develop new research directions, alongside our strong links to other disciplines.

We would like to take the opportunity of our Annual Centre Report to thank our funders: Department for Education; Economic and Social Research Council; Big Lottery Research Programme; NSPCC; The Nuffield Foundation; Office of the Children's Commissioner; Esmée Fairbairn Foundation; Norfolk and Suffolk Children's Services; Suffolk Youth Offending Service. With their generous support we have been able to carry out our research, produce academic papers, reports and books and most importantly communicate our findings, through local, national and international events, to the public, practitioners and policy makers.



Fatherhood • Attachment

Supporting fathers after separation or divorce: evidence and insights

As part of her ESRC funded Post Doctoral fellowship, **Dr Georgia Philip**, together with Professor **Margaret O'Brien** is currently researching the extent and type of support available to separated/separating fathers, on a national and international level, and in terms of regional provision.

The project involves a systematic literature review of interventions or educational programmes on parenting after separation, to collate and synthesise the evidence base in terms of supporting father involvement. The literature review will be used to produce a report, entitled *Supporting fathers after separation or divorce: evidence, interventions and insights*, aimed at practitioners and policy makers, as well as other academic researchers. In addition to examining the research literature, the project also involves 'mapping' the provision of services across East Anglia and encouraging networking and discussion among practitioners working with fathers and families.

There will be two main events linked to this project and to the report: a regional seminar, to be held at the University on 10th July and a National seminar, to be held in London on 18th October. The regional event will be aimed at local practitioners and organisations involved in supporting separated families and fathers in particular, and will be an opportunity to hear about related research conducted at the University, the preliminary findings from this project and to develop links between organisations and with the Research Centre.

The National event will be aimed at practitioners, organisations, academics and policymakers, and will present the key findings of the report and provide opportunities for discussion. There will also be presentations by Dr Esther Dermott (University of Bristol) and Dr Jacqui Gabb (Open University) on their British Academy funded pilot project: *Fragile Fathering: Negotiating Intimacy and Risk in Parenting Practice*. The event will close with an open panel discussion with academics and practitioners in the field.

The Secure Base Model: national and international developments

Since the publication by BAAF of the *Attachment Handbook for Foster Care and Adoption* by **Gillian Schofield** and **Mary Beek** in 2006 and the accompanying training programme and DVD, the Secure Base Model of caregiving has now become established in practice, not only in the UK but internationally. Based on attachment and resilience, the model was recommended in *Care Matters* (2007) and incorporated in the national *Skills to Foster* training programme (2009).

In Norway, 'Trygg Base' is used by social workers across the country and is part of initial training for all foster carers. Most recently the *Attachment Handbook* was translated into French and launched in Paris in 2011, and is now being translated into Italian. To support these developments in the UK and abroad, the website www.uea.ac.uk/providin-gasecurebase has been recently revised (funded by the Nuffield Foundation) and now provides a range of materials for practice. Gillian Schofield would like to hear from individuals and agencies currently using the Secure Base Model and is planning to set up a meeting in London for those who would like to share ideas (g.schofield@uea.ac.uk).



Young Offenders • Family Justice



The health needs of young offenders

The Centre has been keen to engage with local agencies, particularly in areas of research and evaluation that complement our areas of research interest. **Vicky Scaife** and **Judi Walsh** had previously (2008) completed an analysis of the health needs of young people in contact with the Suffolk Youth Offending Service and in 2012 were approached to do a follow up study of needs e.g. physical health and mental health issues including drug use, alcohol use, diet and exercise; other aspects of psychological or cognitive functioning such as speech and language issues or learning difficulties. This new project has included **Gillian Schofield** as consultant and **Julie Young** as researcher. The area of youth offending and our understanding of the developmental and health needs of at risk adolescents is a major source of both practice and policy concerns and is an important area of collaboration for psychology and social work research.

Australian conferences

Marian Brandon will be visiting Sydney, Australia in August 2012 to give a keynote presentation at the 3rd Australasian Conference on Child Death Inquiries and Reviews and a Masterclass at the Association of Children's Welfare Agencies Biennial Conference. She will also be taking part in a Round Table discussion at the Melbourne University Centre of Excellence and will give a staff-student seminar at La Trobe University, Melbourne.

ESRC Grant

In June 2012 we were pleased to be awarded a grant for an important new study: *An investigation of care planning and the role of the Independent Reviewing Officer*. **Jonathan Dickens** is Principal Investigator, and the research team includes **Gillian Schofield**, **Chris Beckett** and **Julie Young**. This project comes at a time when care planning and the IRO are seen as key factors in successful outcomes for looked after children.

Annual Centre Conferences

The Annual Centre Conference 2011 was held on 5th July at UEA London, an important new resource, close to Liverpool Street Station. The title was *Inside Child Protection: New developments in research and practice*. The speakers were **Jeanette Cossar**, **Marian Brandon**, **David Howe** and Kate Morris (Professor of Social Work at the University of Nottingham). The Conference focused on important messages from research on child protection, funded by Department of Education and by the Office of the Children's Commissioner. At a time when the Munro Report is delivering a new vision for the future of child protection, it is more than ever necessary to learn lessons from research. Insights from children, from families and from serious case reviews can be used to build models for practice. A key theme of the day was the importance of sensitive, emotionally attuned practitioners and the centrality of relationships in keeping children safe.

The Annual Centre Conference 2012 is to be held in Sheffield on July 10th, with the title *Looked after Children and Offending: Reducing risk and promoting resilience*. This is to be a joint event with Bank House Chambers, Sheffield, to provide an opportunity for a large multi-disciplinary audience of family and criminal justice practitioners from the North of England to hear and debate the findings of this UEA / TACT (The Adolescent and Children's Trust) research project, funded by the Big Lottery. Speakers will be **Gillian Schofield**, **Laura Biggart**, **Birgit Larsson** and Kevin Williams, Chief Executive of TACT. The event is to be chaired by Jim Baird, senior criminal barrister and Head of Bank House Chambers.

Family Justice Council Conference

In October 2011 the Family Justice Council biennial residential conference was held at Dartington, in Devon. The focus was on messages for the Family Justice Review, which was due to report within weeks of the conference. There has always been a valuable relationship between UEA social work and socio-legal research and the interdisciplinary work of the Family Justice Council, with **June Thoburn**, **Jonathan Dickens** and **Gillian Schofield** all having served on sub-committees. For the 2011 conference Gillian was part of the organising group, while Jonathan and June both gave keynote papers.



A Revolution in Family Policy: Where do we go from here?

Commissioned by the Policy Press, Clem Henricson Honorary Visiting Fellow at UEA has written a book to be published in September 2012 which analyses the last fifteen years of family policy under the New Labour and Coalition governments in the UK. It draws on the emerging successes and failures, and makes proposals for future progressive development.

The author finds that there was a radical shift in the role of the state in personal relationships under New Labour, which has been carried forward in some measure by the Coalition. The parent child relationship was put centre stage; family and parenting services mushroomed. The Government sought to improve the way children behave and learn through positively manipulating family relationships. This critique not only assesses the philosophy, dynamic and social attitudes behind these significant trends in public policy, but also the degree to which New Labour's aspirations were met or were indeed realisable or appropriate.

The aspirations were enormous, addressing the whole social fabric. Macro economic influence was involved and social enhancement. The aim was to reduce child poverty and improve child outcomes – breaking the cycle of deprivation, and to deliver social cohesion. The question asked in this book is whether this whole philosophy and project of social betterment through manipulating the parent child relationship and the parenting environment was appropriate as a point of reference for family policy.

Criticisms were levelled that the aspirations were not achieved. Child poverty targets and a major shift in social mobility proved elusive. Shortfalls there certainly were, but the analysis to date has been blinkered by a two fold process; a simplistic focus on the missing of self imposed government targets, coupled with an habituation of the progressive agenda; society took the goods for granted and continued to ask for more.

Less prominence has been given to the charge that the aspirations were simply too extravagant; that it was unrealistic to expect to change a highly unequal society, which the UK is, through supporting parent child relationships, and there has been even less discussion of the possibility that the aspirations were too high in respect of changing personal relationships and behaviours. Was there in effect at the core of the New Labour narrative too high an expectation of human malleability?

Following this analysis there is an exploration of options for the next phase in progressive thinking on the role of the state in family relationships with a view to the publication acting as a springboard for debate. In this prospective part of the discussion consideration is given as to how public policy can manage relations in a way that is sufficiently aspirational to be of moment, while also being realistic and determined by achievable outcomes.

In pursuing this realistic approach, policies are floated that recognise the core human tension of affection, empathy and supportiveness on the one hand and aggression, deception and self interest on the other. A set of coherent support and control policies for family relations are developed which endorse this awareness and embrace a radical shift in perspective for future progressive governments. The book challenges a broad allegiance to the enlightenment's perfectability of man. Instead of framing things in terms of *'things are going to get better'*, it asks the question *'how are we going to manage the tensions that exist in parent child relationships?'*

United Nations

Over the past year the Centre has continued to contribute to preparations for the twentieth anniversary of the International Year of the Family in 2014. Preparations are being led by The United Nations Focal Point on the Family in the Division for Social Policy and Development of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA) under the leadership of Renata Kaczmarek, based in New York. The three major themes for the International Year of the Family in 2014 are:

- Confronting family poverty and social exclusion
- Ensuring work-family balance
- Advancing social integration and intergenerational solidarity.

The **twentieth anniversary of the International Year of the Family** offers an opportunity to refocus on the role of families in development; take stock of recent trends in family policy development; share good practices in family policy making; review challenges faced by families worldwide and recommend solutions.

Over the past year Professor **Margaret O'Brien** prepared the key background briefing paper on Work-family Balance Policies and participated in the Expert Group Meeting on Good Practices in Family Policy Making: Family Policy Development, Monitoring and Implementation: Lessons Learnt, New York, 15-17 May, 2012. At this meeting she presented a paper on *Work-family balance practices in action: innovation and barriers in the private sector*. Margaret also chaired the special session International Day of Families: Ensuring work-family balance, 15 May 2012.

Despite the global economic downturn, work-family balance continues to be of great importance for societies because in more and more countries women's labour force participation has increased. Finding and retaining enough employment to economically provide, as well as having time to properly care for the young, old and vulnerable members of family groups is a key challenge for contemporary parents- "the squeezed middle" in many families.

In some European countries, financial strains have led to cuts in existing policies or postponement and cancellations to previously announced changes. Whereas in other less economically stressed regions of the world, paid parental policies are being introduced for the first time.

In her Work-family Balance Policies Briefing Paper Professor O'Brien provides evidence on the key challenges faced by families today as their members attempt to

manage work and care and critically examines policy solutions and initiatives offered by governments, employers and civil society actors. Since the 1970s governments have tried to respond to work-care challenges, with varying success, by introducing specific policies/strategies and new benefits.

Professor O'Brien makes a series of recommendations under the banner of **A Family-focused Work-Life Vision** which have been taken forward by the United Nations Focal Point on the Family in its proposals for the Commission for Social Development.

This approach integrates family, work and child policies with an awareness of life course transitions.

Margaret also contributed to the UN's Report *Men in Families and Family Policy in a Changing World* (2011) which was launched at a side event of the forty-ninth session of the Commission for Social Development, the Department of Economic and Social Affairs. The publication emphasizes the importance of policies facilitating greater involvement of men in the lives of their families, in particular in the area of work-life balance. Measures that prove effective to that end include expanding paternity leave; offering flexible working arrangements for men and women with small children, such as an option to work part-time; and expanding access to childcare. Family laws may also need revision to recognise men as caregivers and allow for joint custody in cases of divorce. Policies should also support men's and women's joint control of household assets and joint household decision-making to guarantee adequate livelihoods for their families.

O'Brien, M. (2011) "Fathers in challenging family contexts: a need for engagement" *Men in Families and Family Policy in a Changing World Report* New York: United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs <http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/family/docs/men-in-families.pdf>

Papers Available from: <http://social.un.org/index/Family/MeetingsEvents/EGMonAssessingFamilyPolicies.aspx>

<http://social.un.org/index/Family/InternationalObservances/TwentiethAnniversaryofIYF2014/BackgroundPapers.aspx>

Youth Offending

Looked after children and offending: reducing risk and promoting resilience

This study, funded by the Big Lottery and in partnership with TACT (The Adolescent and Children's Trust) (described below under project reports) has come at a time when outcomes, including offending rates, from the care system are causing concern to policy makers and practitioners. **Gillian Schofield, Laura Biggart, Birgit Larsson** and **Alice Haynes** presented the findings first at fringe meetings at all three party conferences in September / October 2011. The final report of the project, *Looked after Children and Offending: Reducing risk and promoting resilience* was launched at a joint CRCF / TACT conference at Woburn House, London on January 17th 2012. The conference was chaired by John Drew, Chief Executive of the Youth Offending Board, and opened by Crispin Blunt, MP and Parliamentary Under-Secretary at the Ministry of Justice. Catherine McKinnell, MP and Shadow Minister for Children, joined the final panel. Following the launch, Gillian was invited to a meeting at Downing Street in February to discuss possible new policy initiatives to reduce offending, the unnecessary criminalisation of children in care and the use of custody.



