

Centre for Research on Children and Families **Annual Report 2012-13**



**Making a difference
for children and families**

Our aims

To undertake research on a wide range of child and family issues across regional, national and international contexts.

To use research to advance our understanding of the development of children and the diverse nature and meanings of family life across the life course in a changing and multi-cultural society.

To advance our knowledge of the effectiveness and efficiency of services across the statutory, voluntary and private sectors.

To work in collaboration with, or on behalf of, child and family agencies in the statutory, voluntary and private sectors.

To develop and disseminate research knowledge which will inform and have an impact on policy and practice, enhancing the well-being of children and families.

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Research into issues affecting children and families has a particularly important role to play at a time of austerity

Welcome

In 2013 the name of the Centre for Research on the Child and Family changed to become the Centre for Research on Children and Families. This was a necessary development to reflect our commitment to work involving the wide range of children and families whose lives are the focus of our research. This year we also celebrated the work of the Centre at a reception at the House of Lords hosted by Baroness Hollis at which Baroness Butler Sloss was a speaker.

We recognise that research into issues affecting children and families has a particularly important role to play at a time of austerity, since financial constraints affect all aspects of family life and the cost effectiveness of services becomes ever more significant. The 'Troubled Families' agenda in particular has raised a number of issues regarding how judgements are made about families with multiple difficulties – and their need for appropriate support. Projects in the Centre led by Prof Marian Brandon and Prof June Thoburn have focussed on the multi-disciplinary strategies used to help such families.

Challenging for researchers, as well as for policy makers, is the need to take into account the life long consequences of how society uses its resources on behalf of children and their families. This year we see the third phase of a longitudinal study of a cohort of children adopted from care, who are now in late adolescence. Led by Dr Elsbeth Neil, this study, funded by the Nuffield Foundation, is highlighting the many challenges that adopted children and their families face over time and the importance of support right through to adolescence.

Work patterns and their impact on family life are inevitably affected by economic conditions. Prof Margaret O'Brien has built on her international studies of the role of fathers in family life and is now working with Dr Sara Connolly and the National Centre for Social Research on an ESRC funded study *Fathers, work and families in twenty-first century Britain: beyond the breadwinner model*. Using data from four large-scale survey series, it will provide a comprehensive profiling of British fathers in a European context in terms of their paid work and family life, focusing on employment status and working patterns, involvement in childcare and housework, relationships with children and partners, and experience of work-family conflict.

Courts are facing concerns about the delays for children, as well as the cost of care proceedings and implications for care planning. These concerns have led to studies in the Centre led by Dr Jonathan Dickens of pre-proceedings meetings to resolve family problems, schemes to reduce the time taken in court and the role of the independent reviewing officer. These projects follow a strong tradition of socio-legal studies in the Centre.

Our work would not be possible without the support of funding from a range of sources, including the ESRC, government departments, the Nuffield Foundation, the Office of the Children's Commissioner, the Big Lottery, the NSPCC and a number of local authorities and voluntary organisations. We look forward to further significant research collaborations in partnership with our funders and participating agencies into 2014 – the twentieth anniversary of the International Year of the Family.



Margaret O'Brien

Margaret O'Brien (BSc, PhD, DipClinPsych)
Professor in Child and Family Studies and
Co-Director of the Centre.



G. L. Schofield

Gillian Schofield (BA, MA, CQSW, MSW, PhD)
Head of the School of Social Work, Professor of Child
and Family Social Work and Co-Director of the Centre.

News

Contact after adoption

Adoption of children from care has had a high profile in the light of the Government's Adoption Plan (2012) and remains a significant area of policy affecting children

Key aspects of adoption practice, in particular contact, have been the focus of policy development and consultation this year. Led by Dr Elsbeth Neil, researchers from the Centre (Mary Beek, Prof Gillian Schofield and Prof June Thoburn) wrote an evidence-based paper to accompany their response to the Department for Education consultation on contact with birth families for children in care or placed for adoption. June Thoburn was one of only three academics invited to give oral evidence to the House of Lords select committee scrutinising the proposals in the Children and Families Bill which impact on children in care and placed for adoption. The video recording can be seen at www.parliamentlive.tv/Main/Player.aspx?meetingId=11875. Her written and oral evidence is cited in the House of Lords *Adoption: Post-Legislative Scrutiny Report*.

The CRCF adoption research team (Elsbeth Neil, Mary Beek and Dr Emma Ward) are part of international adoption research networks. In April 2013 they spoke at the New Worlds of Adoption conference at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst, USA. The theme of the conference was *Contact between adoptive and birth families: what works?*

Elsbeth Neil gave a keynote address followed by the team presenting a seminar discussing emerging findings from the contact after adoption study. In July 2013 the team presented papers at the fourth International Conference on Adoption Research (ICAR4) in Bilbao Spain. Elsbeth Neil had been part of the planning group for this event which brought together adoption research specialists and practitioners from around the world.

In December 2013 Elsbeth Neil will be presenting at a conference in Finland organised by 'Save the Children' Finland, Encounters project team.

The 'Encounters' project is an initiative aimed at promoting the adoption of children from care in Finland. The team visited UEA in March 2012 to learn from our research studies into contact issues.

They met with Elsbeth Neil, Gillian Schofield and Julie Young. New legislation in Finland has been passed which allows for the possibility of contact between adopted children and their birth relatives and the team have reported back that this meeting and our research papers been very informative in helping them to understand how to set up and manage positive post-adoption contact arrangements. Elsbeth Neil has been asked to speak at this event which is the culmination of the four-year Encounters initiative.



The Care Inquiry report was launched at Westminster on 30 April, and was welcomed by the Minister for Children, Edward Timpson MP.



The Care Inquiry

The Care Inquiry report was launched at Westminster on the 30 April, and was welcomed by the Minister for Children, Edward Timpson MP. Prof Gillian Schofield and Prof June Thoburn contributed to this project which was set up to ensure that children in care and adopted from care experience security, stability, love and a sense of identity.

Funded by the Nuffield Foundation and led by Fostering Network, it was a partnership between eight leading voluntary organisations – Adoption UK, British Association for Adoption and Fostering (BAAF), Family Rights Group, the Fostering Network,

Research in Practice, TACT (The Adolescent and Children's Trust), the Who Cares? Trust and the Together Trust. June Thoburn contributed to the synthesis of the knowledge base about children in care that informed the work of the Inquiry. Gillian Schofield was involved in discussion with the partner agencies in the development of the framework for recommendations. She also presented this framework for further debate at the last of three events held for a range of children's services managers and practitioners, academics, parents, foster carers and adopters, and young people in care at the Nuffield Foundation headquarters in London.

Research and developments in the Family Justice System

CRCF members continue to be involved in a range of activities linked to the Family Justice System. Based on on their Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) project on pre-proceedings meetings, Dr Jonathan Dickens and Julie Young, together with Prof Judith Masson and Kay Bader from the University of Bristol, ran two national seminars in London and Bristol (May 2012). They also gave presentations at the BASPCAN biennial International Conference, Belfast (April 2012), ran a series of feedback events to participating authorities and delivered dissemination events through the local Making Research Count network.

Prof June Thoburn has been appointed as the first chair of the newly formed Norfolk Family Justice Board. She and Jonathan Dickens are also members of the Training Sub-Committee, which arranged a half day conference for over 100 family justice professionals at the UEA Sports Park to launch the Family Justice Board. Prof Gillian Schofield was one of the two keynote speakers on contact in public and private proceedings. Her analysis of the evidence base for making decisions about the contact arrangements between children in care or adopted and members of their birth families was much appreciated by the judges, magistrates, solicitors, barristers and social workers present.



Fathers separated from their families

The number of children living without their biological father has increased in recent years with emotional and financial costs to children, mothers and fathers themselves.

The Centre has held two important seminars on separated fathers, one national and one regional, where we have reviewed the evidence and debated key issues.

The national seminar, funded by the ESRC, was held in London at Friends House, during October 2012 to launch CRCF's report *Supporting fathers after separation or divorce; evidence*

and insights, authored by Dr Georgia Philip and Prof Margaret O'Brien. Adrienne Burgess from the Fatherhood Institute chaired the stimulating event which was attended by over 50 practitioners, policy makers and academics. The audience also heard presentations on new findings from a British Academy funded project: *Fragile fathering: negotiating intimacy and risk in parenting practice* from

Dr Esther Dermott (University of Bristol), Prof Brid Featherstone (OU) and Dr Jacqui Gabb (OU).

The regional event was a Breakfast Seminar held at UEA in July 2012 and was aimed at professionals, volunteers and managers working with fathers in East Anglia. A programme was developed collaboratively between Georgia Philip, Margaret O'Brien, Andy Wood, Danny Taggart and



Dr Philip and Prof O'Brien at CRCF's Seminar on Separated Fathers July 2012

Caring and working fathers

What are the challenges for the future?
Sättra Bruk, Sweden. April 29-May 2 2013

Most children in post-industrialized societies grow up with two parents with a permanent attachment to the labour force.

