

MAKING A DIFFERENCE FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES



**CENTRE FOR RESEARCH ON
CHILDREN AND FAMILIES**

ANNUAL REPORT 2014-15



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**“ RESEARCH EVIDENCE
SHOULD BE THE
FOUNDATION OF
POLICY AND PRACTICE
DEVELOPMENTS. ”**

MARIAN BRANDON

WELCOME WE HAVE BUILT ON THE RANGE AND IMPACT OF OUR WORK IN 2014



The Centre for Research on Children and Families has continued to use research to find better ways to help vulnerable children and their families. Our research has maintained the Centre as one of the leading institutes of its kind. The quality of our research has been commended in the recent Research Excellence Framework (REF 2014). This is the periodic review and ranking of research in universities and their centres. The work of the Centre was returned for peer review in the Social Work and Social Policy panel. We were ranked among the top 5 universities nationally, with 90% of our Social Work research being rated as “world-leading” or “internationally excellent”. This was the first REF exercise to include impact, showing a commitment to ensuring that research makes a difference. Our REF impact case study was assessed as having 80% “world-leading” impact. Our thanks and congratulations go to all involved in achieving this superb result.

The Centre has begun a number of new major initiatives this year. Dr Jeanette Cossar and her team have started their ESRC funded project examining the experiences and identity development of LGBT young people in care. This is an innovative piece of work in a hitherto un-researched area, which will have a significant impact on practice. The study finishes in 2016.

Men and fathers in child protection is another under-explored area of research. Professor Marian Brandon, Dr Georgia Philip and Dr John Clifton have been awarded a grant from the Nuffield Foundation for a 30 month study titled, ‘Counting fathers in: Understanding men’s perspectives on encounters with the child protection system’. Our study involves working alongside three local authorities. One of the outputs of the research will be a module for social workers on working with fathers.

Understanding the impact of changes to the family justice system remains a vitally important part of the work of the Centre. Professor Jonathan Dickens has been awarded a two year ESRC research grant for a new project on the effect of changes in the family justice system on care proceedings. Conducted in partnership with Professor Judith Masson (Bristol University), the project follows up their previous study on pre-proceedings. The study runs until 2018.

A fifth consecutive study of serious child abuse cases (Serious Case Reviews) has been commissioned by the Department for Education. This review will examine cases from 2011-2014 as well as considering the learning from the ten plus years over which the team has been carrying out this research. The project is another collaboration between the team at the Centre led by Professor Marian Brandon and Dr Peter Sidebotham and his team from Warwick University. The study will report in Spring 2016.

Finally, the Centre was successful in its bid to the Department for Education to be one of 25 approved evaluation teams for their £80million Children’s Social Care Innovation Programme. The independent teams are linked to a total of 60 innovation projects and Professor Gillian Schofield, Dr Mary Beek and Julie Young have been appointed to examine ‘Match’, an innovative fostering project. As well as evaluating ‘Match’ Gillian and her team will contribute to identifying the lessons to be learnt from the wider programme, which finishes in 2016.

MARIAN BRANDON

Professor of Social Work, Director of the Centre for Research on Children and Families.

NEWS

INTERNATIONAL NETWORKS AND CONFERENCES

STAFF IN THE CENTRE ARE ACTIVELY INVOLVED IN A RANGE OF INTERNATIONAL RESEARCH NETWORKS

The Secure Base Model developed by Professor Gillian Schofield at the Centre, provides the basis for training and supervision of foster carers throughout Norway (and since 2009 has been part of the initial training of all foster carers in the UK). Over the last year Norwegian translations of the BAAF Secure Base practice guides have been produced. The Model is also being implemented in a growing number of other countries around the world. Thanks to Dr Mary Beek's role in devising and promoting training for 'Care for Children', these countries now include China, Thailand and Vietnam where there is a special need to promote good quality foster care for children who would otherwise be institutionalised.

Norway is also a key country in the trans-national study 'Decision-making in child welfare'. The team includes Professor Jonathan Dickens (UEA, England), Marit Skivenes (University of Bergen, Norway) Tarja Pösö (University of Tampere, Finland) and Jill Berrick (University of California at Berkeley, USA). The University of Bergen has posted information about the Four Country Study, including a summary of the project, the survey material and details of the methodology – this is available at: www.uib.no/admorg/85747/survey-material

The EU-financed project RAINBOW HAS (Rights Through Alliances: Innovating and Networking Both Within Homes And Schools) has had its final seminar and conference in Brussels. Christine Cocker (UEA) and Trish Hafford-Letchfield (Middlesex University) gave the opening address to the final seminar.

Professor Marian Brandon and Emeritus Professor June Thoburn continue to be active members of the International Association for Outcome Based Evaluation and Research (laOBER). This year the group has produced an edited book **Theoretical and Empirical Insights into Child and Family Poverty: Cross national perspectives** to which Marian has contributed a chapter.

Centre members have presented at a number of prestigious international conferences.

Professor Elsbeth Neil delivered a keynote presentation on **Adoption from care in the context of permanence: An international perspective on policy, practice and research** and Masterclass **Contact with biological families in the context of foster care and open adoption** at the 2014 biennial *Association for Child Welfare Conference* in Sydney, Australia. Beth also presented findings from the third stage of her **Contact after Adoption** project at the 8th Congress of the AFIN (adoption, families and childhood), research group in Zaragoza, Spain.

Christine Cocker was also in Australia delivering a paper at the *2014 Joint World Conference on Social Work, Education and Social Development* in Melbourne, an event attended by over 1500 international delegates.

There were three Centre presentations at the 2014 *European Scientific Association on Residential and Foster Care for Children and Adolescents Conference* (EUSARF) in Copenhagen by Professor Jonathan Dickens and the trans-national team, Professor Gillian Schofield and Emeritus Professor June Thoburn.





NEWS

WORKING WITH GOVERNMENT

CENTRE MEMBERS HAVE BEEN ASKED TO PROVIDE ADVICE TO GOVERNMENT WORKING GROUPS AND DEPARTMENTS

Professor Gillian Schofield has been a member of the Improving Permanence Expert Working Group, which produced new Regulations and Statutory Guidance for local authorities on **Permanence, long-term foster placements and ceasing to look after a child**. These came into force on the 1st April 2015. This is the first time that there has been national recognition by government of the role of long-term foster care and guidance for policy, procedure and practice. It was an important opportunity to use our findings from research on permanence in long-term foster care, conducted in the CRCF by Professor Schofield, Dr Mary Beek and Dr Emma Ward over the last 18 years, to help shape the future for long-term foster children and foster carers.