Selected research conference dissemination

American Association of Behavioural and Cognitive Therapies 45th Annual Conference.

The conference was held in Toronto, Canada in November 2011. Helen Dodd presented a paper on Information processing biases and anxiety in inhibited preschool children. (A Career Development Travel Award by the American Anxiety Disorders Association).

2nd European Conference for Social Work Research

This conference was held in Basel in March 2012 and was titled *Social work research in local, national and international contexts: the challenges of comparison and generalisation*. **Gillian Schofield** presented a paper on the Secure Base caregiving model and its development internationally. The event was an important opportunity to identify practice applications of research in other countries.

BASPCAN Congress

The British Association for the Study and Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect held their 8th International Congress in April 2012, at Queens University, Belfast. It was titled *Keeping Children Safe in an Uncertain World: Learning from research and practice*. The BASPCAN congress is always a major event and this year papers were presented on a wide range of Centre projects by **Marian Brandon, Jeanette Cossar, Jonathan Dickens, Jane Dodsworth, June Thoburn** and **Julie Young**.

BPS Forensic Psychology Conference

The Forensic Psychology Division of the British Psychological Society are holding their annual conference in Cardiff in June 2012. **Laura Biggart** and **Birgit Larsson** are presenting two papers on children in care; one relating to social cognition and offending and the other relating to restorative justice. This is an important opportunity to ensure that our joint social work / psychology projects are disseminated in both disciplinary areas.

Making Research Count

Making Research Count is a national dissemination network, which operates regionally from social work departments at ten universities throughout England. Each university in the network organises a programme of research seminars and workshops for those local authorities and health and social care organisations within their region who have subscribed to their Making Research Count programme. UEA was a founder partner in this initiative in 1997, and has run a programme of dissemination events since that date. Making Research Count at UEA is under the direction of **Gillian Schofield**, Head of School, and continues to link with Emeritus Professor **June Thoburn**, who was one of the founders of the network. **Sue Bailey** is the local co-ordinator.

In 2011-2012 the Centre for Research on the Child and Family has continued to link with both Norfolk and Suffolk Children's Services to offer a number of seminars, which are delivered to them individually in their own localities, and chosen with them to reflect the authorities' preferences and priorities, and the Centre's expertise and current research interests. Recent research findings are presented and discussed in the seminars, and they provide an opportunity for those attending to talk through the issues which are of interest to both policy makers and practitioners within the authorities. Examples of recent seminars include a presentation given by **June Thoburn** and **Neil Cooper** on an evaluation they undertook of a 'pathfinder think family' intensive service offered in one London Borough to parents and children with complex problems, and a presentation by **Vicky Scaife** on young people and substance misuse.

Regional conference

Making Research Count (UEA) collaborated with colleagues from within the School in hosting a conference on 'Confidentiality and Collaboration: the ethics of information sharing in health and social care'. The conference was organised by **Peter Jordan** and **Martin Gill**, and was held in November 2011, at the King's Street Centre in Norwich. Guest speakers were Caroline Ball, Chair of Norfolk's Safeguarding Children Board, and the Rt. Hon Charles Clarke, a Visiting Professor in Politics at the university.

The conference addressed the debate about the ethics of information sharing and decision-making with regard to when to share or when to withhold information. This debate is particularly pertinent at a time when multi-agency and multidisciplinary working is accepted as the norm in most sectors of health and social care, and when much of the focus is on improving systems of information exchange.

The year ahead

Making Research Count (UEA) events in the coming year will continue to highlight the very latest research being undertaken in the School, and many faculty and research staff will be contributing to these sessions. Projects discussed elsewhere in this Centre Report will form the basis of a number of forthcoming seminars; for example **Gillian Schofield** will be reporting on the looked after children and offending research project, and **Marian Brandon** will be discussing aspects of her research on serious case reviews.

We hope to expand our Making Research Count programme and to work with some of the other local authorities in the Eastern Region, potentially using the London campus of UEA for some seminars, and thus expanding the number of organisations with which we can engage.

Making Research Count nationally

All the universities engaged in Making Research Count are research-active across a diverse range of topics in both child and family care and in adult social care, and occasional guest speakers from these universities extend the range of presentations we are able to offer. The Making Research Count coordinators from the universities meet regularly to discuss the development of their programmes, and to provide a forum through which the expertise within the national network can be shared.

If you would like to know more about Making Research Count, or if you think your organisation might be interested in subscribing to the UEA programme, please contact Sue Bailey by email at s.e.bailey@uea.ac.uk or on 01603 593557.



Staff

Welcome new staff members

Helen Dodd has joined the Centre research team during the last year. Helen is a Lecturer in Psychology and made the move to UEA from Sydney, Australia in August 2011. Helen's research focuses on the development of anxiety in children, with a particular emphasis on the role of parents, providing a valuable complement to our existing range of expertise. After completing her PhD research, which focused on the development of anxiety in a rare genetic disorder (Williams syndrome), Helen held a postdoctoral position at the Centre for Emotional Health, Macquarie University. Over the past four years Helen has been working on a longitudinal project which examines the role of child temperament, maternal anxiety, mother-child attachment and maternal parenting style in the development of childhood anxiety. This project commenced in 2003, when the participants were aged 4 years. These same children are now turning 12 and the research team in Australia are in the process of conducting the next follow-up. The initial findings of this project showed that an inhibited child temperament, maternal anxiety and overly-intrusive parenting on the part of the mother when the children were aged 4 were significant predictors of anxiety when the children were aged 9. These findings were then used to develop an early intervention program for preschool-aged children displaying an inhibited temperament. The randomised control trial evaluating this intervention is almost completed.

Now that Helen has joined the UEA Centre for Research on the Child and Family she is looking to continue her ongoing work and collaborations in Australia and to develop new collaborations with researchers here. Given that her previous research has focused solely on how mothers affect their children's anxiety levels, Helen is particularly interested in examining how fathers might affect children's anxiety. Longer term Helen hopes to start a new longitudinal project based here in Norwich to examine the development of anxiety in young children, with a focus on both mothers and fathers.

Joe Smeeton joined UEA in January 2012 after 5 years teaching qualifying and post-qualifying social work students at the University of Sheffield. Joe has been involved in social work practice since 1991 and has worked as a Children's Residential Worker, Family Support Worker, as manager of a Care Leaver Service and as a Social Worker and Team Manager within Child Protection and Looked After Children's services. He has also worked with children and their families and carers in the Health and Education sectors.

While working in the higher education sector, Joe has developed a strong interest in the relationship between Social Work theory and Child Protection practice and is particularly interested in practice interventions to promote positive change. He also maintains a strong interest in Children's Residential Services and Leaving care and has been invited to Lithuania on several occasions to talk about developing services to help young people prepare for leaving care.

Joe is currently conducting a study looking at how different professionals arrive at recommendations within care proceedings and the relative merits of different professional expertise.

Research Projects



New learning from serious case reviews in England 2009-2011

Context

Serious case reviews (SCRs) are local enquiries into a child's death or serious injury where abuse or neglect are known or suspected, and there are concerns about inter-agency working. These reviews are carried out under the auspices of Local Safeguarding Children Boards, so that lessons can be learnt locally and implications for national policy and practice can be drawn. An independent analysis of all serious case reviews is commissioned every two years, and UEA, in partnership with the University of Warwick, has now completed the fourth biennial review for the Government, covering 184 incidents which led to a serious case review during the period April 2009 to March 2011. Our database which now covers all four biennial periods holds information on over 800 cases, for the eight year period 2003-11.

Aims

- To identify common themes and trends drawing out implications for policy and practice.
- To explore the feasibility for a combined interface between SCR and child death review data and explore the utility of other available datasets to provide comparator data;
- To examine the evidence from a sample of SCRs where there is evidence to suggest a lack of child development knowledge or training for practitioners, especially social workers;
- To provide a thematic and critical analysis of recommendations and action plans from 30 serious case reviews.
- To provide an analysis of cases concerning children aged 5-10 years.

Methods

The aims were pursued in five separate but interlinking studies, each with their own research questions and methodology. Three of the studies were published by the Department for Education during 2011 as stand-alone reports but common themes recur across the entire biennial review.

Exploring the overall themes and trends involved an examination of the full sample of 184 cases. The characteristics of the child, the family, the family environment, and agency involvement were inputted and analysed using SPSS. More detailed, qualitative work was conducted to explore the following specific themes: the interrelationship between domestic violence, mental ill health and substance misuse; the extent of neglect as an underlying theme; the extent and nature of involvement with children's social care.

Findings

Over the period 2009-11 there were 184 serious case reviews - a decrease in comparison with the last biennial review (2007-09), when there were 280 SCRs. There is a return to the earlier pattern of fewer reviews (189 reviews during 2005-07 and 161 during 2003-05).

There were 10% fewer cases concerning a baby under one year of age than in previous analyses (36% in comparison with 47%). There was also a drop in the number of children with a child protection plan in place at the time of the incident, (10% rather than 16%) in a period when the number of children with a child protection plan has been steadily rising.

Physical injury was the key cause of half of the deaths and half of the serious harm cases. Sexual assault and neglect were each key causes for nearly a third of the non fatal cases, although these types of harm rarely cause a fatality. The only category of fatality to show significant change was a 10% rise in the number of deliberate homicides to 17% in 2009-11 (a greater number of filicide-suicides -killings of a child in the family with subsequent suicide of the perpetrator).

Almost two thirds of the reviews featured domestic violence, nearly 60% featured parental mental ill health, and parental substance misuse was evident in 42% of cases. All three factors were present in just over a fifth of the cases.

The extent of neglect as an underlying feature of these cases can easily go unrecognised. We found that neglect was a feature in at least 60% of the serious case reviews. Past neglect was a factor in eleven out of fourteen reviews conducted following the suspected suicide of a young person.

Almost 60% of the mothers were under 21 years of age when they had their first child. The presence of wider family (e.g. the child's grandparents) in the young parent's home is not necessarily a protective factor in these cases.

The number of children and families receiving any service from children's social care at the time the child died or was seriously injured or harmed was 42%. A further 23% of cases had been closed, sometimes because of non-cooperation. In 14% of cases a referral had been made but not accepted, implying that thresholds to children's social care were set too high. Only 21% of the children had never been referred to children's social care.

Duration

December 2010 – May 2012

Funder

Department for Education

Research Team

Dr Marian Brandon, Sue Bailey, Dr Pippa Belderson, Dr. Peter Sidebotham*, Dr Carol Hawley*, Catherine Ellis*

** Health Sciences Research Institute, University of Warwick*

Implications for Policy and Practice

Although the learning from serious case reviews is important, there can be weariness about the translation of messages from reviews into practice. This may be because serious case reviews are studies of 'worst cases' and hence rarely identify good practice and also because they tend to produce apparently similar findings, concentrating on practitioner failings rather than systems failings.

Several discussion points emerge from this however. Firstly, some of these lessons are so important that they need to be repeatedly learnt and staff need to be regularly reminded of issues that individuals and agencies can lose sight of; secondly the question of why the same mistakes are repeated and why the same failure to see what might be obvious in hindsight should be a source of intrigue and curiosity rather than exasperation; thirdly, each two yearly review produces a number of new insights and new knowledge alongside the recurring messages; and finally, building on our research knowledge about reviews over the years helps to clarify patterns and deviations from patterns. Some new implications for policy and practice drawn from this most recent study are summarised below.

The fact that 21% of children had never been known to children's social care, and a further 37% of cases were either closed or had not been accepted at the point of referral, reinforces the importance of staff in universal services sharing responsibility for protecting children. Our in-depth analysis of 21 cases relating to children aged 5-10 likewise reveals that there had been opportunities to address low level needs which might have prevented the escalation of problems and maltreatment, particularly through the use of the Common Assessment Framework in schools.

A sign of improvement in protection of children may be the fall in the number of children at the centre of a review who had a child protection plan in place, at a time when overall numbers of children with a child protection plan are rising. Another possible indicator of improvement is a reduction in the proportion of infant cases to a third of the total, as compared with half in previous years. Although this decline may reflect a change over time in local decision-making about when to undertake a SCR, it might also be attributable to the efforts to spread awareness among practitioners and community groups of the vulnerability of babies and the risks of harm they face.

For the first time we know, with some accuracy, that neglect is a background factor in the majority of cases, whatever the age of the child. This information adds to the climate of urgency and the greater willingness to acknowledge the harm that stems from neglect even though it is seldom identified as the key factor in the child's death.

There has been an over emphasis on serious case reviews in recent years and it may now be time to adopt a community prevention approach and only review deaths through maltreatment through the review of all unexpected child deaths in the Child Death Overview Panels. Serious harm cases can still be successfully reviewed in case audits.

Dissemination

Three chapters have already been published and disseminated as separate reports (recommendations study, child development study and putting SCR data in context with other data study). These reports (see below) were presented as evidence and incorporated into the Munro Review of Child Protection. The full biennial analysis brings two new studies together with this earlier material. All the learning from this two year cohort will be published at the end of June 2012.

Four papers from this study were presented at the 8th BASPCAN Congress *Keeping Children Safe in an Uncertain World: Learning from Evidence and Practice*, Belfast, April 2012.

We provided consultation for the Department for Education in relation to the drafting of the new edition of the national multi-agency guidance *Working Together to Safeguard Children* regarding proposed changes to the serious case review process and data to be collected on fatal and serious incidents.