The Great Yarmouth Fathers Project (GYFP), and included the presentation of research evidence, the history and aims of the GYFP and an overview of father engagement work in Norfolk. The exciting event was attended by 42 individuals from 23 different organisations including Relate, Action For Children, Homestart, Families House, Children's Centres, Norfolk Children's Services, Families Need Fathers and Family Action.

The Centre is in the process of planning further seminars on working with fathers and their families, with a view to making this a regular event.

The next in the series 'Fathers and Safeguarding' focuses on child protection and takes place on 8 July 2013.

While there has been substantial debate and research on the impact of mothers' employment on children, and on the impact of day care on children's well-being, much less attention has been paid to the impact of fathers' employment on children.

Funding from Allmänna Barnhuset (the Children's Foundation of Sweden) and the Swedish Council for Working Life and Social Research paid for 25 participants from nine countries (including Singapore, Canada, Australia as well as several European countries) to meet and share findings on key issues concerned with fathers, families and the workplace. The beautiful Swedish countryside around the manor house in Sättra Bruk where the seminar was held gave plenty of opportunity for informal discussion.

One session focused on the role of government policies in enabling employed fathers to be more active in the care of children. Historically progressive governments in more social democratic countries have

led developments in policies to support working mothers, dual earner families and working fathers. The picture has become more complex with even market-oriented governments and countries attempting to address these challenges, especially in certain Asia and Eastern European countries where fertility decline has been associated with men's long working hours.

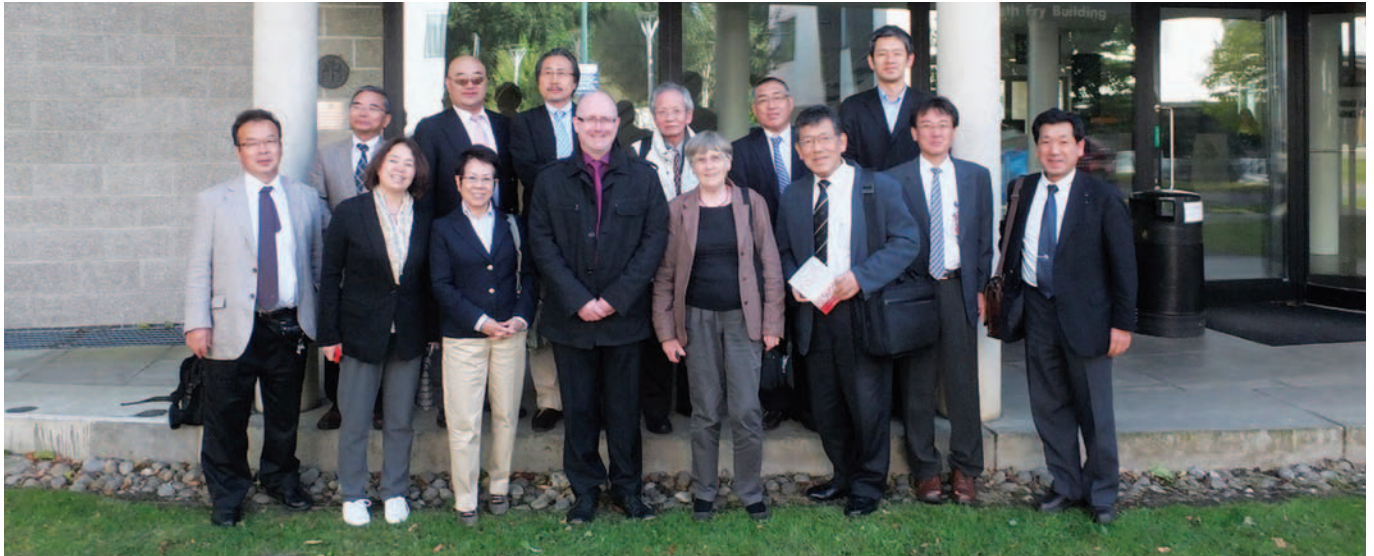
Prof Philip Hwang (Goteborg), Prof Linda Haas (Indianapolis) and Prof Margaret O'Brien (CRCF) the seminar organizers were delighted with the insights which emerged when scholars from different backgrounds (developmental psychology, industrial relations, management, social policy and sociology) started talking to each other to move forward the knowledge we have on men as caring and working fathers. Our funders kindly ensured that a small number of PhD students, the next generation, could attend. UEA was represented by Kelly Giannakou who is working with Margaret O'Brien and Dr Sara Connolly.

A revolution in family policy

Clem Henricson continues to develop her assessment and proposals for the future of family policy in the UK and Europe. Her book *A Revolution in Family Policy* published by the Policy Press in October 2012 received extensive media coverage from Zoe Williams in The Guardian and on Radio 4's Woman's Hour.

It was also the subject of a parliamentary seminar for the Intergenerational Futures All Party Parliamentary Group on Family Policy and Intergenerational

Relationships in April 2013 and a conference presentation for the European Society on Family Relations in Norway in September 2012. At the invitation of the universities of Milan and Parma, Clem Henricson contributed a chapter on family policy *Boom and Bust: the Lessons Learnt* to be included in a publication on Educational Alliances Amongst Adults in Early Childhood Education and Care Services.



Prof Thoburn and Graeme Malcolm of Break-Charity welcome Japanese directors of children's homes to UEA

Prof June Thoburn continues to work on the international context of child and family social work.

International child welfare

Prof June Thoburn has been working with the advocacy team of SOS Children's Villages. Following her visit to Armenia last year she provided consultancy to the SOS local team in Hungary and then joined a workshop in Innsbruck for SOS advocacy workers from South America, Asia, Africa and Eastern Europe.

Emanuel Shinwell, the SOS lead on advocacy, visited the CRCF in March and led a discussion on responses to child maltreatment in different socio-economic contexts involving education, psychology and social work students. June also acted as a critical reader (one of only three UK academics amongst a large international team invited to do so) for the UNICEF/

Better Care Network handbook *Moving Forward: Implementing the 'Guidelines for the Alternative Care of Children.'* This was launched in Geneva in March 2013 and has a Forward by Jean Zermattan, Chairperson of the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child.

In October 2012 June gave a keynote presentation to the annual conference of the Norwegian Government Department of Youth and Family Affairs on the theme of cultural competence. A particular area of concern amongst social workers in rich countries is how their child protection legislation and procedures can be fairly and sensitively applied with respect to families recently arrived from countries with different approaches to bringing up children.

Serious Case Reviews

Prof Marian Brandon has undertaken a series of Government commissioned studies of Serious Case Reviews into child death and serious injury. She has also recently completed a BASPCAN funded study with Dr Kate Morris (Nottingham University) into family participation in Serious Case Reviews. This important work has informed the new national inter-professional guidance *Working Together to Safeguard Children* (2013).

Marian has also been sharing and debating the learning from this research at a range of international events. These include presentations at the European Social Work Research Conference in Finland (March 2013), a conference in Italy (May 2013) 'Addressing Filicide: Inaugural International Conference for Cross National Dialogue' and in the Netherlands (July 2013) at the 33rd Congress of the International Academy of Law and Mental Health.

Right: Sally Bartolo presents young people's messages to the Children's Commissioner Dr Maggie Atkinson

Listening to children at risk of abuse and neglect has been a topic of much recent media attention.



Children's perspectives on abuse and neglect

The Centre continues to work closely with the Office of the Children's Commissioner for England to ensure that children's own perspectives on risk are central to the debate. In 2011 a team led by Jeanette Cossar published *Don't Make Assumptions*, a report on children's views of child protection services. This work is being continued in the current project, *Recognition and Telling: Developing earlier routes to safety for children and young people*, also funded by the Office of the Children's Commissioner.

The research examines how children recognise and tell about abuse and neglect with the aim of improving children's access to services at an earlier stage. The project is innovative in involving young researchers with knowledge or experience of the topic as key members of the research team. The report is due to be launched in autumn 2013 and Jeanette Cossar will be presenting findings at the 13th ISPCAN (The International Society for Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect) European Regional Conference on Child Abuse and Neglect in Dublin in September 2013.



Research with vulnerable children

This successful two day research methods workshop hosted by the CRCF was held on the 23-24 April 2013.

It was an important learning opportunity for PhD students and researchers in universities and the voluntary sector, from a range of disciplines (social work, psychology, criminology, health) and involved in different areas of research with vulnerable children. They were able to hear from CRCF research experts, to explore the use of different materials and research tools and to share their own research experiences and questions.