Professor Elsbeth Neil has addressed members of the Department for Education's Children's Social Policy team on the findings from her **Contact after Adoption** study and its implications for policy and practice.

The All Party Parliamentary Universities Group breakfast meeting at Westminster on Social Work Training, was attended by Professor Gillian Schofield on behalf of the Vice Chancellor. The meeting was addressed by Sir Martin Narey and Sir David Croisdale Appleby, both of whom have prepared reports for government on Social Work Education.

Professors Brandon, Schofield and Thoburn met with other social work academics to discuss the Department for Education's research priorities.

Professor Marian Brandon and Emeritus Professor June Thoburn have been appointed to the Academic Advisory Board as part of the Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse (chaired by Hon. Justice Lowell Goddard). The purpose of the Inquiry is to consider the extent to which State and non-State institutions have failed in their duty of care to protect children from sexual abuse and exploitation and address any failings.

NEWS INFLUENCING POLICY AND PRACTICE

SOCIO-LEGAL STUDIES – FAMILY AND CRIMINAL JUSTICE

The judiciary have been interested in Professor Elsbeth Neil's work on contact in contemporary adoptions and Professor Jonathan Dickens' study on Care Planning and the Role of the Independent Reviewing Officer. Beth addressed an audience of Sheriffs (judges) from across Scotland at a course for Sheriffs on Family Law and Mediation at the Judicial Institute of Scotland. Jonathan presented to both the *2014 Annual Conference of the Association of Lawyers for Children* in Bristol and the 2015 NAGALRO conference for children's guardians in Oxford.

Dr Chris Beckett and Professor Jonathan Dickens gave a paper on their evaluation of the Tri-borough care proceedings pilot at the Tavistock Centre, on Thursday 16 October 2014. The theme of the evening was *Child Protection Now: Munro Three Years On*. It was held to mark the publication of a special issue of the *Journal of Social Work Practice* on that theme. Chris and Jonathan had a paper published in that special issue.

Professor Jonathan Dickens, Dr Chris Beckett, Julie Young and Dr Georgia Philip have presented papers on their ESRC study of care planning and the role of the IRO at both the *Annual Conference of the National Association of Independent Reviewing Officers* and at the *British Association for the Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect (BASPCAN) Congress* in Edinburgh in 2015.

CHILD PROTECTION

The widespread and concerning nature of child sexual exploitation (CSE) has been prominent in the news this year, and Dr Jane Dodsworth has given numerous media interviews about her research in this area. Jane conducted a study of police officers' views of CSE for Norfolk and Suffolk Constabulary in 2014 and has also been asked to carry out a follow up project for the police on multi-agency working. Last year Jane delivered a Masterclass and workshop for the Gloucestershire Safeguarding Children Board on **Sexual Exploitation**,

Selling and Swapping Sex: Victimhood and Agency.

Jane also presented a paper based on her BASPCAN award on the same topic at the 2015 Congress in Edinburgh.

There is continuing interest from a wide range of professionals about the implications of findings from Serious Case Reviews. This was the topic of a keynote address for General Practitioners delivered by Professor Marian Brandon at the *7th Annual Primary Care Child Safeguarding Forum*. Marian was also speaking about the implications of Serious Case Review findings for practice with babies as the keynote speaker at *The Tavistock and Portman NHS Foundation Trust conference, Protecting babies: Dilemmas, risks and supporting change*. This multidisciplinary conference addressed the daily realities of working with parents whose care is thought to present an ongoing risk to their baby. Marian also co-presented a workshop **Reclaiming Serious Case Reviews** at the *Annual Conference of the Association of the Directors of Children's Services*, in Manchester in July 2014.

The outgoing Children's Commissioner for England, Dr Maggie Atkinson, summed up some of the achievements of her five years in office in *Why Rights Matter*. This publication highlights two recent studies from CRCF led by Dr Jeanette Cossar and comments on the impact of the Recognition and Telling Framework from the study **It takes a lot to build trust**. Dr Atkinson writes, "Our Recognition and Telling Framework is being promoted widely and is also being drawn upon to support the development of other aspects of our work such as the CSEG and CSAFE inquiries." Jeanette has been working with local social workers and child mental health practitioners in Norfolk to test out the Framework in practice. She also led a training event based on the Framework for the National Council for Voluntary Youth Services together with Jenny Clifton from the Office of the Children's Commissioner. The event was attended by safeguarding leads from many national youth organisations and generated discussions about the dilemmas faced by volunteers when young people confide in them about abuse. Prompted by further findings from the same study, Jeanette convened a symposium on **Peer support in abuse and neglect** as part of the *BASPCAN Congress* in Edinburgh in 2015.

NEWS

WORKING WITH LOCAL AUTHORITIES AND DISSEMINATING RESEARCH THROUGH THE MAKING RESEARCH COUNT INITIATIVE

Professor Elsbeth Neil has drawn on a range of Centre projects to advise the London Borough of Lewisham to help the Borough to review its policy of discouraging contact between foster carers and children in the early months of the child's adoptive placement. Beth has delivered training to fostering and adoption workers on **Moving from foster care to adoption: the role of foster carers after placement.**

Professors Elsbeth Neil and June Thoburn spoke at a one day *Making Research Count* conference – **Best Practice in Adoption: Understanding and Engaging with the Challenges in 2015** – at King's College, London. The conference looked at areas of adoption including adoption in the context of permanency planning, the breakdown of adoptive placements, siblings and adoption and contact after adoption.

Professor Marian Brandon, Dr Penny Sorensen and Sue Bailey presented a *Making Research Count* workshop for Suffolk County Council's Children and Young People's Service discussing findings from their recent evaluation of the 'Troubled Families' programme in the London Tri-Boroughs. Marian and Penny also presented a workshop on the challenges of evaluating family-minded

programmes at the *Making a Difference for Vulnerable Families: Evidence into Policy and Practice* conference at the Birmingham Voluntary Service Council (BVSC).

New local authorities are expressing interest in implementing the Secure Base Model. The British Association for Adoption and Fostering (BAAF) have included as a priority in their 2015 strategy document the need to work with UEA in rolling out Professor Gillian Schofield's and Dr Mary Beek's Secure Base Model.

Professor Gillian Schofield presented a keynote address on **Skilled professionals and committed parents: the dual role of foster carers** at the Annual Fostering Network Conference in London. The conference had the title *The Future of Foster Care* and included presentations from Annie Hudson, Chief Executive of the College of Social Work and Alan Wood CBE, Children's and Young People's Services Director of Hackney and President of the Association of Directors of Children's Services. Gillian also presented at the Norfolk Foster Care conference at the John Innes Centre. The event was attended by over 100 foster carers and social workers.