Publications

Brandon, M., Sidebotham, P., Bailey, S. and Belderson, P. (2011) *A study of recommendations arising from serious case reviews 2009-2010*. London: Department for Education, DFE-RR157

Brandon, M., Sidebotham, P., Ellis, C., Bailey, S. and Belderson, P. (2011) *Child and family practitioners' understanding of child development: Lessons learnt from a small sample of serious case reviews*. London: Department for Education, DFE-RR110

Sidebotham, P., Bailey, S., Belderson, P. and Brandon, M. (2011) Fatal child maltreatment in England, 2005-2009. *Child Abuse and Neglect* 35(4): 299-306.

Sidebotham, P., Brandon, M., Bailey, S., Belderson, P. and Hawley, C. (2011) *Serious and fatal child maltreatment: setting serious case review data in context with other data on violent and maltreatment-related deaths in 2009-10*. London: Department for Education, DFE-RR167.

An examination of neglect in serious case reviews

Context

There is increasing recognition of the long term harm that stems from living with neglect during childhood, yet even in serious case reviews (local reviews where children die or are seriously harmed and abuse or neglect is known or suspected) the extent and impact of neglect as an underlying feature can go unrecognised and unreported. The project will provide a re-analysis of neglect related information from the 800+ cases studied by this research team for the last four national biennial analyses of serious case reviews in England carried out for the Department for Education (covering the period 2003-2011). This study will draw on anonymised material from these many reviews, focusing in particular on a better understanding of the most serious instances of 'catastrophic neglect'.

Aims

- To gauge how often neglect is evident in the families of children who become the subject of a serious case review
- To analyse the characteristics of children and families where children have suffered a range of neglectful experiences
- To explore how neglect co-exists with other maltreatment
- To identify and analyse themes and trends in the most serious cases of neglect
- To provide an indication of any practice and policy implications.

Methods

The analysis will be informed by the team's usual ecological transactional approach grounded in the child's experiences. The approach requires a dynamic understanding and assessment of the interactions between children and their families, and between helping practitioners and the family and other agency responses.

A statistical analysis of the data relating to the full set of over 800 serious cases reviews will be carried out using the statistical package SPSS. Some information on neglect is available when the incident is initially notified, although this is, at times, minimal unless there has been a child protection plan under the category of neglect, either for the child at the centre of the review or for his or her sibling(s). The SPSS database will be supplemented with fuller information on neglect where it is mentioned either in the executive summary or the full, anonymised overview report of the serious case review.

The second stage of the study will involve a qualitative analysis of up to twenty anonymised cases of the most serious neglect, including those of catastrophic neglect, and will be carried out using the qualitative software package NVivo.

Findings

Previous work, along with initial indications from this study, would suggest that neglect features in approximately two thirds of those cases about which a serious case review is conducted. It is likely to be a characteristic in the family background when the death is an unexplained sudden death in infancy, which is perhaps not surprising since concerns about neglect are likely to trigger a serious case review in these cases. There was evidence of past neglect from eleven of the fourteen suicide case reviews from 2009-2011, and neglect was also a feature in a quarter of the fatal physical assault cases, and in a similar proportion of the deliberate homicide cases.

In non-fatal cases which led to a serious case review between 2009-2011, neglect was found to be a feature in 70% of child sexual assault cases, and neglect was also apparent for almost two thirds of the children who suffered a non-fatal physical assault.

Implications for Policy and Practice

It is anticipated that the finding of this study will be used to inform future NSPCC work, and to provide evidence for campaigns.

Duration

April – July 2012

Funder

NSPCC

Research Team

Dr Marian Brandon
Sue Bailey
Dr Pippa Belderson
Birgit Larsson

Dissemination

A report will be published at the end of the research, which will include a summary for the NSPCC to distribute to the non specialist reader. The study will also contribute to a series of launch events of the NSPCC's Neglect theme being planned by the NSPCC.

Publications

An output from the study will include a journal article focusing on the most serious neglect cases.

Something's broken in the system and we cannot walk away without knowing you've made efforts to fix it, and see it fixed

A study of family involvement in reviews where children died or were injured as a result of abuse or neglect.

Context

The involvement of families in serious case reviews (where a child has died or been seriously injured as a result of abuse or neglect) is an under developed area of practice and research, despite national expectations in the UK for such involvement. This study seeks to develop recommendations for policy and practice for family involvement, drawing on the knowledge and experience of professionals and family members.

Aims

The study set out to address the following questions:

- What are the current arrangements for participation as set out in local protocols and procedures in England, Northern Ireland, Wales and Scotland?
- What are the experiences of families who have participated in reviews and what learning can be drawn from these experiences?
- What are the professional experiences of family involvement?
- What conclusions can be drawn for guiding effective practice?

Methodology

The research design was responsive to the emerging findings and the study had five, interlinked stages:

- 1 A review of all published guidance across the four UK countries.
- 2 An initial series of expert focus groups to develop interview schedules and to reflect upon initial findings from the documentary review and from pilot interviews with professionals and families.
- 3 Semi structured telephone interviews with strategic managers and practitioners involved in the family involvement aspect of the review process to elicit information about current practices, challenges and localised developments.
- 4 Relatively unstructured interviews with family members who had participated in case reviews to capture their experiences and reflections, using pre-set prompt questions where appropriate.
- 5 A final series of consultation events across the four countries to explore the early analysis of the data and to extend the practice recommendations.

A total of 139 professionals were interviewed or provided written responses. These included report authors, board managers and chairs, policy makers, service managers and designated policy leads. The family interviews were undertaken throughout the life of the project concluding only when the final stages of the analysis were underway.

Findings

Guidance – England and Wales have a presumption that family members will contribute to the review whereas in Scotland and Northern Ireland, there is a requirement to consider whether family members should be invited to contribute to the review. There is no clear statement in any of the national guidance about the purpose of family involvement.

Policy – Website search of local policy documents revealed that Scotland and Northern Ireland have no local policy to supplement national guidance. In England and Wales most LSCBs relied on stock phrases from Working Together. A minority of Boards had additional policy and some had leaflets for families helping them to understand what to expect from the review.

Family Views – Families' experiences of involvement are not uniform, nor are their aspirations or expectations. The trauma of their experiences demands skilful robust practice, but evidence of this is uneven. Families expect to see a connection between their contributions and the change process; they also have multiple reasons for participation. Managing family expectations and dealing sensitively with their needs is therefore a considerable practice challenge for those engaged in the review process.

The skills and practices valued by families included:

- Excellent interpersonal skills, including building a rapport and careful communication
- Careful mapping of the family and their relevance to the review
- Skilled use of interpreters and translators to ensure families could fully participate
- Practices that demonstrated care and recognised the realities of families' lives
- Access to the learning and the proposed plans for change beyond the executive summary.

Implications for policy and practice

The report will include a guide for families who become involved in a case review. Principles for Policy for family involvement should include: Clarity of purpose; Transparency in limits and opportunities; Negotiation; Inclusivity; Sensitivity and Skilled practice.

Duration

June 2010 – June 2012

Funder

BASPCAN

Research Team

Dr Marian Brandon
Kate Morris (University of Nottingham)
Paul Tudor (Independent Safeguarding Advisor)

Dissemination

Findings from the study have been disseminated in seminars in all four UK nations. The final report, including a pull out guide for families, will be published by BASPCAN in June or July 2012.

Two papers from the project were presented at the BASPCAN conference in Belfast in April 2012. Marian Brandon and Kate Morris contributed to a podcast about the project developed for practitioners in Northern Ireland. The findings from this study have informed the redrafting of *Working Together* in England and new guidance in the three other nations.

Families on the edge of care proceedings: the operation and impact of the pre-proceedings process in children's social care

Background

This project investigated the operation of the 'pre-proceedings process' for child protection cases. Since April 2008, a local authority considering care proceedings must send the parents a 'letter before proceedings' stating its concerns and inviting them to a 'pre-proceedings meeting' (unless doing so is considered unsafe for the child). Parents are entitled to legal aid and can attend the meeting with a legal adviser. The stated aim is to avoid care proceedings, or if this is not possible, to clarify the issues so that proceedings can be completed more quickly. However, since the launch of the new process, in the aftermath of the 'Baby Peter' case, there has been a significant increase in the number of care proceedings, and the duration of proceedings has continued to rise (as discussed in the *Family Justice Review of 2011*). There are therefore important questions to be asked about the effectiveness of the pre-proceedings process.

Aims

- To examine how the pre-proceedings process relates to other parts of the child protection and 'looked after children' systems.
- To ascertain the extent to which the aims of the process are being met.
- To establish how social work managers, social workers and local authority lawyers work together to operationalise the process.
- To explore the service provided by parents' legal representatives.
- To explore the impact of the pre-proceedings process on the participation and engagement of parents.

Methods

The study was undertaken in six local authorities. There were two county councils, two unitary authorities serving smaller areas (including one in Wales), and two London boroughs. There was a good variety of demographic characteristics. Some were high users of the pre-proceedings process and of care proceedings, others less so. We divided the fieldwork with our Bristol colleagues, each of us taking three areas. The fieldwork combined a survey of local authority files with observations of the meetings and interviews with practitioners and parents.

Overall, the data comprised:

- Case file studies: 173 cases starting care proceedings in 2009, of which 86 had pre-proceedings stages, and 87 did not; and 34 where there were pre-proceedings steps but no subsequent care application (total 207 cases)
- Observations of 36 pre-proceedings meetings (2010-11)
- Interviews with parents who attended the meetings (25)
- In-depth interviews with social work managers (16), social workers (18), local authority lawyers (16), and parents' legal representatives (18).

Preliminary findings

The researchers are currently in the process of analysing the data, but it is possible to give some preliminary findings, based mainly on the observed meetings and the interviews.

There are typical features of the cases that go into the pre-proceedings process. They tend to be long-standing cases that are well-known to the local authority, often because of concerns about neglect, poor home conditions, the impact of domestic violence, and parental drug or alcohol misuse. A third of the observed cases involved unborn or newly born babies (in these cases, children's services had been involved with older children or the parents themselves). The children are almost always on child protection plans.

Meetings tend to be fairly short and focused – 28 of the observed meetings lasted an hour or less. Five lasted more than an hour and half, but four of these were in one authority. There tends to be relatively little room for the parent(s) to negotiate a different plan to the one proposed by the local authority. The 'negotiations', such as they are, will be about clarifications and details, not substantial change.

There are a number of important balances that the meetings have to strike, notably to safeguard the child/ren and try to promote parental engagement. They are also used to reiterate the authority's concerns, trying to get the parent to acknowledge these, and to secure their agreement about what will happen in the future.

The presence of the lawyers is a key factor in shaping the dynamics of the meeting. The MoJ/DCSF *Best Practice Guidance* (2009) about the pre-proceedings process emphasises that the meeting should be led by the social work side, and indeed the lawyers are often quiet (and sometimes entirely silent). But silence does not mean that they do not have an impact.

Duration

April 2010 – June 2012

Funder

ESRC

Research Team

This is a joint project between the School of Social Work and Psychology at UEA and the School of Law at Bristol University.

From UEA:

Dr Jonathan Dickens and Julie Young

From Bristol University:

Professor Judith Masson and Kay Bader

As one team manager put it:

"This meeting is special because it's more formal, it's more formal because parents see it as a legal meeting rather than a social work meeting... It's a legal meeting, they've got their legal representatives there who are able to give them advice and support, and we are able to give them a very clear plan with just a few points."

A parent put it this way:

"...it felt horrible ...because it was a legal meeting I suppose, and I suppose because I knew what the next step up was... The core group meetings are just like family member and midwife and that, and they're all right, they're not very intimidating – but this one, I was worried about this one."

As for the lawyers being silent, one father expressed his view as follows:

"He never said nothing (laughing), he was just sitting there... He only said one thing, I think it was about the funding for the nursery, and that was it. No, but he did a good job of just turning up... I am happy the solicitor is involved now... because before I was scared, I didn't know what to do with them, I was just getting bullied – like gangs in school, every day you get bullied, but now your big brother is in school you got confidence, and the bullies ain't going to come next to you no more, because they know you have got your brother there – and that's my solicitor. So I feel that, yeah, I feel all right now..."

The quotations show some of the tensions behind the pre-proceedings meetings. On the one hand, they are important for safeguarding parents' rights, but on the other they are also a last-ditch way of trying to get the parents to cooperate with the children's services department. Social work attitudes towards the role of the parents' lawyers exemplify this tension. For example, the rights perspective is captured in the following comment from a team manager:

"I think that from a parent's point of view, the fact that they're getting legal representation – so the first time they meet their solicitor isn't at court on the day of the hearing – I think that is good and right for them. So I think that is beneficial."

Against that, a more utilitarian approach is shown by another team manager, who sees the parents' solicitor as a sort of ally for the local authority:

"...their solicitor would say to them clearly, 'this is serious stuff' – so it's not just us as a department saying it – or nagging them to death, as they might well see it – there's somebody else outside the authority actually saying to them that this needs to change."