The programme covered all aspects of the research process, from research questions to design, data collection, analysis and dissemination. Contributors to the workshop drew from a range of examples of CRCF research e.g. with children at risk in the community, children in foster care, adopted children and young offenders, research with disabled children. An important part of the programme was a session with a group of young researchers involved in the *Recognition and Telling* project on children's perception of risk led by Jeannette Cossar and funded by the Office of the Children's Commissioner.

News in brief

Annual Centre Conference 2012

The Annual Centre Conference in July 2012 was titled *Looked after children and offending: reducing risk and promoting resilience*. It reported findings from the CRCF research project, led by Prof Gillian Schofield in partnership with the Adolescent and Children's Trust and funded by the Big Lottery. The conference was held jointly with Banks Chambers in Sheffield and brought together a large multi-disciplinary audience. It followed the London launch in January 2012 and a meeting at Downing Street to discuss the issue with policy makers. The report is available on the CRCF website and the book will be published by BAAF in early 2014.

The Secure Base Model: national and international developments

The Secure Base Model of caregiving has now become established in practice, not only in the UK but internationally. A new development has been the use in the UK of the Secure Base Model as a framework for promoting high quality care as part of the local authority fostering commissioning process. BAAF is publishing a new practice guide by Prof Gillian Schofield and Mary Beek in 2013, *The Secure Base Model: Promoting attachment and resilience in foster care and adoption*.

In Norway, the Secure Base Model (Trygg Base) has been used by social workers with foster carers across the country since 2007. The model is included in the initial training and there are also now secure base support groups for newly approved foster carers. In 2013, *The Attachment Handbook for Foster Care and Adoption* (Schofield and Beek 2006) was published in Italian, following the French translation in 2011.

Making Research Count

A number of local authorities in the Eastern Region are linked with the School of Social Work at UEA in the Making Research Count research dissemination initiative.

Nationally, ten university social work departments throughout England collaborate in this network, each offering a programme of research seminars and events for their regional cluster of local authorities and health and social care organisations. UEA was a founder university in the network in 1997, and has run a programme of dissemination events since that date; indeed Norfolk County Council was our very first partner in this initiative, and was instrumental in its principles and formation, and both Essex and Suffolk have sustained links with Making Research Count for many years.

Making Research Count aims to promote and develop knowledge-based practice in social work and social care, and the programme of seminars, delivered individually to each linked authority, provides:

- An opportunity to hear about current research being undertaken in the School at UEA, and in other universities;
- Reflective time to enable participants to make sense of research;
- Encouragement to agencies to develop their skills in evaluating existing policies and practices, and to apply research awareness to service development;
- A forum for professionals to network and share ideas and practice among themselves.

Topics chosen for the seminars reflect the authorities' preferences and priorities, alongside the Centre's expertise and current research interests. During the last year, many members of the School have talked about their research at Making Research Count events, and it is always a pleasure, on these occasions, to see many ex-students, now working for authorities in the region.

Each year there is a regional conference for colleagues from the linked authorities, and the most recent, in September 2012, addressed 'Working in Partnership with children and families'. Prof June Thoburn described her evaluation of an intensive family recovery project in London, Dr Kate Morris (from Nottingham University) talked about family involvement in care and protection, and Jeanette Cossar discussed children's participation in child protection.

Making Research Count at UEA is under the direction of Prof Gillian Schofield, Co-director of the CRCF, and continues to link with Emeritus Prof June Thoburn, who was one of the founders of the network. Sue Bailey is the local co-ordinator.

If your organisation might be interested in becoming a partner, or for further details, please contact Sue Bailey.

Research projects

Child protection and family support

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| 14 | New learning from Serious Case Reviews: A two year report for 2009-2011 | 20 | Evaluation of the Tri-Borough Family Coaching service |
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| 19 | A thematic review of edge of care cases | | |

New learning from Serious Case Reviews: A two year report for 2009-2011

Project team

UEA:

Prof Marian Brandon
Sue Bailey
Dr Pippa Belderson

University of Warwick:

Dr Peter Sidebotham
Dr Carol Hawley
Catherine Ellis
Matthew Megson

Funder

Department
for Education

This is the fourth consecutive two yearly national analysis of Serious Case Reviews (April 2009-March 2011) undertaken by this research team. The report includes five inter-linking studies which are all informed by the same approach to the exploration of interacting risks which seeks to understand inter-agency working within the dynamic context of the developing child's world.

Study 1

There are around 85 maltreatment related child deaths each year. This estimate comes from setting serious case review data in context with

could be killed or suffer serious harm in the context of acrimonious separations, conflict around contact and domestic violence including on-going threats towards mothers and sometimes children.

Study 4

An examination of how practitioners' knowledge of child development has an impact on casework and on outcomes for children through an in-depth analysis of six purposively selected reviews. Themes include the significance of bruising on pre-mobile babies and curiosity about the emotional development of children. For disabled children there was a tendency to see the disability more clearly than the child resulting in a lower standard of parenting for a disabled child.

<https://www.education.gov.uk/publications/eOrderingDownload/DFE-RR110.pdf>

Study 5

A study of recommendations revealed an average of 47 recommendations per review. The largely successful endeavour to make recommendations specific, achievable and measurable has resulted in a further proliferation of tasks to be followed through.

www.education.gov.uk/publications/eOrderingDownload/DFE-RR157.pdf

Three of the 5 separate studies were published ahead of the final report in time to inform the Munro Review of Child Protection. The report as a whole has informed the new edition of Working Together 2013.

Brandon, M., Sidebotham, P., Bailey, S., Belderson, P., Hawley, C., Ellis, C., and Megson, M. (2012): *New Learning from Serious Case Reviews: A two year report for 2009-2011*, Department for Education, DFE-RR226

Neglect is an underlying feature in 60 per cent of reviews – a much higher prevalence than previously known.

a range of other national data on violent and maltreatment-related deaths in 2009-10.

www.education.gov.uk/publications/eOrderingDownload/DFE-RR167.pdf

Study 2

Statistical analysis on all 184 cases notified as Serious Case Reviews for the period 2009-11 brings our longitudinal database of serious case reviews up to more than 800 cases since April 2003. This allows comparisons with earlier data and commentary on trends over time. Neglect is an underlying feature in 60 per cent of reviews – a much higher prevalence than previously known.

Study 3

Thematic analysis of the 21 cases of children aged 5-10 (a hitherto under-examined group) revealed few distinct features and significant diversity. Yet many children of this age are affected by parental separation and children

Neglect in Serious Case Reviews

Project team

Prof Marian Brandon
Sue Bailey
Dr Pippa Belderson
Birgit Larsson

Funder

NSPCC

This study provides a new contribution to learning about neglect by exploring the circumstances in which neglect can be catastrophic and have a fatal or seriously harmful outcome for a child.

The study is a re-analysis of data from over 800 cases from four consecutive government commissioned analyses of Serious Case Reviews (2003-2011) undertaken by UEA.

The research questions

- 1 How often is neglect evident in the families of children who become the subject of a serious case review?
- 2 What are the characteristics of children and families where children have suffered neglect?
- 3 In what ways does neglect feature in these cases of child fatality and near fatality?

Neglect can be life threatening and needs to be treated with as much urgency as other categories of maltreatment

The first two questions are considered from a statistical perspective by firstly examining patterns over time in relation to those cases (from 2005-2011) of children who had a child protection plan for neglect. Secondly we use a protocol to determine the presence of neglect more widely for children in Serious Case Reviews (from 2009-2011).

The third question is considered through a qualitative study of themes from forty six cases drawn from 2003-2011, and provides a rich understanding of how different types and circumstances of neglect appear to result in a catastrophic outcome.

Key Findings

- Neglect is much more prevalent in Serious Case Reviews than previously understood (60 per cent of the 139 reviews from 2009-2011).
- Neglect can be life threatening and needs to be treated with as much urgency as other categories of maltreatment.
- Neglect with the most serious outcomes is not confined to the youngest children, and occurs across all ages.
- The possibility that in a very small minority of cases neglect will be fatal, or cause grave harm, should be part of a practitioner's mindset. This is not to be alarmist, nor to suggest predicting or presuming that where neglect is found the child is at risk of death. Rather, practitioners, managers, policy makers and decision makers should be discouraged from minimizing or downgrading the harm that can come from neglect and discouraged from allowing neglect cases to drift.
- The key aim for the practitioner working with neglect is to ensure a healthy living environment and healthy relationships for children. Prevention and early access to help and support for children and their families are crucial, but so too is later stage help for older children who live with the consequences of longstanding neglect.

The report has been widely disseminated by the NSPCC. It featured in an article in Community Care and was reported in The Times in March 2013.

A study of family involvement in Serious Case Reviews: Messages for policy and practice

Project team

University of East Anglia:
Prof Marian Brandon

University of Nottingham:
Dr Kate Morris

Independent Safeguarding
Advisor:
Paul Tudor

Funder

BASPCAN

Although there is an expectation that family members will be involved in Serious Case Reviews, developments in practice and guidance often fall short of these expectations. The study involved interviews with members from seven families who had contributed to reviews, and focus group discussions or interviews with over 100 professionals in the four UK nations.