NEWS

CONTACT AFTER ADOPTION

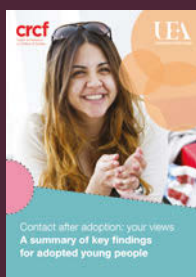
CRCF now has a website for Professor Elsbeth Neil's study **Contact after Adoption: a longitudinal study of adopted young people and their parents and birth relatives** research.

The study has answered questions about what post-adoption contact arrangements are like from the point of view of children, adoptive parents and birth relatives. The families in the study have experienced a range of different post-adoption contact plans from no contact through to face-to-face contact. The study is longitudinal and has taken place in three stages following children from when they were first adopted at under the age of four through to late adolescence.

The website has four leaflets summarising key findings for:

- Adopted young people
- Adoptive parents
- Birth relatives
- Practitioners.

Further resources continue to be added to the site so please do keep visiting at: www.uea.ac.uk/contact-after-adoption



NEWS IN BRIEF

CRCF EVENTS AND SEMINARS

THE 2014 ANNUAL CENTRE CONFERENCE WAS CONTACT AFTER ADOPTION: A LONGITUDINAL STUDY OF ADOPTED YOUNG PEOPLE AND THEIR PARENTS AND BIRTH RELATIVES

The conference was chaired by Professor Gillian Schofield and its presenters were Professor Elsbeth Neil and Dr Mary Beek. The event also served as the launch for the book **Contact after adoption** by Beth Neil, Mary Beek and Emma Ward.

Professor Susan Golombok, Director of the Centre for Family Research University of Cambridge delivered a very well attended Annual Social Work Lecture in October 2014 entitled **Lesbian and Gay Families: what do we know about the quality of parenting and socio-emotional development of the children?**

The CRCF annual conference for 2015 will be held on 14th July at the Nuffield Foundation. The conference – *Permanence and transitions in residential care* – will present findings from two studies examining the work of Break, a locally based organisation providing residential care in small units and a recently developed Transitions Service. Professor Gillian Schofield, Dr Emma Ward and Dr Birgit Larsson will present the findings. The report from this project is **Moving on – but staying connected: An exploration of young people's transitions from Break and the role of the Moving On team.**



NEWS IN BRIEF

Dr Judi Walsh visited the Universities of Reading, Sheffield and Copenhagen to talk about representations, relationships, and caregiving in pregnancy and post-birth (see **Investigating attachment, caregiving and mental health: a model of maternal-fetal relationships**: www.biomedcentral.com/1471-2393/14/383)

The ESRC seminar series – **Born Talking: using birth cohort data about speech, language and communications to inform policy and practice** was launched in London where invited guests included policy makers from the Department for Education, children's charities and early intervention experts. Dr Jan McAllister from MED leads the UEA team which also includes Professor Marian Brandon who chaired the UEA based seminar in May 2015.

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CHILD PLACEMENT

Supporting long-term foster care	18
A Study of the Experiences and Identity Development of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, or Transgender Young People in Care and the Support they receive	19
Pathways and outcomes for children in need, at risk and in care	20
Evaluation of the 'BREAK Moving On Transitions Service'	21

SOCIAL WORK PRACTICE

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Decision-making under pressure: impact of blame anxiety on judgements about risk	26

MAKING DECISIONS ABOUT CHILDREN

Care planning and the role of the independent reviewing officer	28
Decision-making in child welfare: a four-country study	29
Follow-up study of outcomes of the Tri-borough care proceedings pilot	30

DISABLED AND OLDER PEOPLE

An evaluation of the Assist Trust, Norwich: a voluntary service for adults with intellectual disabilities	32
A follow-up review of community social work in a London Borough	33





TRIENNIAL REVIEW OF SERIOUS CASE REVIEWS 2011-2014

MAY 2015 – MAR 2016

RESEARCH TEAM Professor Marian Brandon, Sue Bailey, Dr Penny Sorensen, Dr Jane Dodsworth, Dr Pippa Belderson, Dr Peter Sidebotham and Dr Jo Garstang (Warwick University)

FUNDER Department for Education



CONTEXT

The death of children through abuse or neglect is of great concern to the public, the media, to government ministers and of course to practitioners working with the child and their family. The national analyses of local enquiries into such cases (Serious Case Reviews) provide important learning for all those working with children and families as well as national level policy implications. This will be the fifth consecutive national review undertaken by the same team led by Prof. Marian Brandon from CRCF and the third review carried out in collaboration with Dr Peter Sidebotham from Warwick University.

The primary aim of the study is to continue to provide child protection professionals and others with evidence of key issues and challenges in cases where children have died, or been seriously harmed and there are concerns about how agencies have worked together. In addition, the study will endeavour to provide the government with evidence of what is really changing as a result of their reforms, and to identify areas where further change may be required to support organisations to learn from SCRs and keep children safe.



METHODS

The study uses our existing quantitative and qualitative methodology allowing careful comparisons of themes and trends with previous biennial reviews including updating our database, established in 2005, of over 800 reviews. The study is planned in three interconnected parts:

- 1 Themes and trends across all 2011-14 reports, and from a qualitative sub sample of 50-60 overview reports, drawing out implications for policy makers and practitioners
- 2 Commentary on themes and trends over the last ten+ years (2003-2014)
- 3 A review of recommendations made in SCRs and their implementation.

PLANNED IMPACT

The findings from the study will be made available to the Minister and to the National SCR Panel. In addition a summary of the learning will be sent to each Local Children Safeguarding Board and there will be summaries for different professional groups within the LSCB and particularly: social work, health, education and the police. The summaries will be co-produced by the research team and the organisation Research in Practice and will be free to download from websites.

PLANNED PUBLICATIONS

The project report will be written in an accessible user-friendly style to be published in the Department for Education's Research Report series. It will use easy-to-read graphics, case studies and case examples to illustrate learning. A common focus throughout the various elements of the main report will be learning for different professional groups working together and as individual agencies. Each chapter will have an accessible end summary.

THE STUDY WILL ENDEAVOUR TO PROVIDE THE GOVERNMENT WITH EVIDENCE OF WHAT IS REALLY CHANGING AS A RESULT OF THEIR REFORMS, AND TO IDENTIFY AREAS WHERE FURTHER CHANGE MAY BE REQUIRED TO SUPPORT ORGANISATIONS TO LEARN FROM SERIOUS CASE REVIEWS AND KEEP CHILDREN SAFE.