The main frustration from the local authority side was a sense that the courts did not respect the work that they did in the pre-proceedings process, but routinely ordered further assessments, thus adding to delay. As a local authority lawyer put it:

"...the whole point as we understood it was the judiciary would be a lot firmer on the number of assessments, particularly if we have done them before, because the whole point is to frontload it and to avoid all of that under care proceedings. In theory, care proceedings are meant to be shorter. But what we were finding was that even though we did assessments, and they were agreed by the parents with the letters of instruction, we would get into court and we were asked to re-do certain things ... we were almost back at square one. So maybe in certain cases, if we know we are likely to issue anyway, we might as well do it under care proceedings, we save six months."

As the government responds to the *Family Justice Review* with a renewed drive to reduce the duration of care proceedings, our study highlights some of the challenges this entails – to get the right balances between children's rights and parents' rights, evidence gathering and forward planning, safeguarding children and engaging with parents who may well have many difficulties and a long history of limited cooperation with social work plans. A greater awareness of this complexity is essential if legal and policy changes are to have a realistic chance of success.

Dissemination and publications

The researchers are beginning to share the findings with a wide range of social work and legal practitioners, managers, policy-makers and academics, through publications and conference presentations. The full project report will be published later in 2012.

Recognition and Telling: Developing Earlier Routes to Safety for Children and Young People

Context

This research project aims to improve access to protection and support for children and young people at risk of harm. The government commissioned Munro Review of Child Protection (2011) argued that a child's journey from experiencing problems to getting effective help should be at the heart of the child protection system. It stressed the importance of an offer of early help for children and their families. The current research project focuses on vulnerable young people. It will enquire about their experiences of seeking help and getting support from both informal and formal sources.

Aims

The study seeks to gain greater knowledge of how children and young people recognise and deal with problems of abuse and neglect.

The key research questions addressed are:

- How do children and young people think about and classify experiences as abuse and neglect?
- How do children and young people tell about the problems they are facing?
- What are young people's views about support services?
- How do family members experience support services for children?
- How do professionals feel that access to support services could be improved for children and young people?

Methods

The study has two principal phases. In the first phase information will be gathered via:

- A literature review about children's experiences of telling and help seeking
- A content analysis of an online peer support message board about abuse and neglect
- Semi-structured activity based interviews with 30 vulnerable young people aged between 11 and 18
- A round of five focus groups and workshops involving two groups of school age children and young people, a focus group of adult family members, and two focus groups of professionals, one with managers with strategic responsibility for service development, and one with practitioners who work directly with children and young people.

We will use the findings to suggest a model of service delivery that is responsive to the expressed wishes and needs of young people and assists their access to appropriate support and protection.

In the second phase we will return to the focus groups to discuss our findings.

The study employs a group of eight young researchers, aged between 16 and 24, who will be involved at all stages of the project from research design to dissemination. The young people can use their involvement to work towards an accredited qualification. The young researchers meet regularly with adult researchers, so far working on research ethics and the content analysis.

Findings

A literature review has been conducted. Most of the literature related to children telling about abuse rather than the recognition of abuse and neglect. The literature suggests that young people do not always understand that what is happening is unacceptable and are unsure whether their experiences should be classed as abuse. Disclosure happens more often about sexual abuse than physical harm and young people are least likely to tell about neglect. Children are more likely to disclose if their home circumstances are supportive and only a small minority tell a professional.

The content analysis is being undertaken with young researchers. Emerging findings suggest that there are a wide range of problems faced by young people, ranging in severity and duration. Often young people express the dilemma of feeling that the situation cannot continue as it is, whilst not knowing what to do. Sexual abuse by peers appears to be a significant issue and one that is not widely recognised, making it difficult to talk about. Young people's problems are compounded when they do not have a trusted adult they can turn to and some children are particularly vulnerable when they are isolated both at home and in the community. Barriers to telling such as fear of the consequences may result in a young person delaying telling until they feel desperate. The respondents often advise telling a friend, with the purpose of sharing and offloading. However, where the aim is to get action to stop abuse young people recommend telling an adult rather than a peer.

Implications for Policy and Practice

The research aims to contribute to service provision to improve access to support for children and young people who are at risk of abuse and neglect. Implications for policy and practice will form part of the final report.

Duration

September 2011 – August 2013

Funder

Office of the Children's Commissioner for England

Research Team

Jeanette Cossar
Dr Marian Brandon
Dr Darren Sharpe (Anglia Ruskin University)
Sue Bailey
Dr Laura Biggart
A team of young researchers

Dissemination and Publications

A launch event is planned for 2013. A report will be produced for the Office of the Children's Commissioner and published online. A young people's version of the report will also be made available.

Contact after Adoption – a longitudinal follow up in late adolescence

Context

The Adoption and Children Act (2002) introduced a new requirement that the arrangements for contact with birth family members must be considered and set out in the child's placement plan. Decisions about contact should consider the child's welfare throughout his or her life, yet the long-term impact of contact for children adopted from the care system has not yet been empirically established.

During 2012 and 2013, the third stage of the Contact after Adoption study will be taking place. This project began in 1996 and the current study is the third follow up of a sample of adopted children who have experienced a wide range of contact arrangements (including no contact, exchanging letters and photos, and face to face contact) with some of their birth relatives – mostly parents and grandparents.

At the second stage of the study (2000 – 2004), almost all of the children felt fully and happily integrated into their adoptive families (Neil 2012). Many (usually younger) children had not yet started to consider their differences acquired through adoption: adoption was an *unexplored* topic and contact had little emotional impact, as suggested by 7 yr old Olivia who saw her birth mother once a year and *liked 'getting the presents'*. A second group found their adoptive status to be *unproblematic*, with no evidence of the tasks of differentiation being stressful. As one child said *'there's nothing bad about it... it's normal'*. The largest group of children, however, were those for whom adoption brought about a complicated mixture of feelings as illustrated by the child who graphically described his feelings about being adopted as *'in the tummy it feels all squidgy'*.

Because of their young ages, it was too early, at stage 2, to really judge the effects of contact on the children. Now, however, all of the children in the sample are aged between 14 and 21 years and in this third stage of the project, their views and feelings about contact will be carefully considered, along with those of their adoptive parents and birth relatives.

Aims

Five key research questions to be addressed are:

- What types of openness have adoptees, adoptive parents and birth relatives experienced since the last follow up?
- What are the views of adopted young people, adoptive parents and birth relatives about the contact plans they have experienced?

- What impact does contact have on adopted young people in areas such as: self-esteem, emotional and behavioural development, adoptive identity development and managing adoption related losses, relationships with adoptive and birth family members, decisions about 'searching'?
- What long term impact have contact arrangements had on the adoption specific psychological issues that face adoptive parents and birth relatives?
- To what extent do the personal characteristics of adoptees, adoptive parents and birth relatives contribute to the success of contact and outcomes for the adoptee?

Methods

The sample for the research will be the 87 young people and their 62 adoptive parents and 73 birth relatives who were included in the research at stage 2. It is fundamental to this stage of the project that the voices of as many of the young adoptees as possible are heard and understood. To help with this, a group of young adoptee consultants has been recruited. They will advise on approaching the participants, developing the interview schedules, analysing the responses and disseminating the findings. Previous involvement of peer consultants in this way has made all the difference in communicating effectively with hard to reach samples.

Post adoption contact is a dynamic and transactional relationship-based process (Neil and Howe, 2004) and the research will reflect this by also seeking the viewpoints of the adoptive parents and birth relatives of the young people. Structured questionnaires, semi structured interviews and a range of standardised measures will be used to provide new and comparative data on the development and impact of the contact arrangements over time.

Implications for Policy and Practice

The research will inform policy and practice in relation to planning and supporting contact.

Duration

April 2012 – September 2013

Funder

The Nuffield Foundation

Research Team

Dr Elsbeth Neil, Mary Beek, Dr Emma Ward, Jeanette Cossar, Lynn Von Korff

Dissemination

It is anticipated that project findings and practice suggestions can be disseminated widely via a project website using a range of media, and through dissemination events. The project will also be written up in a book form accessible to practitioners, and in journal articles.

References

- Neil E (2012) Making sense of adoption: Integration and differentiation from the perspective of adopted children in middle childhood. *Children and Youth Services Review*, 34, 409-416
- Neil E and Howe D (2004) 'Conclusions: a transactional model for thinking about contact', in E Neil and D Howe (eds), *Contact in Adoption and Permanent Foster Care: Research, theory and practice*, London: BAAF

Looked after Children and Offending: reducing risk and promoting resilience

Background

Outcomes for young people in the care system, both those who enter in early childhood and those who enter in adolescence, continue to raise concerns at national and local level. Looked after children are on average twice as likely as other children to be cautioned or convicted of offences, and 40% of children in custody and 25% of adult prisoners have been looked after.

Looked after children who are most at risk of anti-social behaviour, social exclusion and criminal careers need to be identified and better supported; care and justice agencies need to find ways to reduce these risks by promoting life-chances, resilience, prosocial behaviour and physical and emotional well-being.

Aims

The project's goal was to improve the life chances of looked after children at risk of offending and criminalisation through meeting the following aims:

- To identify risk and protective factors which increase or decrease the likelihood of offending by young people in care.
- To identify resilience factors that can be promoted in looked after children to reduce the likelihood of offending.
- To identify features of the care and justice systems which may increase/reduce the likelihood of the unnecessary criminalisation of looked after children.
- To identify the key transitional/turning points which are opportunities for interventions to divert children from offending.
- To develop an evidence based typology of looked after children and offending.

Methods

The multidisciplinary research team from UEA have used a multi-level, multi-method approach to this study and carried out:

- A review of the policy and research literature
- A survey in England and Wales of practice in local authority services for Looked after Children (LAC) and Youth Offending Services (YOS).
- In four diverse local authorities, file searches and interviews with 100 young people from 3 groups a) looked after young people who had been in contact with the youth justice system and comparison groups of b) children who had been in contact with the youth justice system and who are not looked after and c) looked after children who had not been in contact with the youth justice system
- Interviews young people included narrative accounts, developmental measures and drew on social psychological frameworks for analysing attitudes and decision making.
- Interagency focus groups in the four local authorities to explore local practice and protocols for supporting young people in care and at risk of offending.

We are indebted to all of the young people who have taken part in these sessions and to all of the staff who have assisted in their recruitment. Engagement with a young people's reference group recruited through VOICE has also been central to completion of this project. This group facilitated development of effective recruitment protocols for this ambitious project including the design of a flyer.

Duration

March 2010 – August 2012

Funder

Big Lottery

Research Team

This project is a partnership between TACT (The Adolescent and Children's Trust) and the Centre for Research on the Child and Family at UEA (Professor Gillian Schofield, Dr Victoria Scaife, Dr Emma Ward, Dr Laura Biggart, Dr Jane Dodsworth, Birgit Larsson, Alice Haynes and Nigel Stone)

Findings

- The care system has proved to be effective in providing good care to children from backgrounds of abuse and neglect, promoting security, resilience and pro-social values.
- However, prior to care most looked after children have experienced many of the risk factors, such as adverse parenting and abuse, that also lead to offending. Thus a correlation between care and offending is to a large extent a result of shared risk factors.
- Early entry to care followed by sensitive parenting in a stable placement with good professional support from a range of agencies, including education and health, minimises the risk of offending behaviour.
- However, late entry into care in adolescence can also reduce the risk of offending if it capitalises on the protective potential of relationships and involvement in constructive activities.
- If children in care from backgrounds of abuse have significant emotional and behavioural problems, do not have stable placements with sensitive caregivers and do not have appropriate professional support, they will be at risk of a range of poor outcomes, including being at risk of offending.
- The two most crucial periods are entry into care during adolescence and transitions from care to independence. These are windows of opportunity for positive change, but they also carry

risk. When the system works effectively it builds resilience; if not there is a danger of the harm done before entry into care being exacerbated.

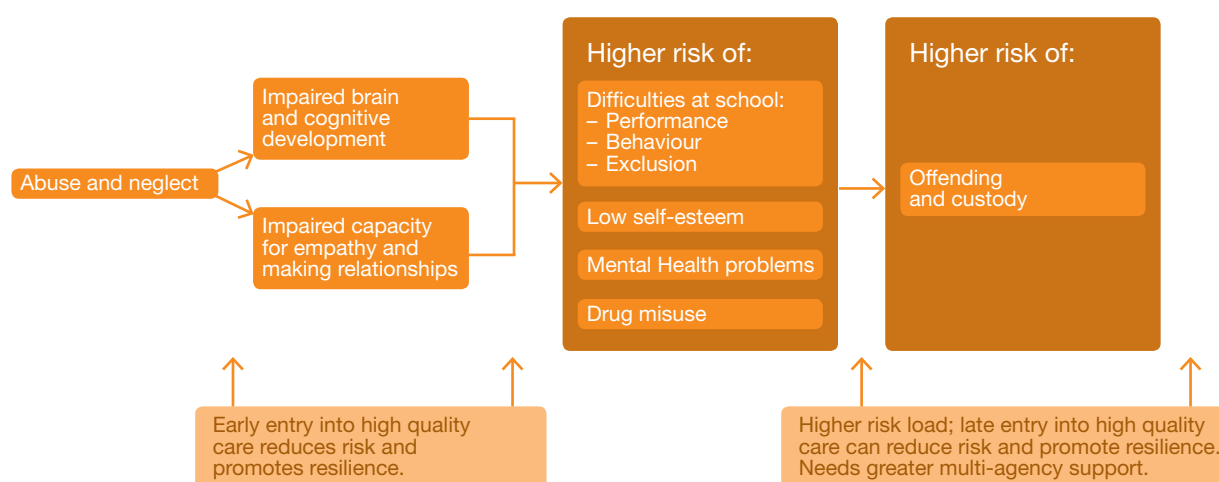
- An additional and serious risk factor for looked after children is inappropriate criminalisation through police and court involvement as a response to challenging behaviour or minor offences in their placements. Policy commitments and practice protocols to prevent this are not working well enough.