Research Questions

- What are the current arrangements for participation 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?

Family involvement can make an important contribution to learning from reviews of the most serious cases of child death or serious injury arising from abuse or neglect. This study suggests that guiding principles rather than prescriptive practice is well suited to the policies and practices of family participation. The evidence indicates that the principles grounded in clarity, transparency, negotiation and inclusivity can usefully inform family involvement.

The study revealed a range of reasons for family involvement in case reviews but

agencies rarely make clear why they seek family involvement. In order for families to become involved in a manner that avoids further harm, and for professionals to be clear about their involvement, local protocols need to be transparent about the reasons for family involvement.

The family should be able to contribute from the earliest stages of the review: Phase One: initial contact and mapping of the review (purpose, remit, and relationship to other processes), identification of family's support needs. Phase Two: negotiation (where possible) of terms of reference, agree type and process of involvement, mapping of family members to be involved, facilitation of family preparation including setting out how family information will be used. Phase Three: substantive gathering of information, including family descriptions of experiences, agreement about on-going contact and feedback arrangements. Phase Four: feedback, fulfilling commitments about reporting actions and change, family evaluation of process. The report includes a brief information sheet for families.

The report has been widely disseminated by BASPCAN. The new edition of Working Together, published in March 2013, provides a direct link to the study.

Family involvement can make an important contribution to learning from reviews of the most serious cases of child death or serious injury arising from abuse or neglect

Recognition and telling: Developing earlier routes to safety for children and young people

Project team

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Sue Bailey
Dr Pippa Belderson
Dr Laura Biggart
A team of young
researchers

Funder

Office of the Children's
Commissioner for England

The government commissioned Munro Review of child protection (2011) argues that a child's journey from experiencing problems to getting effective help should be at the heart of the child protection system. It stresses the importance of an offer of early help for children and their families. The aims of the project are to examine young people's perceptions of abuse and neglect, and to explore their experiences of telling and getting help from both informal and formal sources.

The key research questions 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?

The study employs six young researchers with experience or knowledge of the topic, aged between 16 and 24. The team of adult and young researchers is undertaking an analysis of an online message board, interviews with vulnerable young people aged 11-19, and six focus groups conducted with children and young people, family members, and professionals.

Emerging findings suggest that young people face a variety of problems 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. 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. Young people utilise their peers for emotional support and offloading. However, where the aim is to get action to stop abuse young people recommend telling an adult rather than a peer.

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.

A launch event is planned for autumn 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.

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

Routes into sexual exploitation: going missing, agency and victimhood. An exploration of the perceptions of young people involved

2013-14

Researcher

Dr Jane Dodsworth

Funder

British Association for the Study and Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect (BASPCAN)

There is increasing awareness of child sexual exploitation and the individual, family and environmental factors which contribute to involvement. Many young people involved have childhood histories of adversity and there is growing awareness of the additional vulnerability of those who have experience of the care system and/or of running away from care or home. The sense individuals make of these experiences impacts on how they perceive themselves, their sense of victimhood or agency, routes taken and receptiveness to safeguarding services.

Aims and objectives of the research were:

- To gain an understanding of the experiences and perspectives of young people involved in sexual exploitation, particularly those who have run away from care/ home and are involved in substance misuse.

Following careful consideration of ethical factors, 20 participants aged 16 plus are being sought via 'gatekeepers' from specific specialist outreach projects. Semi-structured interviews will chart participants' lives and examine experiences in their narratives. A qualitative approach will be taken to data collection and analysis to ensure findings are grounded in the expertise of those directly involved.

A report to BASPCAN and a presentation for the National BASPCAN conference 2014, and for the participating LCSBs (Local Safeguarding Children Boards). This will be the beginning of introducing findings to support practice in this difficult area.

The sense individuals make of these experiences impacts on how they perceive themselves, their sense of victimhood or agency, routes taken and receptiveness to safeguarding services

- To identify whether it is possible to determine risk and protective factors in the young people's perceptions of agency and victimhood.
- To add, from the perspectives of the young people involved, to what is known about routes into involvement, perceptions of agency and pathways taken in order to raise awareness of what has been until recently a largely hidden issue.
- To increase the development of effective service interventions which have meaning to the young people involved.

A thematic review of edge of care cases

1 Apr 2012-30 Sep 2013

Project team

Prof Marian Brandon
Dr Penny Sorensen

Funder

London Borough
of Westminster

'Edge of care' cases provide a challenge to social work practice and pose difficult decisions about how and whether young people should be supported to remain at home or how to plan for them to be 'looked after' elsewhere. They often concern older children (over the age of ten) in circumstances where care is needed imminently (for example today or tomorrow) or where there is no immediate crisis but there is a likelihood of care in the near future. 'Edge of care' cases can also include young people who are returning home from care.

The study is a brief six month thematic review and analysis of a small number of adolescent 'edge of care' cases (April-September 2013). It is an ethnographic study using a narrative approach to carry out observations and a small number of interviews with family members and practitioners to understand and improve edge of care practice better.

The cases for analysis will be purposively selected, as far as is possible, to reflect the different elements of this practice (eg immediate crisis cases, high risk of care cases and return home cases). They will also reflect the ages of young people across the adolescent spectrum.

The study aims to provide a better understanding of the current strengths and limitations of edge of care practice for adolescents in Westminster so that best practice can be more widely shared and services can, if necessary, be re-arranged. As well as being interested in the detail of edge of care practice and decision making, we are also seeking to discover families' and practitioners' experiences of this area of service, and their perceptions of good practice. Interim outcomes for different family members will also be tracked.

The study will build on an internal report of the service and will inform changes to the existing manual about how 'edge of care' cases should be addressed by practitioners and their managers from the point of identification through to assessment, monitoring, tracking and evaluation. The study will be written up as an article.

The findings of this study will be looked at alongside the evaluation of a new 'edge of care' service provided by Norfolk Children's Services. This new study will be led by Dr Emma Ward and Prof Gillian Schofield, 2013-14. It will investigate the work of a service provided by the Norfolk Clinical Commissioning Team to assess and intervene with vulnerable families where children may be on the edge of care. The service includes supporting families to keep children safely at home, enabling children who have had to come into care to be reunified successfully with their families – and using their assessments as a basis for speedy permanence decisions.

The study aims to provide a better understanding of the current strengths and limitations of edge of care practice in Westminster so that best practice can be more widely shared and services can, if necessary, be re-arranged

Evaluation of the Tri-Borough Family Coaching service

Mar 2013-Feb 2014

Project team

Prof Marian Brandon
Dr Penny Sorensen
Sue Bailey
Prof June Thoburn
Dr Neil Cooper
Dr Sara Connolly

Funder

The London Tri-Borough

The Family Coaching service is a response to the Government's high profile 'Troubled Families' initiative and is being delivered across the Tri-Borough (of Westminster, Kensington and Chelsea and Hammersmith and Fulham). This new service is being offered to families with problems in at least two of the following: youth offending; crime and anti-social behaviour; school attendance; truancy or exclusion from school; employment; adults claiming out-of-work benefits. The initiative aims to turn around the lives of troubled families by providing a coordinated approach to support, so the family is not overwhelmed by interventions and is helped to deal with the most urgent difficulties first.

This one year study aims to provide a primarily qualitative, critical evaluation of the working of the family coach service to get a better understanding of what elements appear to be making a difference and for whom. It will also examine how the coaching service relates to the 'services as usual' that precede and follow the service. It will map each stage of the service beginning with the triage system to allocate families to the coach service (or elsewhere).

A series of developmental workshops will be run with the Family Coaches to understand from their perspective how their work is developing. 'Whole family' interviews will provide family perspectives on what might, or might not, be succeeding and why. A simple reviewing system will also be devised to capture longer term outcomes for families and the knock on effects of the service for other stakeholders.

The study is, in part, a follow on from the influential earlier evaluation of the more intensive Family Recovery Project, evaluated by a team led in the CRCF by Prof June Thoburn and ending in 2012. The overall Tri-Borough Troubled Families service has drawn substantially on the findings of this earlier evaluation. June will have an advisory role in the team led by Prof Brandon that is evaluating the next stage of the FRP (Family Recovery Project) team's work in Westminster and the Tri-Borough Troubled Families service.