COUNTING FATHERS IN – MEN’S EXPERIENCES OF THE CHILD PROTECTION SYSTEM

NOV 2014 – MAR 2017

PROJECT TEAM Professor Marian Brandon, Dr Georgia Philip, Dr John Clifton

FUNDER Nuffield Foundation



CONTEXT

We know from existing research that child protection professionals struggle to engage men. Consequently, assessments may not accurately reflect men as either a risk or a resource for children they care for, potentially endangering children and excluding men. To date, this problem has been investigated mostly from the viewpoint of professionals. This study focuses on men’s perspectives and investigates the encounters between fathers or father figures, and the child protection process following the making of a child protection plan.

METHODS

The study is being carried out in partnership with three local authorities in England. It includes a study of local authority case files for 150 children (50 per area), and an innovative qualitative longitudinal study of 25-30 men (at least 10 in each area), following their lives and involvement with child protection processes over the period of 12 months. Participants are interviewed around the time of the Initial Child Protection Conference and then contacted regularly (this is negotiated and agreed with each man) for the next 12 months; with a final research interview at the end of the study period. Where possible separate interviews with the child’s mother will also be carried out at the beginning and end of the study.

Child protection themes will be tracked and detailed individual case studies will trace pathways through services. The study will reveal experiences and patterns as men travel through the child protection process, providing insights into their engagement as caregivers and men.

The main research questions are:

- What do the case files reveal about the extent and nature of men’s involvement in child protection processes in the six month period beginning with the child protection conference where a plan is made for the child?
- How do fathers and father figures experience child protection practice and procedures as they unfold in real time?

- Are there critical moments in the child protection process which are particularly significant for participants’ lives and/ or the engagement of men?
- What are the implications of the different strategies and practices employed by social workers or other professionals to involve men in protecting and safeguarding children?

IMPACT

- Findings will be fed back to participating local authorities to inform practitioners’ understanding of men’s experiences to aid safer, more inclusive practice
- A practice focused report completed at the end of the study with implications primarily for social workers but also for other practitioners; also available via the CRCF website
- An audit tool offered to partner authorities to allow monitoring of men’s involvement across the authority or in particular areas or teams
- A research presentation made to an invited audience of key sector leaders at the Nuffield Foundation
- Research briefings circulated to all Local Safeguarding Children Boards
- The anonymised data from the qualitative study will be archived for future use by other researchers.

THE STUDY WILL REVEAL EXPERIENCES AND PATTERNS AS MEN TRAVEL THROUGH THE CHILD PROTECTION PROCESS, PROVIDING INSIGHTS INTO THEIR ENGAGEMENT AS CAREGIVERS AND MEN.



MISSED OPPORTUNITIES: INDICATORS OF NEGLECT – WHAT IS IGNORED, WHY, AND WHAT CAN BE DONE?

JAN – NOV 2014

PROJECT TEAM Professor Marian Brandon (UEA), Professor Danya Glaser (UCL), Dr Sabine Maguire (Cardiff University), Professor Eamon McCrory (UCL), Clare Lushey (Loughborough University), Professor Harriet Ward (PI, Loughborough University)

FUNDER Department for Education



CONTEXT

Neglect is the most common form of child maltreatment in England where almost half (43%) of child protection plans are made in response to neglect. Yet a number of high profile child deaths have shown that it is extremely difficult for professionals with safeguarding responsibilities to identify indicators of neglect, to assess whether what they have observed is sufficiently serious for them to take action, and to decide on the most appropriate course of action.

METHODS

Research questions:

- 1 To help practitioners understand the research and practice related evidence concerning risk factors in the environment, the parent and the child that are associated with a likelihood of actual harm or future harm in very young children.
 - 2 To help practitioners understand the research and practice related evidence about indicators of actual, current neglect in very young children.
- The purpose of the project was to discuss and reach a consensus on these research questions drawing on the learning from numerous existing literature reviews rather than setting out exhaustive new searches. A narrative approach was adopted for the search strategy. The resulting report (which was subject to independent peer review) was prepared by members of an expert advisory group which met three times and was convened by the Department for Education.

FINDINGS

Neglect in the early years can have a long-standing impact across the whole spectrum of children's development, and throughout their life span. Early intervention and support for families where neglect is identified is therefore of utmost importance in safeguarding children from harm, but there is substantial evidence that opportunities to take timely action are routinely missed.

The report sets out the research and practice based evidence concerning the consequences of neglect and explores a number of barriers to effective action. It explores the research evidence concerning observable risk factors within the environment, the parents and the child that are associated with an increased likelihood of neglect; observable indications of the harmful parent-child interactions, which often underlie concrete manifestations of neglect; observable indicators of harmful parenting, and the manifestations of the impact of neglect in child functioning from birth until the age of five. Systematic assessment of these factors and the interrelationships between them, using a conceptual framework such as Glaser's tiers of concern should lead to more timely action and fewer missed opportunities.

IMPACT

The Department for Education is commissioning further work in the summer of 2015 to produce a brief practitioner summary from the report.

PUBLICATION

Missed opportunities: indicators of neglect – what is ignored, why, and what can be done?
DFE-RR404. www.gov.uk/government/publications/indicators-of-neglect-missed-opportunities

EARLY INTERVENTION AND SUPPORT FOR FAMILIES WHERE NEGLECT IS IDENTIFIED IS THEREFORE OF UTMOST IMPORTANCE IN SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN FROM HARM.



ROUTES INTO SEXUAL EXPLOITATION: PERSONAL PERCEPTIONS ABOUT GOING MISSING, AGENCY AND VICTIMHOOD

OCT 2012 – NOV 2014

RESEARCHER Dr Jane Dodsworth

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



CONTEXT

There is rapidly growing awareness in government, in safeguarding agencies and amongst the wider public about the extent and risks of child sexual exploitation (CSE) across the country. Many of the young people involved have childhood histories of adversity and there is an increasing understanding of the additional vulnerability of those who have experience of the care system and/or of running away from care or home.

AIMS

- 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.
- To identify whether it is possible to determine risk and protective factors in their perceptions of agency and victimhood.
- To add, from the perspectives of the participants, 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 individuals involved.

METHODS

Following careful consideration of ethical factors, 15 participants aged from 16-57 took part. They are therefore, retrospective accounts giving an interesting perspective on whether and how attitudes and services have changed. Semi-structured interviews charted participants' lives and examined experiences in their narratives. A qualitative grounded theory approach was taken to the analysis to ensure findings were grounded in the expertise of those directly involved.

FINDINGS

- Various 'push' and/or 'pull' factors interconnected and overlapped with incidents of going missing entrenching some in CSE and enabling others to exit.
- 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.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- A need for better 'joined up thinking' and planning between agencies
- A need for long-term relationship based therapeutic services.