This diagram represents pathways from abuse and neglect, potentially and for some children to offending. The emphasis here is on the significance of timely intervention, the role of high quality care in placements - and the increased significance of multi-agency involvement in working with adolescents in placement and leaving care in order to mitigate the accumulated risk that comes from the impact of abuse and neglect through middle childhood and into adolescence.

Implications for policy and practice

The overlap between these two vulnerable groups - young people in care and young people who offend - raises specific issues for joint working, service development and commissioning that can only be successfully managed when evidence is available that facilitates assessment of need and risk.

Pathways from abuse and neglect: The significance of timely intervention and high quality care



Dissemination

- Conservative, Liberal Democrat and Labour Party conferences 2011
- Launch conference January 2012
- Meetings at Ministry of Justice and Downing Street 2011/12
- Round Table for Parliamentarians chaired by Shadow Minister for Children June 2012
- Annual Centre Conference, Sheffield – with Banks Chambers July 2012
- Making Research Count Seminar July 2012

Publications

Research report: *Looked After Children and Offending: reducing risk and promoting resilience*, (2012). Schofield, G. Ward E., Biggart, L., Scaife, V., Dodsworth, J., Larsson, B., Haynes, A. and Stone, N. Norwich; UEA/TACT.

Findings from the project are being written up for publication in national and international academic, policy and practice journals and further dissemination is planned through professional networks in 2012.

Foster care commissioning in an age of austerity: the experiences and views of the independent provider sector in one English region

Context

Considerable knowledge exists about the commissioning of fostering placements from external agencies within a context of shared corporate parenting. However, the impact of governmental change in the UK from May 2010, and particularly that of austerity measures, has yet to be determined.

This study explored the experiences of foster care providers in one English region in the year following the government's first Spending Review. It builds on the findings of Dr Sellick's earlier foster care commissioning research and considers these alongside some policy ideas put forward by influential figures sympathetic to the government.

Aims

The principal aim of this study was to explore the impact of austerity measures on independent fostering providers (IFPs) during the first full year which followed the autumn 2010 Spending Review. It therefore explored:

- the volume and type of placements being sought by local authorities (LAs);
- working arrangements between commissioners and providers;
- relationships with local authority social work staff;
- if, in respect of long term or permanent placements, IFP foster carers are being approached directly or indirectly by LA staff to consider special guardianship, transfer to the local authority and reduced fees? If so, are these growing trends?
- whether, despite framework agreements, fostering placements are being commissioned as a last resort and/or are decisions on permanence being influenced by cost?

Methods

This small-scale qualitative study explored how contemporary commissioning processes are being experienced by senior managers in six IFPs in one locality in England. Face to face interviews took place with IFP managers between September 2011 and January 2012.

The six IFPs were selected because they had been commissioned by LAs in a particular region over a period of several years, to provide fostering placements. These managers were able to comment upon commissioning arrangements and relationships throughout this time, including whether these had changed during the period beyond the Spending Review. The IFPs represented a mix of ownership type comprising those which were registered as not for profit voluntary organisations and for-profit agencies, including some which had been acquired by private equity companies.

Each interview was audio recorded. A semi-structured interview schedule of research-based questions focused on the key areas identified from previous studies.

The interviews were analysed thematically. Particular attention was paid to the language of the providers, including how they described the impact of austerity measures on their agencies, carers and the children. These themes were then considered alongside the published accounts of previous relevant research studies and policy reports.

Findings

The findings of this study shed light on the initial effects of austerity measures on both LA commissioners and IFPs. Whilst collaborative working relationships remain, the study highlights legal and procedural factors which may distort or threaten effective foster care provision. LAs are reported to be 'squeezing' the market through a double-edged process of over-stimulating supply and imposing more resource intensive and diverse tendering requirements. Both potentially threaten the sustainability of provider agencies, particularly those which are not amongst the small cluster of very large enterprises.

Duration

September 2011 – March 2012

Funder

The Research Activity Support Fund
of the School of Social Work and
Psychology, UEA

Research Team

Dr Clive Sellick

There was also a view, expressed by these managers, that social work practice had been compromised by the impact of LA austerity measures in respect of making inappropriate referrals, often when placements have broken down, so that carers and children are not well matched and positive outcomes may be jeopardised. It was acknowledged, however, that LA social workers found themselves in a position of not being able to seek the kind of quality service which they would want for these children. External commissioning of fostering placements is still practised as a last resort and viewed by many commissioners as a more expensive option. Suggested changes to policy and practice such as outsourcing and payment by results, during the current Coalition government's term of office in the UK, are likely to have significant consequences both for local authorities and IFPs.

Implications for Policy and Practice

The external commissioning of services by public authorities has attracted the interest of policy advisers and makers. As a result of his work Dr Sellick has been interviewed by the Prime Minister and Deputy Prime Minister's adviser on children's services and was consulted by the Policy Exchange think tank and contributed to its 2012 publication *Fostering Aspirations: reforming the foster care system in England and Wales*. He has also been consulted by the Audit Commission in its exploration of local variation in the unit costs of independent foster care. He is a member of the Department for Education's expert working group on commissioning foster and residential child care services.



Publications

Sellick, C (2011a) Independent fostering providers: predators or pioneers, partners or procured? *Adoption and Fostering*, 35, 1, 33-43

Sellick, C (2011b) Commissioning permanent fostering placements from external providers: an exploration of current policy and practice, *British Journal of Social Work*, 41, 449-466

Sellick, C (2011c) Privatising foster care: the UK experience within an international context, *Social Policy and Administration*, 45, 7, 788-805

Sellick, C (under review) Foster care commissioning in an age of austerity: the experiences and views of the independent provider sector in one English region

Evaluation of the BREAK Moving On project

Context

BREAK is a Norfolk based voluntary organisation which provides a range of residential child care and other services for children and families. In 2012 they received funding from the Esmée Fairbairn Foundation to develop two areas of their work – their transitions and mentoring programmes. These two projects have been brought together in the 'Moving On' team. Gillian Schofield and the Centre for Research on the Child and Family were funded to undertake the evaluation.

The project at Break is targeting important areas of work with children and young people for which good practice models are needed. Much of Gillian Schofield's work at UEA has focussed on the welfare and stability of children in care and has highlighted the support needs of young people in transition to adulthood. Her recent project (discussed above) on the risk and protective factors for young people looked after who are young offenders has highlighted the challenges for young people, predominantly those in residential care, who do not have access to support for education and pro-social behaviour during adolescence and the significance of close relationship with carers as a protective factor. The importance of mentors in adolescence and support during the transition to adulthood has been a key theme in this and other projects, especially for young people in residential care but also for young people in foster care.

Over the three year period of this development project at Break, Professor Gillian Schofield, with the support of a research associate, will monitor the progress and outcomes of both the mentoring and support for transition to adulthood initiative.

Research design

The research questions to be addressed concern the potential benefit of targeted services provided by Break to young people, both those in their care and those not in their care to whom they provide support.

The interventions to be developed are multi-systemic and relationship based, so it will be important to evaluate the nature and impact of both a) support for young people in relation to such areas as accessing health, education, constructive activities, training and employment and b) the relationship with carers and mentors.

Although some of the evaluation will focus on outcomes in terms of young people's mental health and well-being and their engagement in constructive activity and relationships, the evaluation will also seek to establish young people's perceptions of their close relationships during their time in care and the support currently available to them. Their sense of security, identity and belonging, for example, which is a clear goal of permanence, will be a particular focus here.

Data collection

1) Quantitative data on the young people's histories and current situation

Break are currently developing improved systems for recording data on the young people in their care and in receipt of their services, so that it will be possible to establish key information about the young people, including standardised measures of emotional and behavioural development (Goodman's Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire- the SDQ). This data will enable the UEA team to consider change over time, but also to compare data on this group of young people with other data sets at UEA and other research institutions to indicate the range and level of difficulties to be addressed.

2) Questionnaires / interviews with young people

We will ask young people to complete questionnaires on their experiences of care and of the services made available to them through Break. The sample here will need to be negotiated, but we are aware that there may be valuable data from young people who have been in receipt of Break transitions /leaving care services and are now in their 20s, in addition to those currently in receipt of services.

We will then interview 30 young people to explore their accounts of their care experiences, their close relationships and sense of security / identity / belonging, and their views of the support they have received from Break. These interviews will be recorded and transcribed.

3) Focus groups of professionals

Finally, we will conduct at least one and possibly two focus groups of professionals, to capture the views and experiences of both Break staff (carers and transitions workers/mentors) and local authority staff e.g. the children's social workers, the Independent Reviewing Officers.

Analysis

Quantitative data on children's characteristics, the developmental measures and the questionnaires will be analysed using SPSS.

Qualitative data from interviews and focus groups will be coded using NVivo and analysed thematically.

Implications for practice

The project will inform a range of practice in relation to transitions from residential care and mentoring for young people in care. It is an important opportunity to consider how different approaches can improve outcomes as young people move into adulthood.

Dates

April 2012 – March 2015

Funder

Esmée Fairbairn Foundation

Research team

Professor Gillian Schofield

A study of the needs of Looked After Children populations, prior to the introduction of intensive intervention programmes for fostered children

Context

The Department for Education, in partnership with the Department of Health and the Youth Justice Board, is supporting a number of local authorities in offering intensive interventions for looked after children, and children on the edge of care or custody. The interventions include Multi-dimensional Treatment Foster Care for Adolescents (MTFC-A), and KEEP (keeping foster and kinship parents supported).

Norfolk and Suffolk County Councils jointly bid to deliver these two evidenced-based interventions, initially in the Great Yarmouth and Lowestoft area. Prior to their introduction, the councils commissioned UEA to undertake an analysis of the numbers and needs of their Looked After Children (LAC), to assess likely demand for the interventions, and identify who might best benefit from them. Providing appropriate in-county placements for the most challenging Looked After Children can be considered in the context of:

- Increasing numbers of Looked After Children both locally and nationally.
- Increasing reliance on independent sector care provision.
- Placement instability and poor outcomes for some children, especially those with persistent behavioural difficulties.
- Problems with recruiting and retaining 'in county' foster carers.

Aims of the study

- To profile the population of looked after children in Norfolk and Suffolk.
- To estimate how many young people meet the criteria for inclusion in the programmes, and who among them might best benefit.
- To assess the likely sustainability of the programmes and the flow of referrals to them.
- To comment on the cost implications of the programmes and potential future savings.

Methods

Both councils provided anonymised information on the 1,750 children in their care, enabling an analysis of the children's ages, gender, locality, reason for being in care, length of time in care, type of placement and history of placement moves. These data were set in a context of national figures and trends for Looked After Children. Additional local data, and commentary on current provision, was provided by, among others, the education services, CAMHS and the Youth Offending Service.

Findings

Of the 1,750 Looked after Children in the two counties, 55% were male, and the majority (70%) were in a foster placement, and were being provided with a service due to abuse and/or neglect. A third were aged 5-12 years, for whom the 'KEEP' enhanced foster carer training is designed. 56% (or nearly 1,000 young people) were aged 11 and over, an age appropriate to the adolescent intervention (MTFC-A). Around 10% of the children experienced three or more placement moves in the 12 months prior to the study. While 55% of both counties' school pupils gained five 'good' grades at GCSE in 2011, only 12% of LAC achieved these grades. Key Stage 2 results were similarly much lower than for pupils in general. Data from one county's Youth Offending Team indicated that 24% of 'Start of Order Asset' report forms in a year related to young people who were either currently 'looked after', or had been in the past.

The young people most likely to benefit from the interventions had experienced many, if not all, of the following:

- Multiple placements, and/or at risk of current placement breakdown.
- A Strength and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ) score giving cause for concern (potentially the case for 50% of LAC).
- Emotional and/or behavioural problems of a level warranting CAMH services.
- Poor school attendance and/or underachievement;
- Conviction or final warning/reprimand, or YOS early intervention project engagement.
- Alcohol or drugs misuse.

Being resident near to Lowestoft/Great Yarmouth reduced the number for whom the intervention might initially be appropriate. To maintain MTFC-A programme numbers over time it will need to be offered to those not currently living in this area.

Implications for Policy and Practice

If the programme is successful and enables the child or young person to return from residential care to an in-county foster placement, significant savings are possible. However the most needy young people may not be suitable for the intervention, and conversely the children most likely to complete the programme may not be those for whom most savings could be realised. The programme needs to engage a full complement of young people (ideally 8), otherwise average costs per intervention will be higher and potential savings lower. Research findings from some intensive intervention schemes suggest that initial success can be hard to sustain over time. The quality and intensity of the support offered to the young person, their foster carer and/or birth family, post intervention is key.