The initiative aims to turn around the lives of troubled families by providing a coordinated approach to support

Emotional Intelligence (EI) and performance in child and family social work

2012-2015

Researcher

Dr Laura Biggart

Funder

ESRC Future Research Leaders scheme

For public sector workers such as social workers, teachers or nurses, good interpersonal skills are very important for the quality of service that they deliver. Skills such as listening and thinking about how the other person may be feeling are all important. Just as important is the ability for individual social workers to manage their own anxiety and stress, otherwise they may not perform as well as they should. This research will investigate what factors constitute good performance in child and family social work specifically, as this is considered to be one of the more stressful jobs to do. We are interested to see whether something called

The research project has four phases: the first phase will examine existing measures and conceptualisations of good social work performance and explore these with four focus groups of social work service users; social workers themselves; social work managers and social work lecturers. The second phase involves designing and testing a questionnaire which can capture these elements of social work performance identified from the literature search and focus groups. The second phase also examines if this questionnaire of social work performance is linked to emotional intelligence. The third phase designs an emotional

intelligence intervention based on what is known to work from known existing interventions. The fourth phase delivers an emotional intelligence training package to deliver an intervention to one group of social workers and compare their performance to another group of social

We are interested to see whether something called emotional intelligence helps social workers do a better job and whether emotional intelligence also helps them manage their anxiety and stress better

emotional intelligence helps social workers do a better job and whether emotional intelligence also helps them manage their anxiety and stress better.

Emotional intelligence refers to a number of related skills in individuals: understanding how emotions work; recognising emotions in themselves; recognising emotions in others; managing their own emotions; managing emotions in others. If emotional intelligence does help both performance and managing anxiety and stress, we want to see if teaching emotional intelligence skills to child and family social workers makes a difference to their performance and anxiety levels over one year whilst they are in work.

workers who do not receive the training. Their performance will be tracked over the period of one year.

The research is important for two main reasons: First, social workers' stress is known to affect performance. Secondly, if emotional intelligence skills are important to carry out the job, it is essential that these skills are adequately assessed at the stage of recruitment, both to training and into work, and then supported in practice.

Partnership by law?

The pre-proceedings process for families on the edge of care proceedings

2010-2012

Project team

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Funder

ESRC

The pre-proceedings process was introduced in 2008, with the aims of diverting cases of abuse and neglect from the courts, ensuring care applications were better prepared, and reducing the time courts took to decide these cases. Local authorities are required to write a 'letter before proceedings' to parents explaining their concerns and inviting them to a 'pre-proceedings meeting' to discuss how proceedings could be avoided. Legal aid is available so that a lawyer can advise and support the parents at this meeting.

Local authority interviewees valued the process as an ethical way of practice, with potential to avoid proceedings. Positive views were tempered with concern about delays for children and great disillusionment about the failure of courts to take note of pre-proceedings work. The process made no significant difference to what happened in court, and cases with or without it lasted just as long. These findings are important given the current drive to reduce the duration of care proceedings to 26 weeks. This creates new pressures on local authorities

Positive views were tempered with concern about delays for children and great disillusionment about the failure of courts to take note of pre-proceedings work

The study was conducted in six local authorities in England and Wales, and examined the use and impact of the process by analysing local authority case and court proceedings files (207); interviews with social work managers (16), social workers (19), local authority lawyers (16) and lawyers who represent parents (19); observations of pre-proceedings meetings (36), interviews with parents and other relatives who attended them (25); and a focus group with judges. Observed cases were followed up 6-18 months after the meeting.

Most of the families that were involved in pre-proceedings meetings were well known to the local authority, and over 80 per cent of the children were on child protection plans. The primary use of the process was to reinforce the child protection plan; it was a 'step up', to indicate the seriousness of concerns and encourage the parents to co-operate. Given the long histories it was notable that diversion was achieved in about a quarter of the cases, through alternative care arrangements or improved parenting.

to bring well prepared cases, and on the courts to take more account of pre-proceedings work. The full report and a summary were published in April 2013, and are available on the Centre website.

Evaluation of the Tri-Borough Care Proceedings Project

2012-13

Research team

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Dr Penny Sorensen

Funder

The London Tri-Borough
authorities

For many years policy-makers and practitioners have wrestled with the problem of lengthy court proceedings involving children. Children need a secure base, and if there is a possibility that they may not be able to spend their childhoods in their original families, they should not have to wait for longer than necessary for a decision to be made about their future.

The Tri-Borough Care Proceedings Pilot Project, which ran from April 2012 – March 2013, was designed to address this problem through practice changes and a framework of monitoring

Questions include whether there have been changes in care plans or placements because of the drive to make proceedings shorter, and whether it has had any impact on delay before or after care proceedings. Further, since the changes need to be sustainable if they are to become a useful model for others to emulate, we are looking at what is supporting practice changes in the short run, and the possible difficulties in keeping them going in the long-run (for example, has staff time had to be diverted from other areas of service in order to make

The project and our evaluation are likely to have direct impacts on the current policy agenda for speeding up care proceedings and adoption

mechanisms, with the aim of providing a model that can be rolled out to other areas. It was developed by the three Tri-Borough authorities (Hammersmith and Fulham, Westminster, Kensington and Chelsea) along with the court service and Cafcass.

The Tri-Borough authorities invited tenders for an independent evaluation, and a team from the CRCF, with consultants Dr Sara Connolly of the Norwich Business School and Prof Judith Masson of Bristol University, were successful. We are using a mixture of statistical analysis, and interviews and focus groups with social workers, lawyers, judges, children's guardians, young people and parents. We are due to report to the authorities at the end of July 2013.

In order to gain a full understanding of the impact of the project, we are looking not only at whether there has been a reduction in the duration of care proceedings, but at other changes that may have resulted from it.

the pilot work?) The project should generate important lessons for reducing delay in child care cases, and challenging messages about the drivers and inhibitors of organisational change.

The project and our evaluation are likely to have direct impacts on the current policy agenda for speeding up care proceedings and adoption. In addition to the project report, we anticipate publications both on the impact of the pilot and on the challenges of sustainability.



**Children need a secure base
and should not have to wait
for longer than necessary for
a decision to be made about
their future**

Research projects

Child placement

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- 29 **Evaluation of the BREAK Moving On project**

Care planning and the role of the independent reviewing officer

Project team

Dr Jonathan Dickens
Prof Gillian Schofield
Dr Chris Beckett
Julie Young
Dr Georgia Philip

Funder

ESRC

Local authorities are 'corporate parents' for the children they are looking after, and effective care planning is essential for the children's well-being and the best possible outcomes. In 2004, a system of 'independent reviewing officers' (IROs) was established to monitor the way that local authorities implement the plans, and to ensure that the child's wishes and feelings are fully considered. Since then, there has been heated debate about how effective and how truly 'independent' the IROs are. In April 2011, new government regulations and statutory guidance about care planning came into force, which (amongst other things) strengthened the IRO's role.

A team from the Centre was awarded a grant by the Economic and Social Research Council to investigate current practice in care planning and the role of the IRO. The project started in August 2012, and runs until summer 2014.

The main goals are to

- investigate how the new care planning regulations and guidance are being implemented;
- investigate the effectiveness of IROs for monitoring the plans of the local authority, promoting children's well-being, and managing their participation;
- examine the overlaps and differences in the roles and responsibilities of the range of individuals involved in planning for children in care, how decisions are made and disagreements managed;
- ascertain the views of children and parents about the care planning and review process, particularly the role of the IRO.

The aims of the project are to learn from the histories of the children and views of practitioners, parents and children, to identify key messages for policy and practice

The research includes a study of case files on a total of 120 children, plus interviews with social workers, IROs, parents and young people, multi-agency focus groups, and a national survey. The file study, interviews and focus groups are currently underway, and the survey will be undertaken in autumn 2013.

The aims of the project are to learn from the histories of the children and the views of practitioners, parents and children, to identify key messages for policy and practice. We shall work with government and non-government agencies to share our findings and develop practice models for rigorous but flexible child focus, and clarity about professional roles and boundaries. We plan to produce a good practice guide for IROs, social workers and LAC (Looked After Children) managers. Findings and practice guides will be available on the project website.

Further information about the study is available on the project website

www.uea.ac.uk/ssf/centre-research-child-family/p4cic

Contact after adoption – a longitudinal follow up in late adolescence

Research team

Dr Elsbeth Neil
Dr Emma Ward
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Funder

The Nuffield Foundation

Throughout the past year, the third stage of the Contact after Adoption study has been taking place. The research team has been following up a sample of adopted children who have experienced a range of contact arrangements (including no contact, exchanging letters and photos and face to face contact) with some of their birth relatives. This is the first longitudinal study of post adoption contact in the UK, as well as a unique outcomes study of children adopted from the care system.

Data collection is nearing completion and a good proportion of the original sample of young people, adoptive parents and birth relatives have been interviewed. A key area of enquiry has been to trace the pathways that the contact arrangements have taken over the past ten years and to explore how the contact has been experienced by the three parties.

This is the first longitudinal study of post adoption contact in the UK, as well as a unique outcomes study of children adopted from the care system

Early findings on face to face contact indicate that it can become more stressful as children grow older and become more aware of the emotional meaning of the meetings, both for themselves and for their adoptive and birth relatives.