IMPACT

A report *Routes in to sexual exploitation: personal perspectives about going missing, agency and victimhood* was published in November 2014 available at www.uea.ac.uk/crcf

A paper was given to the 9th BASPCAN Conference April 2015 and a paper for *Child Abuse Review* is in progress.

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.



AN EXAMINATION OF THE PERSPECTIVES AND EXPERIENCES OF POLICE OFFICERS WORKING WITH YOUNG PEOPLE AT RISK OF, OR INVOLVED IN CHILD SEXUAL EXPLOITATION

APR – OCT 2014

RESEARCH TEAM Dr Jane Dodsworth, Dr Birgit Larsson

FUNDER Norfolk and Suffolk Constabulary



CONTEXT

There has been increased awareness amongst professionals and the wider public about Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) and the need for professionals to recognise the early warning signs. The police force is a key agency in safeguarding this vulnerable group. The objective of the study was to increase understanding of what works well, what works less well and to identify any gaps in policy, procedure or practice in Norfolk, in order to inform service provision.



FINDINGS

Four areas stood out as particular strengths in police officers' work with children and young people involved in CSE. These included officers':

- Sense of commitment to and passion for CSE work
- Awareness of the vulnerability of young people involved in CSE, including the links between victimisation and offending
- Recognition of three categories of young people involved in internet abuse; 'naïve' victims, 'wise' victims and 'naïve' offenders
- Understanding that prevention and proactive early intervention is key.

Four areas for development were identified:

- Supervision
- Training
- Joint working between specialist and non-specialist officer
- Increased multi-agency working and information sharing.

Although this study has shown that there are identifiable difficulties, pressures and tensions for police officers in Norfolk working in this complex area, what is clearly evident is the high level of commitment to safeguarding, listening to and understanding children and young people at risk of child sexual exploitation.

IMPACT

A report *An examination of the perspectives and experiences of police officers working with young people at risk of, or involved in child sexual exploitation* was published in October 2014 available at www.uea.ac.uk/crcf

The report has informed aspects of Norfolk Constabulary's training. A journal article is planned.

ALTHOUGH THIS STUDY HAS SHOWN THAT THERE ARE IDENTIFIABLE DIFFICULTIES, PRESSURES AND TENSIONS FOR POLICE OFFICERS IN NORFOLK WORKING IN THIS COMPLEX AREA, WHAT IS CLEARLY EVIDENT IS THE HIGH LEVEL OF COMMITMENT TO SAFEGUARDING, LISTENING TO AND UNDERSTANDING CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE AT RISK OF CHILD SEXUAL EXPLOITATION.

A STUDY OF THE SUPPORT NEEDS OF SEX WORKERS ACROSS NORFOLK

JUN – DEC 2014

PROJECT TEAM Dr Jane Dodsworth, Dr Penny Sorensen, Dr Birgit Larsson

FUNDER Norfolk Community Health and Care NHS Trust



CONTEXT

There is increasing diversity both in the types of sex work undertaken and the environments where sex work takes place. Street work, although a visible aspect of sex work, constitutes a small proportion of the number of people engaged in sex work with the majority of individuals being more hidden and harder to access. This has implications for support service providers as needs and access are likely to differ between the groups of sex workers.

AIMS

The aim of the study was to provide a picture of sex work across Norfolk, including sex workers' expressed needs for services and services currently on offer. This included ascertaining:

- What is already known about the needs and best practice in delivering support services to sex workers?
- What are the needs of different groups of sex workers in various locations across Norfolk?
- What are the perspectives of specialist and other professionals involved in supporting sex workers around service need and provision?

METHODS

The study involved interviews with fourteen sex workers (on-street and escorts), questionnaires for professionals and agencies to establish a picture of prevalence across Norfolk, interviews with professionals and agencies, a focus group with professionals, data from an on-line forum and a detailed search of a website where sex workers advertise their services.

FINDINGS

There was ample evidence to suggest that it is no longer enough to only support the visible population of female street workers in Norwich and there is a need to rethink services so that they more effectively support all sex workers who seek support. This may need more integrated services which are more discreet, whilst still offering relationship based support for as long as needed.

New ways of accessing and engaging sex workers who work alone and secretly will be required and are likely to include more virtual relationships between services and those they seek to support. Likewise, harder to reach male and transgender sex workers need to feel included in service provision and efforts have to be made to engage this group with appropriate services for their needs.

The sex workers interviewed for this study had mostly positive experiences of their involvement with the police. However, there is still reluctance to involve the police, particularly by street workers. Adapting the Merseyside model where all crimes against sex workers are viewed as hate crimes may encourage sex workers to report violence and abuse against them but also, as suggested in the literature, may increase rates of prosecution of those who attack sex workers. The availability of a sexual assault referral centre in Norwich (The Harbour Centre) together with increased confidence in reporting, would put Norfolk in a strong position to increase convictions and protect sex workers from abuse and violence.

IMPACT

A report has been produced with recommendations for agencies who support sex workers in Norfolk and is available on the CRCF website.

THERE WAS AMPLE EVIDENCE TO SUGGEST THAT IT IS NO LONGER ENOUGH TO ONLY SUPPORT THE VISIBLE POPULATION OF FEMALE STREET WORKERS IN NORWICH AND THERE IS A NEED TO RETHINK SERVICES SO THAT THEY MORE EFFECTIVELY SUPPORT ALL SEX WORKERS WHO SEEK SUPPORT.

RIGHTS THROUGH ALLIANCES – INNOVATING AND NETWORKING BOTH WITHIN HOMES AND SCHOOL (RAINBOW HAS):

Research on family discourses and analysis of best practices in tackling homophobic bullying in schools

FEB 2013 – FEB 2015

RESEARCH TEAM Christine Cocker (UEA), Professor Peter Ryan and Dr Trish Hafford-Letchfield (Middlesex University)

FUNDER EU funded project financed by the DAPHNE European research and development fund



CONTEXT

This EU project focused on the role that schools play in offering support and dealing with homophobic bullying and discrimination. Seven European research centres located in five European countries (Italy, Spain, Belgium, the Netherlands, Bulgaria and the UK) worked together to address the issue of homophobic bullying and discrimination based on differences in sexual orientation in schools.

AIMS

The aim of the research was to broaden the debate with institutions, LGBT families, families with LGBT children, families with children and youth who have been victims of trans/homophobic bullying, in order to create spaces and conditions for dialogue or lobbying for positive change to “break the silence” of LGBT discrimination. This hopefully will result in higher levels of mutual respect, a higher degree of awareness and support within families and the challenging of stereotypes, through better and more accurate information, and will lead to more supportive approaches to the welfare of the children of LGBT families, or to LGBT children themselves in schools.