Duration

September 2011 – January 2012

Funder

Suffolk Children and Young People's Services; Norfolk Children and Young People's Services

Research Team

Sue Bailey
Dr. Clive Sellick

Dissemination

Findings were presented to the Core Management Group responsible for the intervention programme, and additionally to multi-agency audience of professionals and stakeholders from Norfolk and Suffolk.

Publications

The final report was submitted to Norfolk and Suffolk County Councils in January 2012.

Utilising fathers' narratives to inform interventions for supporting separated parents

Background

Over the past decade academic and political attention concerning the role and involvement of fathers has steadily increased. In terms of social policy, individuals and institutions alike are expected to consider the role of fathers in children's and family lives (Clegg 2010). Given current proposals to reform legal aid in private family law and the Coalition commitments to facilitate shared parenting and relationship support (Family Justice Review 2011), enriching the evidence base for such interventions is crucial. There is a need to synthesise current research findings and evaluation of parenting education and support interventions aimed at separating parents and within this, a particular need for data on fathers' perspectives.

Aims and objectives

The central aim of this project is to utilise and extend Dr Philip's doctoral research project on fathering after divorce or separation, in order to update and deepen the evidence base on supporting fathers in their ongoing parental and co-parental relationships. This in turn will be used to develop practice guidance relevant to social workers, providers of mediation or contact facilitation services and other voluntary sector organisations.

The specific objectives for the project are:

- To disseminate and evaluate the doctoral research through academic journals and conferences, presenting not only the substantive findings, but also methodological insights and broader theoretical arguments produced by the research.
- To conduct a literature review and evaluation of interventions involved in supporting men as fathers after divorce or separation.
- To work with local and national organisations, practitioners and user groups, as part of this review process, to gather information and insight about services and good practice. Such groups will include: One Plus One, Relate, National Association of Child Contact Centres, CAFCASS, Norfolk Family Mediation Service, Mancroft Advisory Project in Norwich, Norfolk and Norwich Families House.
- To produce a report based on the review and consultation process, which synthesises and evaluates the current evidence base, identifies key research findings, issues and elements of existing good or innovative practice.
- To organise an event aimed at practitioners in third sector and statutory organisations, academics and policy makers, to launch the report, identify key issues and promote discussion.

Research methods

The central research activity for this project is the systematic literature review. This has involved the identification and evaluation of peer reviewed publications or commissioned reports produced since 2005 within the UK and beyond; including experimental, quantitative and qualitative studies of interventions aimed at separating or separated parents. The interventions may be aimed at couples, parents or fathers but must include fathers as part of the treatment group.

The review process is informed by the Cochrane and Campbell models for systematic review and a preliminary search of both Cochrane and Campbell libraries suggests that supporting fathering remains an area that is under researched. The literature review will form the basis of the final report by Philip & O'Brien to be launched on 18th October 2012 at our Centre seminar event in London: *Supporting fathers after separation or divorce: evidence and insights*.

In addition to the literature review, the project involves building on local and national networks with practitioners and organisations working with separating parents and/or fathers. This will facilitate a consultative and qualitative element to the review and reporting process and will also strengthen links between practitioners and the Research Centre.

Duration

November 2011– October 2012

Funder

A one year ESRC funded Post-Doctoral Fellowship

Research Team

Dr Georgia Philip
Professor Margaret O'Brien

References

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- The Campbell Collaboration:
<http://www.campbellcollaboration.org>
- The Cochrane collaboration:
<http://www.cochrane.org>

Impact and dissemination

A key policy implication of this project is that a language of gender neutrality is insufficient for understanding or supporting parents after divorce. Existing research on family lives and parenting relationships after divorce or separation highlights the ongoing significance of gender in shaping the experiences of fathers, mothers and children. An already gendered experience of family life and parental care means that established patterns of caring for children can become fault-lines for the renegotiation of parental roles, responsibilities and identities following divorce or separation. It is therefore crucial for practitioners and policy makers to have an appreciation of the complexity of contemporary gender relations and the particular emotional and moral investments involved in mothering and fathering (Doucet 2006, Featherstone 2010). Most specifically, this is important to policy making in relation to divorcing/separating parents and mediation or support services, in order to be attentive and responsive to the investment and work involved in sustaining family relationships and to avoid simply imposing or reworking an adversarial gendered positioning of fathers and mothers.

The project will culminate with two key dissemination events. In July we will be holding a local seminar and networking event, here at the Research Centre. This will be aimed at local or regional practitioners working with separating parents and/or fathers. The event will be used to showcase the Centre's ongoing research on fathers and families, to indicate preliminary findings from the literature review and to offer opportunities for discussion and sharing of practice issues. The final event, to launch the Centre report, will be held in London on 18th October 2012 and will be aimed at practitioners, organisations, academics and policy makers. This event will present the key findings from the report, alongside guest speakers and opportunities for discussion.



Publications

Phillip, G & O'Brien, M (report in preparation)
Supporting Fathers after separation or divorce: evidence, interventions and insights
Journal publications are planned

Engaging with fathers who are recent arrivals in the UK: a feasibility study of an innovative strategy for escape from disadvantage for parents and children

Background

A substantial body of research shows fathers' involvement in their children's early education and care to be associated with higher levels of achievement and fewer behaviour problems right through to adulthood – whatever the family background. The Fatherhood Institute, a national charity, has developed programme (the 'Dad Factor') to help schools apply a range of strategies to engage fathers and encourage their involvement in their children's learning. While project monitoring suggests positive outcomes, The Fatherhood Institute now wishes to adapt this programme for pre-school children's centres and for use specifically with families who have been in the UK for fewer than four years, paying special attention to refugee and asylum seeking families.

Aims and objectives

This project involves undertaking a feasibility study and substantial evaluation of this programme in four children's centres (two intervention two controls) in some of the most deprived boroughs of London.

The expectation is that, following the programme, management and staff in the participating centres will, in comparison with controls, have developed strategies to increase engagement with fathers in families who have been in the UK for fewer than four years and will be engaging with more of these men more often and more thoroughly.

A strong body of research suggests that greater paternal engagement in children's early education will help give children a head start before commencing primary school. Their fathers' English language skills should also improve, facilitating employability, giving them better understanding of UK systems and enhancing their capacity to advocate for their families.

Research methods

A process evaluation of the 'Dad Factor' will examine the following questions: *what was the aim of the programme, what was done, what was the process?* Intervention and control sites will be matched as far as possible to reduce the likelihood of pre-existing factors impacting on outcomes. The two intervention sites will receive the 'Dad Factor'. Pre and post questionnaires and other data collection will measure change in staff attitudes / beliefs / confidence, involvement of new-arrival fathers in the Children's Centres and other services and outreach projects. Data collection points will be pre-intervention, post training and six month follow up. Building on the findings, the Fatherhood Institute will reconfigure the 'Dad Factor' which, if judged successful, will be introduced in other children centres in London and across the UK.

Anticipated outcomes:

The first step in new-arrival-fathers becoming involved in centre activities is, of course, for centres to identify them and draw them in. For this reason the goal of Dad Factor is to promote a father-inclusive family support approach so that management and staff in children's centres will:

- feel more positive and confident about engaging with fathers and father-figures in families who have been living in the UK for less than four years
- develop strategies to reach out to the men in these families
- attract more such fathers into Centre activities more often, while also engaging more regularly with them in home visits, other outreach and related services.
- support their language/literacy, referring on where necessary and possible

This is a collaborative project between **Centre for Research on the Child and Family** (led by Professor Margaret O'Brien, with the researchers Alice Haynes and Michela Franceschelli) and The Fatherhood Institute, funded by Trust For London, from 2012-2014 .

Expectations about childbearing and childrearing

Context

This programme of work examines the importance and influence of relationships in having and parenting children. Our research uses attachment theory to explore decisions to have children, expectations of parenting, and bonding in pregnancy and beyond. Research projects running at the moment are (1) exploring the influence of relationship factors in decisions to have children, and (2) exploring how prenatal bonding might influence postnatal outcomes. With the assistance of BabyCentre.co.uk we recently completed a study examining the relationship predictors of bonding in pregnancy.

Aims

The way parents think about their children before they are born has been linked with a number of important outcomes including maternal mental health, well-being, and health practices in pregnancy (Lindgren, 2001), parent-infant interaction (Siddiqui & Hagglof, 2000), and attachment disorganization (Crawford & Benoit, 2009; Green & Goldwyn, 2002). Understanding the nature of the prenatal bond is therefore vital, (Alhusen, 2008; Bryan, 2000), and could guide risk-assessment and intervention (Lindgren, 2001). However, we know little about what predicts prenatal bonding, or how it develops (Lindgren, 2001). Romantic attachment relationships in adulthood have been associated with the strength and quality of prenatal bonds in previous research, but the mechanisms by which these concepts are linked have remained unclear. Our study explored predictive pathways to prenatal bonding, examining the mediating role of women's caregiving responsiveness.

Methods

263 women in pregnancy were recruited in an anonymous online study from BabyCentre.co.uk. Women were experiencing singleton pregnancies with no known complications, and were all in romantic relationships. Women completed measures of giving and receiving care and support in their romantic relationships, their thoughts about their foetus, pregnancy anxiety and other measures of psychological well-being.

Findings

From the factors we measured, the strongest predictors of prenatal bonding were caregiving responsiveness and mental health. Caregiving responsiveness mediated the relationship between attachment avoidance and prenatal bonding. That is, women who were avoidant in their relationships with their partners were more likely to be low on caregiving responsiveness, and thus more likely to have lower levels of prenatal bonding.

Implications for Policy and Practice

Where they are in a relationship, the thoughts and feelings of expectant parents cannot always be viewed in isolation from how they feel about each other. Understanding more about the factors which influence psychological well-being in pregnancy and beyond means that resources and support can be more effectively targeted to those who are at risk of developing problems. Our study suggests that interventions to improve bonding in pregnancy might need to take account of caregiving style and the couple relationship, alongside mental health considerations.

Duration

July 2009 – ongoing

Funder

UEA

Research Team

Dr Judi Walsh, Professor Margaret O'Brien, Dr Kenda Crozier (NSC), Alexis Hargreaves, Benjamin Marshall, Dr Erica Hepper (University of Southampton)

Dissemination

Walsh, J., Hepper, E., & Marshall, B. (2012, July). Romantic caregiving responsiveness mediates the link between romantic attachment avoidance and prenatal bonding in pregnant women. To be presented at International Association of Relationship Research, Chicago, USA.

Walsh, J., Hepper, E., & Marshall, B. (2011, September). Responsive caregiving mediates links between couple relationship and prenatal bonding. Society for Reproductive and Infant Psychology Annual Conference, Nottingham, UK.

Walsh, J., & Marshall, B. (2010, April). Thoughts about pregnancy- prenatal caregiving rather than attachment? British Psychological Society Annual Conference, Stratford-Upon-Avon, UK

Publications

Walsh, J., Hepper, E., Marshall, B. (2011). Responsive caregiving mediates links between couple relationship and prenatal bonding (Abstract). *Journal of Reproductive and Infant Psychology*, 29, 3, e17-18.

Walsh, J. (2010). Definitions matter: if maternal-fetal relationships are not attachment, what are they? *Archives of Women's Mental Health*, 13(5), 449-451. doi:10.1007/s00737-010-0152-8

PhD Projects



Older men living alone: a photo-elicitation study of their social worlds

Context

The UK is an ageing society. Between 1971 and 2009, the proportion of the population aged 75 and over increased from 4.7% to 7.8% and is projected to rise to 11.7% by 2031. The growth rates in the 75 years and over group of the population differ by gender as life expectancy for men is increasing at a faster rate than for women. The narrowing of this gender gap in life expectancy together with the significant rise in one-person, male households makes the need for well-contextualised understanding of issues relating to potential loneliness and social isolation in old age ever more pertinent.

As women constitute the majority of older people, support and services tend to be geared towards them, often to the exclusion of older men and their interests. This research is an exploratory study of the everyday lives, social worlds and relationships of older men, aged 75 and over who live alone and the way experiences and behaviours are interpreted through interactions. Using Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological systems theory as a framework, older men's lives were explored in context, both temporal and spatial, shedding light on the interaction of various systems which influence the experience of living alone later in life and the social interactions which are meaningful to individual men. The intention was to explore all meaningful interactions.

Aims

- To engage older men in research in terms of setting the agenda, giving them some control over the research process and avoiding stereotyping this group of men as problematic and deficient in terms of social relationships.
- To understand the social worlds of older men who live alone in terms of social relations and social engagement. I did not seek to quantify the extent or intensity of relationships but sought to gain some indication of the types of relationships that these older men sustain and value through the co-construction of rich data which conveyed meanings and experience of the topic.

Method

Methodological challenges to exploring more hidden relationships were overcome by involving the men as collaborators. Older men were invited to take photographs of their daily lives thus engaging them in the research and giving them some control over issues which were meaningful to them. The collaborator-generated photographs were used in photo-elicitation interviews. A purposive sample of sixteen men

from Norfolk, UK collaborated in the research. The men had entered solo living through many, varied routes. The resulting data were analysed using constructivist grounded theory method.