Some meetings have not continued, but others have provided a range of benefits, including the dispelling of fantasies about the birth family, as this young woman describes:

It's like when you can't have something you want to know but where I've always had the option I've never been that curious. Maybe I will when I'm older, I don't know. Some people really want to meet their parents, they think about it more. I've always been able to so that curiosity can't really grow because if I really wanted to ask her a question I could.

Indirect contact has often proved more problematic with a high proportion of arrangements 'fizzling out' over the years and young people often reporting sadness and dissatisfaction when their birth relatives have not responded. Equally, some birth relatives have been distressed by the unexplained ending of indirect contact from the adoptive family.

Further analysis of the qualitative and quantitative data will provide more nuanced information about the impact of contact and the factors that contribute to both beneficial and difficult outcomes.

The research team is developing a practice model to support professionals in assessing these factors and tailoring their plans accordingly. The study is due to complete in September 2013.

Looked after children and offending: reducing risk and promoting resilience

Mar 2010-Jan 2012

Research team

Prof Gillian Schofield
Dr Laura Biggart
Dr Jane Dodsworth
Dr Victoria Scaife
Dr Emma Ward
Alice Haynes
Birgit Larsson

Funder

Big Lottery Research
Programme

Outcomes for young people in the care system continue to raise concerns at national and local level in relation to offending. The project's goal was to improve the life chances of looked after children at risk of offending and criminalisation by identifying risk and protective factors – in the lives of young people and in the care and youth justice systems.

The project was a partnership with TACT. It included a literature review, a national survey of practice and protocols and inter-agency focus groups. Interviews and developmental measures were conducted with 100 young people in total from four case study local authorities.

Findings of this study suggest that the care system can 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 continue to 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.

Two of the 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 significant risk factor for looked after children is inappropriate criminalisation through police and court involvement as a response to challenging behaviour in their placements.

The overlap between these two vulnerable groups – young people in care and young people who offend – raises specific issues for policy and practice that can only be successfully managed when evidence is available that facilitates assessment of need and risk, and can also contribute to appropriate prevention and intervention.

The executive summary and full report are available on the CRCF website.

The overlap between these two vulnerable groups – young people in care and young people who offend – raises specific issues for policy and practice

Evaluation of the BREAK Moving On project

Apr 2012–Mar 2015

Research team

Prof Gillian Schofield
Dr Emma Ward

Funder

Esmée Fairbairn
Foundation

BREAK, a Norfolk based voluntary organisation providing residential child care and other services, received funding in 2012 from the Esmée Fairbairn Foundation, to develop two areas of their work – their transitions and mentoring programmes.

These programmes were brought together in the 'Moving On' project. Prof Gillian Schofield and the Centre for Research on the Child and Family were funded to undertake the evaluation of these innovative projects.

The transitions team works alongside Break's residential units preparing young people for independence and moving on into the community. When a young person has left their care, the expectation is that support and advice will be available whenever it is needed and for as long as required.

The mentoring projects link young people who have experience of the care system and disabled young people with disabilities with volunteer mentors from the community, who can act as positive role models and provide support for young people on their path towards adulthood.

Over the three year period of this development project at Break, Gillian Schofield, with the support of a senior research associate, Dr Emma Ward, will monitor the progress and outcomes of both projects. We are tracking the progress of the young people and will send questionnaires to all those who have received services. Interviews, including some well-being measures, will be conducted with a sample of young people currently involved, as well as those who have recently received support services.

The evaluation will 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, a key goal of permanence, will be a particular focus here. Focus groups will also be conducted with a range of practitioners to capture the views and experiences of both Break staff and volunteers (carers, transitions workers and mentors) and local authority staff (e.g. children's

social workers,
Independent
Reviewing Officers).

Findings from the evaluation will inform a range of practice in relation to transitions to adulthood from residential care and also mentoring for young people in care. Adolescence is a crucial period of development for vulnerable young people and supportive relationships that

promote resilience are essential. This project is an important opportunity to consider how new approaches can improve outcomes as young people in care move through adolescence into adulthood.

This project is an important opportunity to consider how new approaches can improve outcomes as young people in care move through adolescence into adulthood.



**Fathers' active participation
in family life is likely to be
one of the most important
social developments
of the 21st century**

Research projects

Parents, families and work

- 32 **Fathers, work and families in twenty-first century Britain: beyond the breadwinner model?**
- 33 **Capturing career paths of European Research Council (ERC) grantees and applicants – ERCAREER**
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- 35 **Impact of the ‘Dad Factor’ programme on Children Centre professional attitudes to father engagement**

Fathers, work and families in twenty-first century Britain: beyond the breadwinner model?

Nov 2012-Apr 2014

Project team

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Funder

ESRC Secondary Data
Analysis Initiative

The role of fathers as breadwinners and parents has been undergoing dramatic changes over the past few decades. In the UK and elsewhere in Europe, there is a renewed policy emphasis and concern about the role of men in families. At the same time, there is no single comprehensive source of information about men as fathers, their contribution and role in the family, involvement in childrearing, economic activity and contribution and how these factors interact.

This project aims to bridge the information gaps on fathers and establish the UK's foremost analysis about the lives of fathers using data from four large-scale survey series: Understanding Society, the European Union Labour Force Survey, the European Social Survey and the British Household Panel Study.

The study has four main aims

- 1 To provide the first comprehensive profiling of fathers in twenty-first century Britain in terms of their paid work and family life, focusing on employment status and working patterns, involvement in childcare and housework, relationships with children and partners, and experience of work-family conflict.
- 2 To explore factors associated with differences in fathers' paid work and family life, focusing in particular on fathers' own characteristics (e.g. age, education, occupation) and those of their households (e.g. age of the youngest child, partner's employment status and hours worked), as well as on interrelations between the 'provider' and 'carer' roles.
- 3 To analyse time trends in fathers' working patterns since the late 1990s in order to consider whether changes in UK family policy, as well as the recession, have led to a shift in how households arrange their paid work and care.
- 4 To explore the role of institutional factors in affecting fathers' working patterns and the level of work-life conflict they experience, by comparing the UK with other European countries.

Impact

The study will inform the development of innovative work-care policies and practices and empower key stakeholders to carry out their work more effectively drawing on the improved understanding of men's diverse family and work roles.

Our project stakeholder group includes national representatives from:

- Gingerbread
- Department for Business, Innovation & Skills (BIS)
- Department of Work and Pensions (DWP)
- The Conference Board (a global independent business membership group)
- Working Families
- Relate
- National Children's Bureau
- Fatherhood Institute
- Trade Union Congress (TUC)
- Family Matters Institute
- Fawcett Society

To facilitate the impact there will be a range of written outputs and dissemination events including:

- a study website, which will house all the main research findings and will structure the information around the needs of the diverse stakeholders
- targeted briefings aimed at specific groups of stakeholders
- a launch event for the study's findings and for the study website.

This project aims to bridge the information gaps on fathers and establish the UK's foremost analysis about the lives of fathers using data from four large-scale survey series

Capturing career paths of ERC grantees and applicants – ERCAREER

Nov 2012-13

Researcher

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Funder

European Research
Council

Coordination and Support Actions,
ERC-2012-SUPPORT-1: Gender aspects
in career structures and career paths

Research questions

- (a) Who are those scientists who apply to the ERC, how do they differ from the scientific population as a whole, and what distinguishes the successful from the unsuccessful applicants?
- (b) How are research careers affected by care responsibilities?
- (c) How are career breaks and unconventional career paths represented to and treated by the ERC?

Information on career breaks and/or family status: Information on family status, career breaks and the birth of children is not reported systematically. Information on career breaks is usually only reported by applicants who wish to be considered a 'starter' and this group are mainly women.

Parenthood was only mentioned in 30 per cent of the CVs.

Under half of the women mentioned being mothers (42.2 per cent) and a very small proportion of men mentioned being fathers (13.3 per cent). Given the average age of the Starting Grant applicants, a 30 per cent rate of parenthood seems low and a 13.3 per cent rate of fatherhood implausibly low!

Of those who mentioned having children most, but not all, (76.7 per cent) gave the years of birth but less than a third of women specifically mentioned the length of maternity leave or associated career break.

Of the 43 who mentioned being parents, 14 were successful applicants – 6 men and 8 women – that is 75 per cent of the men who mentioned being fathers and 22.9 per cent of the women who mentioned being mothers. Whilst recognising the small and self-selecting sample of parents, the gap in success rates for fathers and mothers is striking and we need to fully explore this.

We have subsequently validated our coding scheme for the Starting Grant applicants across other subject areas. The applicants for the Advanced Grants rarely provide on family or parental leave.

Under half of the women mentioned being mothers and a very small proportion of men mentioned being fathers

Work conducted November 2012-March 2013

Examine CVs submitted as part of the ERC application and develop a coding schema for 'conventional' career paths;

To get an impression of how applicants present 'career breaks' to the ERC.