METHODS

The fieldwork part of the study used a variety of methods to gather data. Each country used the same method:

- 1 Bibliography
- 2 Gathering of data through interviews and documentary analysis. In England this comprised:
 - Seven ‘generic’ families with birth children who were children school aged (interviews)
 - Five Lesbian and Gay families with school aged children (birth children and adopted children) (interviews)
 - Four networks and associations who work with lesbian and gay families (telephone interviews and documentary analysis were undertaken)
 - Five cases of children who had experienced homophobic bullying were identified through school teachers and bullying and harassment education officers
 - Three examples of best practice in tackling homophobia within schools.

FINDINGS

A number of conclusions were agreed at the final Rainbow HAS conference, which were drawn from the work undertaken during the project. These recommendations were submitted to the EU and were geared to addressing how the EU and policy makers could improve the lives of LGBT young people throughout Europe, whilst also acknowledging that homophobic bullying is not something that only affects LGBT youth.

The recommendations included:

- 1 Homophobic bullying should be everybody’s concern. Politicians and leaders are accountable to all, and therefore they have the responsibility to learn about LGBTI issues and experiences
- 2 A specific legal framework needs to be put in place to protect the rights of lesbian and gay men. In countries without a specific legal framework, we must start from the basis of accepting LGBTI people as part of the society and enjoying full citizenship rights. Specific laws must be passed in the area of education regarding curriculum, educational materials, textbooks, antibullying protocols, gender roles, etc. But laws are not enough. It is also essential to create proactive public policies and services to overcome the obstacles to real and effective equality for LGBTI minors and the children of single-sex parent families
- 3 Education authorities must demonstrate clear leadership and implement educational plans, homophobic/transphobic antibullying protocols and information services for LGBTI mothers, fathers and students.

IMPACT

The project had its final conference in Brussels in November 2014, where the key note speaker was Roberta Metsola, MEP from Malta. Roberta is a member of the European Union LGBTI Intergroup and she was awarded the prestigious MEP of the year award in March 2015 for her work on Justice and Civil Liberty issues.

Christine Cocker and Dr Trish Hafford-Letchfield presented a paper entitled *Positioning discourse on homophobia in schools: What have lesbian and gay families got to say?* at the Joint World Conference on Social Work, Education and Social Development in Melbourne, Australia in July 2014. Further information can be accessed here: <http://rainbowhas.eu/>

A person wearing a dark, textured hoodie is seen from the back, looking out over a misty, hilly landscape. The scene is dimly lit, with a soft, hazy light in the background. The person's head and shoulders are in the foreground, and the landscape stretches out behind them.

**HOMOPHOBIC BULLYING SHOULD
BE EVERYBODY'S CONCERN.**

SUPPORTING LONG-TERM FOSTER CARE

APR 2015 – MAR 2016

RESEARCH TEAM Professor Gillian Schofield, Dr Mary Beek, Julie Young

FUNDER Department for Education



CONTEXT

The Department for Education (DfE) Young People's Social Care Innovations Programme has funded a wide range of projects. Evaluation of the outcomes is a key part of the investment in this programme. The CRCF was one of the research institutions who successfully applied for approval as part of the Innovations Programme Evaluation Framework and was selected by Match Foster Care to evaluate their project. Improving outcomes for children in foster care is an important aim for policy and practice development.

Match Foster Care is an Independent Fostering Agency (IFA) which was awarded funding to trial a new system for supporting long-term foster placements. Support for foster care placements is usually provided both by the child's local authority social worker and the agency supervising or fostering social worker.

The Innovations programme funding is for Match to develop a system in which the local authority relinquishes responsibility for the child social worker role to the IFA and both the child and the foster carers are supported by one IFA social worker. The children will also have access to an advocacy service.

In addition, DfE funding is supporting additional psychological and education support to achieve a 'wraparound' service. The aim of the Match project is to achieve a more effective system of support for the placement and to improve outcomes for children.

AIMS

- To investigate different ways of organising social work services and support for long-term fostering placements.
- To identify the elements of systems and practice that work well for long-term foster families and lead to good outcomes for children and young people in long-term foster care.
- To investigate how different structures and practice are experienced by children, foster carers and social workers.
- To identify the practical and financial consequences of different divisions of responsibility between the independent fostering agency and the local authority.

METHODS

- The study will take place in two independent fostering agencies, Match and a comparison agency, Anglia Fostering Agency (AFA).
- A sample of up to 20 young people and their foster carers will be identified by each agency. The young people will all have a care plan for long-term or permanent fostering.
- File data will be gathered on young people's care pathways, decision making and the provision of services.
- Measures of young people's emotional and behavioural development and parenting stress will be completed twice during the study.
- Young people, foster carers and supervising social workers will be interviewed about their experiences of the two different agency systems.
- Focus groups will be held with children's social workers and other professionals, in order to gain their perspectives on systems and practice in long-term foster care.

IMPACT

As part of the DfE Innovations programme, this project and the evaluation will be expected to use their findings as a basis for learning and for improving policy and practice, in this case in relation to looked after children in foster care. The study will be completed and written up by the end of March 2016 and a report of the key findings will be available to all participants.

IMPROVING OUTCOMES FOR CHILDREN IN FOSTER CARE IS AN IMPORTANT AIM FOR POLICY AND PRACTICE DEVELOPMENT.

A STUDY OF THE EXPERIENCES AND IDENTITY DEVELOPMENT OF LESBIAN, GAY, BISEXUAL OR TRANSGENDER YOUNG PEOPLE IN CARE AND THE SUPPORT THEY RECEIVE

NOV 2014 – OCT 2016

RESEARCH TEAM Dr Jeanette Cossar, Dr Birgit Larsson, Dr Pippa Belderson, Professor Gill Schofield, Dr Jane Dodsworth, Christine Cocker, Peter Jordan

FUNDER Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC)



CONTEXT

LGBT young people in care are an under-researched group, and to date, no research about their experiences has been conducted in the UK. Scholarship from the US, however, suggests that LGBT young people in care routinely face challenges such as homophobic and transphobic bullying and violence.

As a result of adverse experiences, this group are known to face additional risks such as homelessness, sexual exploitation, drug use and self-harm.

Once in care, LGBT young people have reported being cared for by professionals including residential staff, foster carers, and social workers who have not always adequately responded to their needs, and they have encountered peers who are less than accepting.