Findings

Analysis revealed this group of men to be competent, adaptive and resourceful within the home. They employed strategies to stay connected with others and valued many kinds of interactions, some rarely considered in previous research. Family relationships were important to men who were part of families but mostly family did not provide daily social interactions and family members were at times intrusive. Other more hidden and peripheral interactions, including sensory interactions, were found to be valued by the men as meaningful social interactions.

These older men were not interested in participating in activities designed for older people. Such activities were felt to be mostly geared towards women's interests and therefore did not provide venues for social engagement.

Theoretical reflections and insight offered by these findings are used to argue that researchers have paid too little attention to all meaningful interactions in older men's lives. Conceptualising the space between intimates and strangers as a continuum may provide an alternative lens through which to understand older men's social relationships.

Implications for policy and practice

We may need to look to other disciplines (e.g. environmental gerontology) for inspiration as to how the very brief interactions and peripheral relationships that these older men described as having meaning and value for them can best be supported and possibly further developed, whilst still remaining meaningful.

Social relationships have to precede their provision of informal support. Attention, therefore, needs to be placed on the opportunities to increase social interactions if older men are to be able to draw on social support in later life. Information about available services has the potential to increase social interactions but currently there is no single point of information at a local level for older men to access.

Duration

October 2009 – March 2012

Funder

ESRC studentship

Researcher

Pernille Sorensen, supervised by Professor Ann McDonald (SWP) and Dr Fiona Poland (AHP)

Dissemination

Paper presentations:

April 2010 'Home alone: visions of older men living alone'. Emerging Researchers in Ageing Annual Conference, University of East Anglia, England.

Aug 2010 'Visions and voices of older men living alone: exploring the social worlds of older men using informant-generated images'. European Sociological Association Doctoral Students' Workshop, Vechta, Germany.

May 2011 'My family and other relationships'. New Researchers in Families and Relationships Conference, Edinburgh, Scotland.

July 2011 'Visions and voices of older men living alone'. British Society of Gerontology 40th Annual Conference, Plymouth, England.

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Young People and Cannabis Use: A mixed-method Theory of Planned Behaviour study

Context

International research ('Health Behaviour in School-aged Children study', (World Health Organization, 2008) has shown that cannabis use appears to be becoming a normative behaviour amongst young people, both in parts of North America and Europe.

In the UK, until very recently, neither the Economic and Social Research Council, nor the Medical Research Council (two main research funding councils) had prioritised research programmes of work on the use of illicit drugs. Extant health and policing-related research in the U.K. has used large-scale surveys to monitor and evaluate drug use among young people but there has been insufficient exploratory, descriptive and explanatory research designed to contribute to the gaps in our understanding (Lloyd & McKeganey, 2010).

My current work seeks to contribute to addressing the gaps that exist in our understanding of why some young people do, and some young people don't, use cannabis, using an expanded version of the Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB; Ajzen, 1985); a social-psychological decision-making model. The TPB serves to understand behaviour by implementing a range of environmental, social and individual variables that can help to explain and predict a specific type of behaviour.

Aims

To obtain and understand young people's perspective on cannabis use through a range of social-psychological variables that predict behaviour as well as explore the meanings and accounts revealed by young people with regards to this behaviour.

Methods

This research adopts a mixed-methodology using three research studies to investigate a range of social and individual factors that contribute to young people's decisions about whether or not to use cannabis. The three key studies, incorporating novel additional variables and approaches, are:

Study 1 was a longitudinal questionnaire-based panel study examining young people's (n=200, 16-18 years) decision-making processes regarding whether or not to use cannabis. Key variables of interest within this expanded TPB model were: beliefs and attitudes, social

influences (e.g. peers, parents), perceived parenting styles, moral norms and individual-related factors (e.g. impulsivity) (Churchill, Jessop, & Sparks, 2008). Parental questionnaires measuring self-reported parenting styles, and attitudes towards substance use, as well as substance use history and attachment issues, were matched with young people's data, enabling comprehensive cross-matched analysis, and so facilitating understanding.

Study 2 adopted a qualitative approach to investigating young people's views on cannabis through the use of interviews with focus groups consisting of 18+ university students (n=20). Themes evolving included cannabis use being described as a 'moment-centred behaviour' sometimes conducted out of 'habit', out of 'willingness' or as it being a result of their 'identity'.

Study 3 involved another extended TPB-based longitudinal study examining university students (n=204, 18+) decision making process with regards to cannabis use, involving a range of factors built from Study 1 (e.g. impulsivity, parenting styles) & Study 2 (e.g. 'willingness', 'self-identity' and 'habit').

Findings

Apart from the significant role of the basic TPB variables (attitudes, perceived norms and PBC) the role of 'impulsivity', 'moral norms' and 'perceived parental rejection' were emphasized as important factors to be considered within the TPB when examining 16-18 year olds' cannabis use. Adolescent and parents' parenting styles were not strongly associated indicating a mismatch in their understanding. Through the focus groups university students revealed a strong 'willingness' to use cannabis despite knowledge of its negative effects as well as an inclination to implement cannabis use as part of their 'self-identity'. Finally the expanded TPB model indicated the importance of 'habit' and 'past behaviour' in explaining cannabis use among university students, independently to the variables within the TPB.

Implications for Policy and Practice

Adopting an individual-centred approach towards young people could effectively capture the particularities involved with cannabis use, and shift drug-related policy towards understanding the non-homogenous nature of this behaviour.

Duration

September 2009 – September 2012

Funder

UEA SSF Research Studentship

Researcher

Eliza Patouris (3rd year), supervised by Dr Vicky Scaife and Dr Gavin Nobes

Dissemination

Presented at: PSYPAG Bangor University Conference (08/07/11)

Oxford Brookes Symposium: One day PHD Symposium on Substance Use (11/07/11)

Society for Study of Addiction Annual Symposium (10-11/11/11)

Planned Publications:

Study 1 to be submitted to *Addiction*; Study 2 to be submitted to *Journal of Adolescence*.

References

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Family routines and teenagers: The meanings of the family meal from a multi-person perspective

Context

There continues to be a wide range of interdisciplinary research on the relationship between food and family life, with researchers linking regular family meals with various health and psychological outcome measures for children and young people. More recently there has been an emergence of a body of qualitative work on family meals aiming to explore, understand and question the meanings behind these associations.

Drawing from this emerging field, this PhD research aimed to explore the underlying family processes that occur during mealtime interactions, focusing on how individual and family meanings are created around this daily routine. The conceptual framework within which this psychosocial research was situated is based within the context of family process theory, as presented by Kantor & Lehr (1975). This theory focuses on how family systems and the subsystems within the family unit, negotiate power, affect and meaning through the dimensions of space, time and energy. An important focus of this research was to obtain a multi-person perspective to counter previous mother-dominated 'family' research, so paternal and young people's accounts, alongside maternal views, were actively sought.

Aims

- to explore the underlying family processes that occur during mealtime interactions
- to explore how individual and family meanings are created around this daily meal time routine
- to obtain a multi-person perspective on food, eating and meals within the home

Design

The research adopted a mixed methods approach (incorporating in-depth interviews, participant generated photo-elicitation, visual floor plans of the family home and questionnaires) in an attempt to access the typically private interior of family life. A sample of twelve family groups, with a 14-15 year old son/daughter, was recruited through questionnaire surveys carried out in three schools in market and seaside towns. In-depth separate home-based interviews were conducted with individuals in the twelve family groups, with the final interview sample consisting of fourteen young people, eleven mothers and twelve fathers. The young people were given a digital camera, approximately two weeks before the family interviews, and asked to take photos of 'food and meals in your home'. The young people were not asked specifically to take photos of 'family meals' as I did not want to make any assumptions about the eating patterns within the family homes. These images were printed onto A4 sheets and re-presented at the start of each interview to elicit reflection on how food and meals were organised in the daily life of the family.

All interviews were transcribed and thematically analysed through NVIVO, in the context of both the family system and the individual subsystems within each family group. After the home based interviews, approximate floor plans of each family home were produced, locating the eating areas according to the family accounts, in an attempt to visually represent and reflect on where families ate in relation to the space available to them. The family interviews were completed in January 2012, and the thirty seven interviews are currently being coded and analysed, alongside the participant generated photographs and the floor plans denoting the family eating areas.

Preliminary findings

Initial analysis has focused on the participant generated visual images and the spoken interviews. Early findings highlight the value of this methodological approach, suggesting that the 'family talk' elicited from the visual images often mirror significant family processes, such as how individuals create and signify autonomy, togetherness, caring, distance and myth in families.

Duration

October 2009 – September 2012

Funder

UEA SSF Faculty Research
and Teaching Studentship

Researcher

Kamena Henshaw, supervised by
Professor Margaret O'Brien and
Dr Neil Cooper

Dissemination

Research findings are due to be presented at the
BSA Food & Society Conference at the British
Library Conference Centre, London, on the 2nd
July 2012.

Exploring a role for digital technologies in life story work with adolescence in residential care: A discourse analysis

Context

Engaging in processes which aid coherent narrative identity construction is common practice when working with younger care populations (Fahlberg 1994; Rose & Philpot 2005; Schofield & Beek, 2006). This process, known as Life Story Work, is undertaken to help the transition of younger care populations from short-term to more long-term care arrangements. It aims to support reflections about and the management of complex feelings towards early experiences within a safe, age appropriate environment (Ryan & Walker, 2007). However this appears to be rarely undertaken with adolescents living in residential care due to this approach being conventionally something undertaken earlier in childhood. Yet engaging this population in such work by encouraging reflections upon their current, more accessible preoccupations, may help them discover for themselves the value of making some connections between past and present.

In this sense there was a need to create and develop tools to engage vulnerable adolescents in dialogues which encourage self-reflection, promoting a sense of narrative and identity coherence. This need was coupled with the requirement to generate knowledge about how to use such tools, whilst exploring how the tools digital nature of was experienced by those living and working in a range of residential homes. This perspective formed the basis of this research project and informed the overarching research question:

“How can digital technologies be used to engage adolescents placed residentially in reflective dialogues akin to those of conventional life story work?”

Methods

Ten young people between the ages of 14-18 years were recruited from an established residential care population across five residential home. The collaborative nature of the study was facilitated by the innovative use of technology as a means to engage participants. In line with the technical model of action research, several cycles of research were undertaken, during which, contributions from the young people, staff members, practitioners and managers, played a key role in the development and the integration of the digital media. The created digital life story work (DLSW) innovations ‘bebook’ and ‘podwalking’ were then implemented across the residential homes with the research exploring how the digital innovations were negotiated in talk by adolescents, their carers and care context.

The integration of familiar and flexible digital media provided the young people with a range of non-threatening tools with which to express themselves. The offline and/or online nature of bebook and podwalking also meant that the research was able to explore how the internet was negotiated in an effort to create and disseminate best practice.

The methodologically innovative nature of the study meant that qualitative data stimulated by the introduction of digital media into residential environments was varied. Regular visits to the homes captured the talk created through producing, installing and implementing the online tool in the form of a bespoke private website (www.bebook.me.uk) and the associated hardware. Webcam dairies and mobile phone clips uploaded to the website by young people provided a supplementary stream of qualitative data. Access to the young person's private section on the website was within their control; however young people were encouraged to use the website as a vehicle for communication and reflection with individual members of staff, if they felt comfortable doing so. Podwalking involved the young people filming and sharing narratives with a camcorder, researcher and carers from places they deemed important. This also produced qualitative data through its introduction and implementation. A more detailed explanation of Podwalking is available at: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SdNa6IBNZIO>.

Duration

2009 - 2012

Funder

UEA SSF Faculty Research and Teaching Studentship

Researcher

Simon Hammond, supervised by Dr Neil Cooper and Professor Gillian Schofield

Findings

The general consensus from young people and staff alike was that bebook and podwalking provided a novel way to engage in reflective conversations. Young people saw the tasks as engaging rather than a chore. Those uploading weekly content to the bespoke bebook website such as pictures and video camera journal logs, tended to have an increased ability to reflect on recent events and understand such things in a temporal fashion. Young people indicated a preference for more widely used Social Networking Sites (SNS) such as Facebook and Bebo rather than the bespoke website, as such websites allowed them to maintain friendships. However they also commented that bebook gave them a safer place to store more sensitive digital memories. Young people who went on podwalks would often introduce and contextualise characters present in the places visited when they were there, with anecdotes and stories evoked from visiting such places reconstructed and reinterpreted in the now. Podwalking was young person led and tended to see young people locate the construction of shared narrative within their overarching biographical accounts. A process facilitated by those present.

Overall practitioners support the usefulness of modern technologies in engaging adolescents in life story work and the research provides models for future developments.

Implications for policy and practice

There remains a degree of nervousness around the promotion and usage of digital media in social work practice. This may be attributed to an increased focus upon practitioners and media coverage which continually emphasises the risks associated with digital media such as the internet. Such risks should not see the closing of the door on such technologies, since their rapid diffusion and importance to youth cultures is unlikely to halt because of this perceived risk. It does however offer a strong rationale for accepting and shaping digital media as a legitimate communicative tool, concurrently creating a training need. Increasing professionals' knowledge and presence in online environments presents an opportunity to help educate the most vulnerable and disadvantaged groups of young people as to how best protect to themselves online.