Preliminary findings based on the analysis of the CVs of 150 Starting Grant applicants in the Life Sciences:

Information on job history: While almost all applicants provide at least the most important stages of their careers, we find their accounts vary considerably regarding completeness.

Acceptability and feasibility of collecting outcome data on the psychological and social adaptation of fathers to the birth of a very low birth weight infant – a pilot study

2012–Nov 2013

Project team

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Foundation Trust:
Dr Paul Clarke
Karen Few

Funder

UEA School
of Psychology

More very low birth weight infants (<1500g; VLBW) are surviving, creating a need for higher levels of medical and nursing care from professionals and family care from parents. To date, most research on the family factors has focused on maternal adaptation. Less is known about how fathers cope with the birth of VLBW premature infants or how they manage later when these infants are discharged home.

The topic arose from an observed deficit in the support of fathers of VLBW infants on the neonatal intensive care unit (NICU) at the Norfolk & Norwich University Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust (NNUH) and subsequent confirmation by fathers of unmet needs. How fathers of premature babies reconcile work-family responsibilities and manage care of other children is not well understood.

As the body of evidence on fathers as 'risks' and 'assets' grows it is timely to investigate experiences and needs of fathers of VLBW infants, particularly their psychological and social support needs. Although fathers can provide vital support to mothers in the transition to parenthood and early paternal involvement benefits child development, paternal risk factors are also associated with poor child outcomes, including child maltreatment.

The study aims to first investigate the feasibility and acceptability of collecting psychological outcome data, with mother and father couples of VLBW infants in comparison to parents of other infants admitted to the neonatal intensive care unit (NICU). It also aims to investigate the parenting, spousal and mental health profiles of fathers after the birth of VLBW infants compared to fathers of other infants admitted to the NICU. Fathers' work-family balance will also be examined. A prospective research design will follow all admissions to the NICU unit at the Norfolk and Norwich University Hospital (N&NUH) over a three to four month period so that mother and father couples of VLBW infants can be compared to other parents of infants admitted to the NICU.

IRAS NHS Ethics Approval has been granted and data collection commenced in April. Forty parent couples of infants admitted to the NICU at Norfolk and Norwich University Hospital NHS Trust are being recruited (20 parent couple of very low birth weight infants and 20 couples of term infants).

Implementation in the NHS of family-centred neonatal care set out in the Toolkit for High Quality Neonatal Services (2009) is at an early stage of development, particularly in respect of fathers. This study will contribute to its development.

We are not yet sure how hospital and community staff can be best advised to support fathers and so in turn influence the support provided to both mother and baby. The value of including both parents in assessments and interventions is increasingly stressed but rarely implemented.

The father-inclusive approach of the proposed study will contribute to filling this gap in knowledge and practice.

As the body of evidence on fathers as 'risks' and 'assets' grows it is timely to investigate experiences and needs of fathers of VLBW infants

Impact of the ‘Dad Factor’ programme on Children’s Centre professional attitudes to father engagement

2012–Nov 2013

Project team

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Alice Haynes
Dr Michela Franceschelli

Funder

Trust for London

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 a programme (the ‘Dad Factor’) to help schools develop a range of strategies to engage fathers and encourage their involvement in their children’s learning.

More recently the Fatherhood Institute have adapted this programme for children’s centres and for use with professionals wishing to work with families who are new to the UK paying special attention to refugee and asylum seeking families. The Trust for London have funded the Fatherhood Institute and CRCF to develop this work and to evaluate the new programme.

The ‘Dad Factor’ Intervention Programme goals are 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 more specifically refugee, asylum-seeking and migrant fathers; develop strategies to increase engagement with the men in these families: show greater frequency of interactions with these fathers/father figures.

The intervention consists of a ‘whole team’ 2-day training with supporting resources to

- educate management, staff and related professionals (including from referring agencies and other local services) about the benefits of engaging fathers and particularly fathers who have been in the UK for fewer than four years, in their children’s care and education
- develop professionals’ understanding of the target group
- develop professionals’ skills and self-confidence in engaging with them
- assist staff to develop systematic engagement with these fathers, which will be sustainable

In the family support services field there has been growing attention to fathering particularly in relation to children’s wellbeing. Practitioners are increasingly aware of mother-centredness of mainstream practice and the need to engage fathers in service provision.

This study is a process and impact evaluation of the programme by comparing professional attitudes to father engagement and frequency of professional contact with fathers in intervention and matched control sites. Base-line, post intervention and 3 month follow-up assessments are being conducted in Children’s Centres in an Inner London Borough using: an online Family Tracking Attendance Spread sheet completed by the Centre Manager and an online Father-Friendliness Organizational Self-Assessment and Planning Tool for Early Childhood Education Programs and a Feelings Thermometer Scale to explore staff engagement with men and father figures.

The project will contribute to understanding father-inclusive family support in the early years in particular for families which have recently arrived in the UK.

In the family support services field there has been growing attention to fathering particularly in relation to children’s wellbeing

PhD

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Threatened identities?

The mothering experiences of asylum-seeking and refugee women in England

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Asylum-seeking and refugee women can encounter a range of experiences that affect mothering, including encountering new understandings of child rearing norms and gender roles, language barriers and the loss of support. In England, these experiences are combined with the consequences of negotiating an asylum system at a time when seeking sanctuary is considered a threat to state interests and those applying for asylum are often suspected of seeking economic prosperity. As a result, asylum-seeking and refugee families encounter policies that prioritise the protection of borders over the wellbeing of families.

The participants encountered a range of challenges to mothering stemming from asylum status precariousness, including poverty, inadequate housing, separation from children and poor mental health. These occurred in addition to challenges outside the asylum process, including negotiating a new culture, intimate partner violence and lone parenting. Some spoke about these experiences as damaging to their maternal identity whilst others seemed to retain a sense of themselves as competent mothers. A resilience framework was used to examine the influence of external and psychological factors on women's perceptions of themselves as mothers. The study then explored the way in which the participants adopted multiple narrative strategies to manage threats to their identity as 'good' mothers. By framing their narratives to give favourable impressions of themselves, the women sought to bolster their internal self-image, as well as to influence external opinions of themselves as mothers.

Mothering is a central part of many women's identities and encountering experiences that threaten the mothering role can damage women's self-concept and psychological wellbeing

Mothering is a central part of many women's identities and encountering experiences that threaten the mothering role can damage women's self-concept and psychological wellbeing, and in doing so, risk the wellbeing of children. In light of the recent substantial cuts to government funding of asylum-seeking and refugee support services, research is crucial in encouraging the provision of adequate and appropriate support for this vulnerable group.

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with twenty-two asylum-seeking and refugee mothers living in England between June 2011 and July 2012. The participants came from a diverse range of countries and were recruited through refugee support organisations. The interviews were recorded, transcribed and inputted into the qualitative software programme Nvivo. The data was then analysed using grounded theory.

The research confirms the centrality of the role of mothering for many women, regardless of their cultural and socio-economic backgrounds. It also challenges the suspicion that the asylum system is a 'soft touch'. The findings emphasise the importance of social support networks and access to employment, education and training for mental wellbeing. They also highlight the need for culturally-sensitive psychological therapies to encourage resilience, whilst taking into account asylum-seekers' and refugees' understandings of mental health.

Young people and cannabis use: A socio-psychological mixed method analysis

Dr Eliza Patouris

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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 had prioritised research programmes of work on the user of illicit drugs. Extant health and policing-related 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.

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.

Aims and methods

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. 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 are:

Study 1

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. 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

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

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.

The development of the caregiving behavioural system: A longitudinal exploration of the transition to motherhood

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The mother-infant relationship during pregnancy has been the subject of research in many areas of psychology. Bowlby suggested that pregnancy was a time when a woman must begin to see herself as able to provide a secure base for her child and to see herself as a mother. He proposed that we have an evolutionary need to "attach" to a person who is bigger, stronger and wiser than us, known as our attachment behavioural system. We will seek out this person in times of fear, anxiety, or distress. This system promotes our survival as a species.

Bowlby also suggested that we have an evolutionary need to want to protect our young; this is referred to as our caregiving behavioural system, which promotes our genetic fitness. Although there have been theoretical predictions as to how this system develops, there has not been much study into the actual developmental changes that occur during the transition to parenthood. This longitudinal study will examine the developmental trajectory of the caregiving behavioural system and the impact of prenatal influences on the child's attachment to his or her mother at one year of age.

Exploring disabled young people's views and experiences of child protection

Jane Hernon

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Previous research has indicated that disabled young people are significantly more likely to have experienced abuse than their non-disabled peers. In the UK, relatively little is known about what happens to disabled children and young people who are abused, or how well safeguarding services respond to their needs.