However, the literature is also clear that not enough is known about the resilience of this group and that more research should be focused on how LGBT young people in care overcome challenges and develop positive identities by themselves and with the help of professionals. This project will therefore explore both risks and resilience, through a focus on young people's perspectives.

AIMS

The research broadly aims to: explore the identity development of LGBT young people through a lens of intersectionality; investigate how professionals work with LGBT young people in care (and how young people experience such professional support); develop a national picture of the type of services and care planning provided by local authorities to meet the needs of this group.

METHODS

The study will consist of:

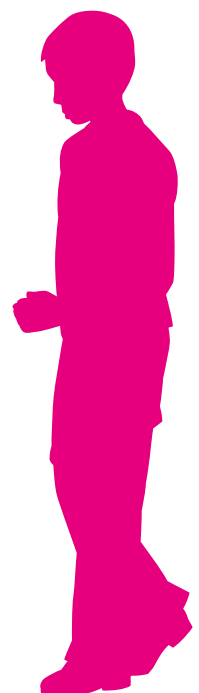
- A systematic literature review of international policy and practice involving LGBT young people in care
- A mapping survey of 152 local authorities in England exploring care planning for LGBT young people in care
- Life history interviews with 40 young people between the ages of 14 and 25 who have spent at least 6 months in care and identify as LGBT
- Semi-structured interviews with 25 foster carers who have looked after a LGBT young person
- Focus groups with professionals who have worked with LGBT young people in care.

In order to make young people's perspectives central to the research, a group of young researchers will be recruited who will help us with recruitment, advise on ethical aspects of the research, develop interview schedules, assist us with analysing anonymised interview data and be involved in dissemination.

IMPACT

We anticipate that findings will allow us to develop guidance to improve services and support for LGBT young people in care and for the foster carers and professionals who look after them.

IN ORDER TO MAKE YOUNG PEOPLE'S PERSPECTIVES CENTRAL TO THE RESEARCH, A GROUP OF YOUNG RESEARCHERS WILL BE RECRUITED.



PATHWAYS AND OUTCOMES FOR CHILDREN IN NEED, AT RISK AND IN CARE

2015–2018

RESEARCH TEAM Professor Elsbeth Neil, Professor Gillian Schofield

FUNDER Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC)



CONTEXT

In 2013, the University of Essex, the University of East Anglia, the University of Kent and London School of Economics were awarded funding for five years to set up the ESRC Business and Local Government Data Research Centre. The overall aim of the Centre is to help local authorities and companies to harness the power of their data. One of the themes that was established as part of the bid was ‘Supporting vulnerable people’ and CRCF is leading the work under this theme. We will be undertaking a demonstration project using local government data from children’s services to examine the pathways of vulnerable children.

Nationally there are concerns about the numbers of children in care, and variations in these figures between local authorities. Some previous research has studied the pathways of children entering the care system, but the impact of local authority input with families before this threshold is reached needs more understanding. Families may be offered “early help” services aimed at resolving problems before children reach the thresholds of being either “in need” or “looked after”. It is important to understand whether early intervention can divert families from more intensive services, and whether this is the best outcome for children. It is therefore useful to know more about the subsequent outcomes for children who have some involvement from social services, but who do not go on to become looked after long term. By linking social care data with other data held on families (for example health and education data) the success or otherwise of early interventions can be considered.

AIMS

To use the administrative data available from local authority children’s services to gain some understanding of the pathways complete cohorts of children take through different levels of children’s services interventions. This project also hopes to take advantage of the opportunities offered by data linkage, exploring the characteristics and outcomes for children across services. For example we hope to link the data about children in need and in care with information about these children within the education system. This linking of data will be important not just for the research, but for policy and practice.

METHODS

The project will begin in partnership with Norfolk Social Services. It will use Children in Need census data, the SSDA903 data on looked after children, and data on children’s educational outcomes to map the characteristics, pathways and outcomes for children in contact with children’s social care. The project will be piloted with Norfolk County Council, with a view to replicating the methodology in other areas.

FINDINGS

Findings from the project are anticipated in 2018.

IMPACT

This project has the potential to benefit participating local authorities by providing them with a detailed analysis of their service users and the impact of their interventions. This can inform future service planning and delivery, enhancing outcomes for children and families. The project will also benefit other local authorities through the demonstration of data analytics.

PUBLICATIONS

Key findings from the research will be published in a range of formats addressing the key audiences (academic articles and policy/practitioner articles). www.blgdataresearch.org

WE WILL BE UNDERTAKING A DEMONSTRATION PROJECT USING LOCAL GOVERNMENT DATA FROM CHILDREN’S SERVICES TO EXAMINE THE PATHWAYS OF VULNERABLE CHILDREN.



EVALUATION OF THE 'BREAK MOVING ON TRANSITIONS SERVICE'

SEP 2013 – MAR 2015

RESEARCH TEAM Professor Gillian Schofield,
Dr Emma Ward, Dr Birgit Larsson

FUNDER Esmée Fairbairn Foundation



CONTEXT

All young people leaving care and making the transition to adulthood face a number of challenges, both practical and psychological. For young people leaving residential care there are likely to be additional challenges arising from the fact that they are likely to have more troubled histories and also that there may not be the same expectation of staying in touch as there is under 'staying put' arrangements in foster care.

BREAK, a Norfolk based voluntary organisation providing residential child care and other services, received funding in 2012 from the Esmée Fairbairn Foundation, to develop a transitions service for young people leaving Break children's homes. The decision by Break to develop a transitions service emerged from a wish to ensure that young people who left Break's care receive high quality support for as long as they need it to maximise their chances of successfully establishing themselves as independent adults in the community.

AIMS

To explore the following questions:

- How does Break prepare young people in their children's homes for leaving care and for the transition to adulthood?
- How do young people experience their transition from Break residential care to adulthood and the support they have had from the Break transitions service?
- How do Break residential and transitions staff view their contribution to the care, preparation and support for young people?

METHODS

- Quantitative data provided by Break about young people who have left Break children's homes
- Interviews with 20 young people who had left or were in the process of leaving a Break children's home
- Interviews with transitions workers from the Break Moving On team
- Focus group with residential staff.

FINDINGS

- All young people in Break residential care had experienced significant losses and almost all had experienced abuse and neglect.
- Young people reported experiencing some very positive care and relationships, both with residential and with transitions staff. These relationships were often explained in the language of family - with staff talked of as being 'motherly', 'like a brother' and 'like a family', using the language of permanence.
- Young people had different narratives to describe their lives from childhood to adulthood and those who were able to resolve their feelings of victimhood or of being 'bad' children in the context of positive relationships experienced a significant transformation in their self-esteem, confidence and competence.
- The Break transitions service provided a wide range of active relationship-based support, both practical and emotional, that enabled young people to manage their lives in the community while staying connected to Break.
- Beneficial for young people was the coherent experience of a secure base from the time of their arrival in the Break children's home through to a supported transition to adulthood.