Dissemination

Hammond, S. P. (2011) Participant Information Clips (PIC) using digital technologies conveying information to potential, current and former participants. 2nd International Visual Methods Conference. The Open University, Milton Keynes, UK

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Hammond, S. P. (2010) Exploring a role for new technologies in life story work with adolescents in residential care. "INSIDE OUT" 11th biennial conference of European Scientific Association on Residential and Foster Care for Children and Adolescents (EUSARF). University of Groningen, Holland

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Hammond, S. P. & Cooper, N. J. (2010) Podwalking as a data generation tool in narrative inquiry. "A Change of Tongue" Qualitative Methods in Psychology Section (QMIP) Annual Conference. University of Nottingham

Publications

Hammond, S. P. & Cooper, N. J. (Forthcoming March 2013) Digital Life Story Work: Using technology to help young people make sense of their experiences. London: BAAF

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Life pathways and narratives of young women who have offended and participated in restorative justice

Context

Restorative justice is a face-to-face meeting between a victim, an offender, and their support people, led by an experienced facilitator, at which the group discusses the impact of the crime and decides how to handle the criminal matter. In 2010, the Independent Commission on Youth Crime and Anti-Social Behaviour and the Ministry of Justice advocated for restorative justice to become a major method of handling crime in the UK. Although restorative justice has been practiced throughout the world since the 1970s, research into how and why it works is mixed. Findings suggest that it is an effective way of dealing with some types of juvenile crime, but questions remain about how young female offenders experience the process.

This project will one of the first major studies focusing on young women who have offended and participated in police-run restorative justice conferences in the UK. It comes at a time when the number of young women entering the criminal justice system has increased and research on how young women experience and participate in offending is gaining critical attention.

Aims

- Increase understanding of young women's offending in the UK
- Investigate how young women who have offended feel about their lives, victims, and communities after participating in restorative justice
- Develop working models of effective interventions for young women who offend.

Methods

The project will be composed of:

- 1 A systematic review of the literature
- 2 Quantitative analysis on police data collected on individuals who have experienced restorative justice
- 3 Interviews with young women who have offended and participated in restorative justice
 - 25 young women under the age of 25 who have committed against the person crimes or other crimes with a clear victim (such as robbery or burglary)

Implications for Policy and Practice

This project explores the aftermath of restorative justice for offending youth by taking a holistic and longitudinal view of the life pathways of twenty-five young women who offended in their adolescence and were referred to a conference. It examines participants' experiences of restorative justice conferences and looks at turning points in their lives, inquiring whether (and why) restorative justice might be one of them. The aim of the study is to inform future policy and practice with this vulnerable group.

Duration

2010-2013

Funder

UEA SSF faculty studentship

Researcher

Birgit Larsson, supervised by Professor Gillian Schofield, Dr. Jonathan Dickens and Dr. Laura Biggart

Dissemination

fds

The Psychosocial Antecedents of Binge Drinking Behaviour in a Student Population

Context

Binge drinking, broadly defined as the consumption of a high volume of alcohol in a short space of time, is a topic of research, media and political interest. With binge drinking being particularly prevalent among students and having potential negative effects for student well being it is also an area of concern for students their families and university staff. In order for intervention, prevention and education efforts to be effective researchers must not only have an understanding of the antecedents of binge drinking behaviour but also how and why students binge drink.

Aims and Methods

This three study research project employs a mixture of methods in order to improve understanding of how undergraduate students perceive and define binge drinking and the factors that contribute to their engagement in binge drinking behaviour.

All three studies utilise student samples recruited through either lectures, advertisements or the participant pool scheme.

In study 1 thematic analysis of focus group discussions (N=6 groups) is used to explore students' understanding of the term binge drinking, their perceptions of problematic drinking and their experiences of 'nights out' drinking alcohol.

Study 2 expands the Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB) in line with current thinking and applies this model to the prediction of student binge drinking behaviour. A large scale pilot study (N≈110) employed a cross-sectional questionnaire while the main study utilises a prospective self report questionnaire.

Study 3 combines a short computerised TPB based questionnaire with a computerised implicit attitudes test to consider the role of implicit attitudes in the prediction of student binge drinking behaviour.

Findings

Findings from study 1 demonstrate that students view binge drinking in terms of intention to get drunk. Within this the amount of alcohol consumed and speed of consumption are important. Problematic alcohol use or alcoholism were viewed by students as being present if an individual was drinking continuously, at inappropriate times, or if they continued drinking despite suffering negative consequences.

Student descriptions of 'a typical night out' revealed a highly standardised format for the night out with many similarities at both group and individual levels. Further to this students cited monetary cost and social bonding as key factors in many of the decisions made during the course of a night out.

Duration

2010 – 2013

Funder

UEA SSF Faculty studentship

Researcher

Ellen Lynch, supervised by Dr Victoria Scaife and Dr Neil Cooper

Threatened identities? The mothering experiences of asylum-seeking and refugee women in England.

Existing research indicates that asylum-seeking and refugee mothers tend to encounter a range of challenges which can affect their mothering practices. These include: negotiating a culture whose established and recognised childrearing practices are often different, and sometimes in conflict, to their own; experiencing higher rates of mental health problems than the resident population as a result of both pre-migration and resettlement experiences; and encountering inadequate support networks, both in terms of accessing formal services to ensure their child's wellbeing and development and in terms of social isolation.

This study by Alice Haynes explores the mothering experiences of asylum-seeking and refugee women in England, focusing on the impact these experiences have on the women's maternal identity (their identification with the maternal role, and their perceived sense of competence in that role). This research intends to contribute to knowledge and understanding of motherhood, identity and the immigration process, with a particular focus on women's perceptions of themselves as mothers, and the way in which they construct, maintain or repair their maternal identity in threatening situations.

The study is in its second year. Semi-structured interviews are currently being held with asylum-seeking and refugee mothers living in a variety of locations in England and originating from a wide range of countries. The interviews are being analysed using Grounded Theory.

Alice Haynes, Supervised by Dr Jonathan Dickens and Professor Gillian Schofield

Understanding young people's experiences and views of partner violence in teenage relationships.

Whilst there has been growing recognition of, and research into, domestic abuse in adult relationships, violence in young people's relationships has not been recognised to the same degree. A substantial number of young people will experience some form of violence from their partner before they reach adulthood, yet there has been limited research within the UK specifically exploring young people's experiences and views of violence in their intimate relationships. This research, being undertaken by Vicki McDermott, seeks to address some of these gaps in our knowledge by examining young people's experiences of violence in their intimate relationships and their views, understandings and attitudes toward intimate partner violence.

Positioned within developmental and feminist socio-cultural perspectives, the research will be undertaken using a multi-method framework combining qualitative and quantitative approaches. Two data collection techniques will be used; an online self-completion aimed at identifying if participants have ever experienced a range of violent behaviours within their relationships, and a series of focus groups intended at exploring young people's views, understandings and attitudes toward teenage intimate partner violence. It is hoped the research will provide insight into the nature and dynamics of different forms of violence in teenage relationships; a nuanced understanding of what intimate partner violence means to different groups of young people; and perhaps offer some insight into how best to respond to teenage partner violence.

Vicki McDermott, Supervised by Dr Marion Brandon, Dr Jane Dodsworth and Dr Sanna Inthorn

Migration and Community Formation: Narratives of Three Generations of Women Living in A Greek Diaspora Community

Migration has been studied and written about in a number of diverse disciplines, from sociology to economics. However, what is common across disciplines is the under representation of the female voice which has only become more prominent in the last few decades. Through research on three generations of Greek Cypriot women, I intend to gain an insight into their experiences of migration and living in a migrant community.

The aim of this research is to understand the processes of community formation, how communities transform over generations and how such changes impact upon the individual identity construction of Greek Cypriot women living in Great Yarmouth.

An ethnographic study of the community along with in-depth narrative interviews and focus groups is being conducted for this project. This research approach will allow women to tell their individual stories and allow the analysis to build an understanding of migration and this migrant community across three generations.

Emerging themes from the research already conducted reflects issues that are highlighted in literature such as identity, family relationships, gender roles and community boundaries. But early findings also indicate some distinctive features around business and family life which will be further explored as the research progresses.

Alexia Zinonos, Supervised by Dr Neil Cooper and Professor Margaret O'Brien

Working Title: Siblings and antisocial behaviour: Understanding the connection

The research is concerned with the effects of siblings on the development of antisocial behaviour. The impact of siblings in psychological development has taken a back-seat to parents in general but recently their important role in antisocial development has been highlighted. Previous research has suggested that siblings may provide a training ground for antisocial behaviour through hostile exchanges escalating to antisocial behaviour. Other research has suggested that siblings may co-commit antisocial behaviour and encourage each other through deviant talk.

The first study sought to investigate sibling relationships by qualitative interviews with ex-offenders. Interviews were conducted in conjunction with St Giles Trust. Interviews provided confirmation of traits of sibling relationships from the literature review such as warmth and hostility. Preliminary findings suggest that low empathy from siblings may result in particularly harsh contexts which may contribute to antisocial behaviour. Reports of bullying and aggression between siblings have driven the focus for the second study which will seek to investigate the links between peer and sibling bullying and aggressive behaviour. Additionally accounts of co-offending frequently featured substance use as well as siblings providing the introduction to substance use. The third study will therefore aim to examine how siblings may collude and how this may link with increased substance use.

Billy MacFarlane, Supervised by Dr Gavin Nobes, Dr Laura Biggart and Dr Victoria Scaife

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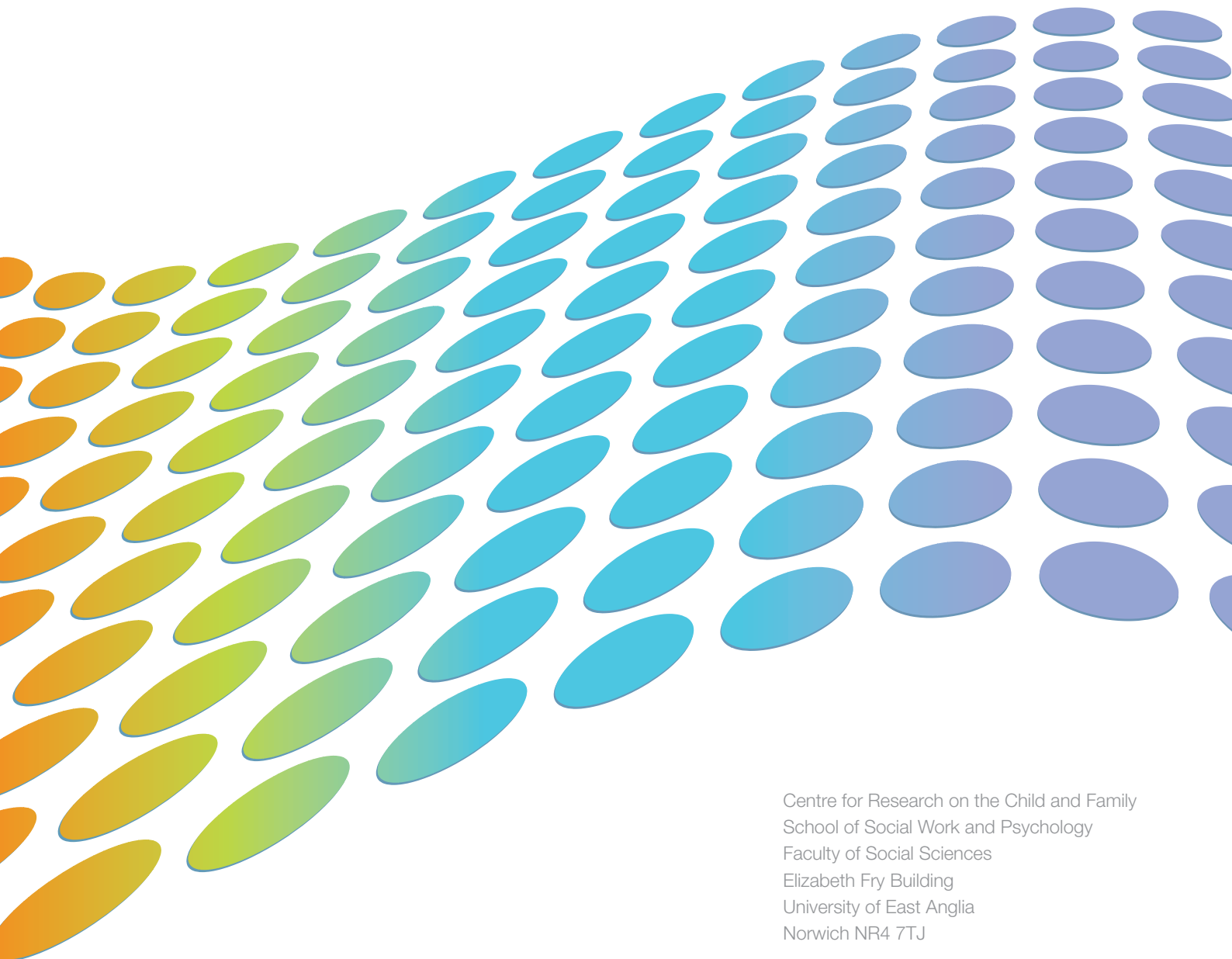
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