The Munro Review of Child Protection called for a fundamental re-focusing on the views and experiences of children themselves, re-iterating children's legislated rights to participate in decisions made about them (UNCRC (United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child) 1989, Children Act 1989). While there is a growing literature exploring children and young people's experiences of child protection, few, if any, studies have focused on the perspectives of disabled young people.

Drawing on theoretical perspectives from childhood and disability studies, this study intends to begin to address this gap in research knowledge. Activity-based interviews will be conducted with 20-25 disabled young people, aged 11-18, currently or recently the subject of a child protection plan, exploring with them their:

- Access to and priorities for support
- Experiences of having a social worker
- Knowledge and understanding of the child protection process.

It is hoped that analysing what these young people have to say, using grounded theory, may contribute to improved understanding of how disabled young people make sense of their lives and experiences of child protection, and how practitioners and policy-makers can best respond to their needs.

Staying in touch: The use of social media by young people in care

Andrew Sach

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This research project is investigating how looked after adolescents stay in touch with friends, family and carers. In particular it will consider how they use social media (SM) to do this. In this context SM is used to describe the use of mobile telephones (smart phones) and computers to communicate through text messages, instant messaging, email and social networking sites. In a relatively short period of time, SM has gained in popularity with developments in technology increasing the availability and ease of such communication. Such a trend is likely to continue with the increasing availability of smart phones. For example in 2010, Ofcom found smartphone ownership for 12-15 year olds to be 35 per cent and in two years this has risen to 62 per cent (Ofcom, 2012). The relatively recent emergence and popularity of SM means we are at the beginning of understanding its impact

on development. There is growing awareness of risks such as cyber bullying, sexting and grooming, along with an understanding that SM is used by adolescents to explore themselves and the world. However currently very little is known about the specific use of SM by looked after adolescents. Significantly they represent some of the most vulnerable in society and living away from parents may uniquely affect their SM experience. The project will initially involve interviewing a small number of young people in care around who they stay in touch with and SM. Focus groups including social workers and foster carers will consider the same questions to provide an adult perspective. The themes that derive from this work will then be used to develop an online questionnaire for a large sample of young people in care. This approach will help build an understanding of SM use in this population and identify whether there are specific risks and benefits for this population.

Encounters with the family in child protection practice: social workers' reflections on the home visit

Laura Cook

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The Munro Review of Child Protection (2011) emphasised the need for systemic change in order to facilitate social workers' use of 'professional judgement' in child protection work. The report emphasised the need for good quality supervision and organisational structures which would minimise the 'predictable biases' in social workers' reasoning about families. However, to date there has been a lack of research into the way in which practitioners reflect on, analyse and form judgements about children and families.

This research project will examine how social workers experience, and make sense of, an initial home visit to a family in the course

of child protection work. The study will use in-depth, narrative interviews with child protection social workers in order to elucidate a) the emotional impact and psychodynamics of encountering the family at home, b) the process of reflection through which social workers make sense of the family, and c) how social workers generate knowledge from a home visit, and the reflective processes through which this 'knowledge' is generated.

The proposed study will contribute to our understanding of how social workers exercise their professional judgement and the organisational, systemic, procedural and psychodynamic factors that impact on this process.

Family meals: The meanings of the family meal from a multi-person perspective

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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 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 study adopted the conceptual approach of family process theory (Kantor & Lehr, 1975) to explore the underlying family processes that occur during a family meal.

By interviewing multiple family members within a small East Anglian sample the study was able to compare and contrast the different family members' perceptions of family meals, both

within and between the families, and explore the themes of gender and family role in relation to food provisioning. The key findings from the study were that several types of family processes were evident during the mealtime interactions which enabled family members to achieve their 'goals' of affect, meaning and power. By utilising a mixed methods approach with multiple family members the study provided a 'window' into the private world of family life, which illuminated the underlying family paradigms, second order family processes, that guide and influence daily family life (Day, 2010). And finally, the study challenged the homogeneous nature of family meals and concluded that whilst family meals are still perceived as important, they vary in relation to their composition, location, timing and content (both physical and emotional).

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

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There has been growing recognition of, and research into, domestic abuse in adult relationships; however violence in young people's intimate relationships has not been recognised to the same extent. Studies suggest that 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 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.

The research is being undertaken using a multi-method framework combining qualitative and quantitative approaches. Two data collection techniques are being used; an online self-completion survey aimed at identifying whether participants have ever experienced a range of violent behaviours within their relationships, and a series of primarily single sex 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 intimate 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 intimate partner violence.

Migration and community formation: Narratives of three generations of women living in a Greek diaspora community

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Migration has been largely studied from a male perspective and has not specifically reflected the experiences of women. It is only in recent years that there has been some focus on the experiences of female migrants. For this research, migration and a particular diaspora community has been reflected on from a gendered standpoint focusing on the interplay between gender and identity across generations of migrant women. The aim is to understand the experiences of women who have migrated and the effect that this migration has had on their ethnic and gender identity.

An understanding of this diaspora community has been formed through an ethnographic study. Narrative interviews and focus groups have been carried out with three generations

of women living in the community. Data has also been collected through observations, the collection of artefacts and community documents and participant research.

It is through the analysis of data gathered through these varied methodological approaches that conclusions have been reached about the individuals and the community as a whole.

Findings have given an insight into the formation of this community and how it has transformed over the generations. Some of the emergent themes include: gender roles and expectations, family and community relationships and individual and community identity.

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

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This project consists of a systematic review of the literature; quantitative analysis of four years of police data collected on individuals who have experienced restorative justice; and life history interviews with young women who have offended, sampled from the database.

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.

The study will be 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. Findings are intended to inform future policy and practice with this vulnerable group.

Couples' Negotiation of Childcare in Light of Fathers' Increased Entitlements to Paternity Leave and Flexible Working

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During the last decade, Southern, Nordic, Central European and former socialist countries, have increasingly developed diverse forms of parental leave entitlements and bonuses for fathers and mothers, with distinctive design features targeted at enhancing their engagement with infants and children. Despite these developments, our understanding of the impact of parental leave and flexible work policies on parents' work and family behaviour is surprisingly limited. The research attempts to address this gap by comparing three countries with different policy environments.

It adopts a parental capital theory lens (Pleck, 2007) which offers a multi-layered framework: including, social contextual factors (i.e. parental leave policies and flexible work arrangements)

as well as parents' personal and work attributes (e.g. gender role attitudes, work behaviours, education and occupation of parents). In particular, the study seeks to examine how macro policy instruments impact (a) parents' work behaviour (working hours, use of leave, use of flexible work), (b) gender role behaviour, and (c) fathers' child care time. Empirical testing will be based on a comparative analysis of large survey datasets in Europe. Countries with extended father-care leave (e.g. Norway), with short father-care leave (e.g. Netherlands), and with short/minimalist father-care leave policies (e.g. UK) will be selected and subsequently compared for between-country and within-country differences.

South Asian Young British Muslims: Identity, Habitus and the Family Field

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Since the 1950s the incoming flows of immigrants have transformed the social composition of British society which has become increasingly diverse. In this context, the thesis explored the negotiation of religious and national identities amongst young British Muslims and their parents from South Asian backgrounds, the second largest religious group in the UK.

Using Bourdieu's theory of habitus, field and cultural capital, the thesis adopted a qualitatively driven mixed research methods design. It started with an in-school exploratory survey (N=560) with young people aged 14-18 years old from different ethnic and religious backgrounds in an inner London borough and the North West.

Semi-structured interviews (N=52) with South Asian British Muslim young people and their parents followed. Visual methods in the form of photographs taken by young people were used as prompts during their interviews.

Findings from the survey confirm that Islam was the main source of self-definition for Muslim young people, while qualitative data show that the emphasis on religion originated in the family field. Within the family field, young people adopted a range of strategies by which to negotiate new and fluid identities. Three main typologies emerged: conforming and contesting parental culture and Islam, and combining identities. The concept of Islamic capital was developed to understand the specific role of Islam as a resource for parenting.

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Elsbeth Neil (BSc, MA, DipSW, PhD) is a Senior Lecturer in Social Work and has particular research interests in contact after adoption, post adoption support for birth families, and services to support post adoption contact.

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Margaret O'Brien (BSc, PhD, DipClinPsych) is Professor in Child and Family Studies and Co-Director of the Centre. Her research interests are in the role of fathers in families, workplaces and family policies.

Georgia Philip (MA, PGCE, PhD) joined the Centre in November 2011, to begin an ESRC funded Post-Doctoral Fellowship, working with Prof Margaret O'Brien. She is currently a Senior Research Associate on the Care Planning and the Role of the IRO project. Her research interests include: fathers, gender and care, qualitative and feminist research, the feminist ethics of care, parenting interventions and family policy.

Ros Proops (MBChB) is a Honorary Visiting Fellow. She was formally Associate Medical Director at NHS Trust Norfolk with a particular interest in child protection issues and providing care for vulnerable children and young people.

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