IMPACT

A conference was held in March 2015 to launch the report on the findings to Break staff. The project was the subject of the 2015 Annual CRCF Conference on the 14th July, held at the Nuffield Foundation in London, with the title *Permanence and Transitions in Residential Care*.

PUBLICATIONS

Schofield, G., Ward, E. and Larsson, B. (2015) *Moving on but staying connected: An exploration of young people's transitions from break and the role of the moving on team Norwich*, Centre for Research on Children and Families, University of East Anglia.

BENEFICIAL FOR YOUNG PEOPLE WAS THE COHERENT EXPERIENCE OF A SECURE BASE FROM THE TIME OF THEIR ARRIVAL IN THE BREAK CHILDREN'S HOME THROUGH TO A SUPPORTED TRANSITION TO ADULTHOOD.

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 (EI) AND SOCIAL WORK PRACTICE IN CHILD AND FAMILY SOCIAL WORK

2012–2015

PROJECT TEAM Dr Laura Biggart, Dr Emma Ward

FUNDER ESRC Future Research Leader's grant



CONTEXT

For social workers, 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 critical. 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 practice in child and family social work, as this is considered to be one of the more stressful jobs to do. 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 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 practice and anxiety levels over one year whilst they are in work.

METHODS

The research project has several phases: the first phase will examine existing measures and conceptualisations of good social work practice 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 practice identified from the literature search and focus groups. The final phase delivers an emotional intelligence training package as an intervention to one group of social workers and compares their practice to another group of social workers who do not receive the training. Their practice will be tracked over the period of one year.

PROGRESS TO DATE

Identifying good social worker practice: Focus groups identified nine domains: Knowledge, Communication, Relationships, Case Work Skills, Emotion Management, Traits, Values, Professional Role, and Work-time management. These domains were compared to the Professional Capabilities Framework. A first draft of a social work practice questionnaire was designed which went out to child and family social workers in 75 Local Authorities in March 2014 and 420 responses are being analysed to inform a revised version of the practice questionnaire.

Emotional Intelligence training evaluation:

Child and family social workers (n=214) in a variety of different roles were recruited across eight diverse local authorities in England to take part in a 12 month study evaluating a two day Emotional Intelligence training programme. Half of this group were randomly allocated to receive Emotional Intelligence training early in the 12 month period and the other half to receive the training at the end of the 12 month period, acting as a control group. The training itself has been receiving good feedback about its usefulness and relevance to both social lives and their work with service users.

This phase of the study is currently still live and data collection will be complete by December 2015, with results available from April 2016.

IMPACT

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



MENTALIZATION AND SOCIAL WORK EDUCATION

JUN 2013 – OCT 2015

RESEARCH TEAM: Dr Jeanette Cossar, Laura Cook, Professor Gillian Schofield
FUNDER Department for Education



CONTEXT

The Anna Freud Centre's Early Years Parenting Unit (EYPU) in London was set up to offer mentalization-based therapies to high-risk families with complex needs. Mentalization can be defined as the 'mental process by which an individual implicitly and explicitly interprets the actions of himself and others as meaningful on the basis of intentional mental states such as personal desires, needs, feelings, beliefs and reasons' (Bateman and Fonagy, 2004: 21).

In (2013-15) the Anna Freud Centre received funding from the Department for Education to work with two universities, the University of Sussex and the University of East Anglia, to develop and evaluate the introduction of mentalization as part of social work education. The project at UEA included the delivery of mentalization-based teaching to students on the MA and BA in Social Work. Teaching was provided by staff from the Anna Freud Centre as well as being incorporated into existing modules, such as relationship-based practice, working in organisations and human growth and behaviour. The research project at UEA and Sussex aimed to investigate how such teaching and learning about mentalization might assist newly qualified social workers in practicing more effectively and reflectively.



AT A TIME WHEN THERE IS A SIGNIFICANT EMPHASIS ON THE EXERCISE OF PROFESSIONAL JUDGEMENT, MENTALIZATION HAS AN IMPORTANT CONTRIBUTION TO MAKE.

METHODS

Data was collected from students at different points in the course and analysed.

- Vignettes: Students at Sussex and UEA were asked to respond to case vignettes at the beginning and end of the course. The responses will be coded using an adapted measure of mentalization (developed for this project).
- Placement documentation: At UEA, samples of Records of Practice Analysis from first and second student placements will be coded to provide an insight into students' ability to reflect on direct work they have undertaken, including how their personal responses to clients may impact on their work.
- Student feedback: At the end of the programme there was a focus group for students to provide feedback on the teaching and placement experience in relation to mentalization and relationship based social work more generally.

IMPACT

It is hoped that teaching and learning about mentalization will increase social workers' ability to reflect upon the thoughts, feelings and behaviour of service users, as well as how their own thoughts and feelings impact on their practice. Students will also be considering the ways in which multi-agency professional systems can adopt non-mentalizing stances when cases are complex and emotionally demanding. For this project, the aim was also to see how relevant teaching could be delivered and whether mentalization could feature in the assessment of student learning on placement.

Lessons learned from the introduction of mentalization teaching as part of social work education at the two universities will be used to inform social work education nationally. At a time when there is a significant emphasis on the exercise of professional judgement, mentalization may have an important contribution to make.

PUBLICATIONS

A report will be produced and disseminated at a conference for social work educators hosted by the Anna Freud Centre in 2016. Academic and practitioner articles will follow in 2016.

AN EVALUATION OF THE ASSESSED AND SUPPORTED YEAR IN EMPLOYMENT (ASYE) PROGRAMME DEVELOPED BETWEEN UEA AND PARTNERSHIP AGENCIES IN THE EASTERN REGION

JUN 2014 – APR 2015

RESEARCH TEAM Sue Bailey, Andrew Sach

FUNDER University of East Anglia



CONTEXT

The assessed and supported year in employment (ASYE) was recommended by the Social Work Task Force, as part of the drive to improve the standards and standing of the social work profession, and introduced nationally in September 2012. The ASYE scheme aims to develop the skills, knowledge and capabilities of newly qualified social workers (NQSWs), and to build their professional confidence in their own practice. It brings together NQSWs working with adults and those working with children and families, offering one unified set of guidance.

The approach to the ASYE in the Eastern region was carefully designed and developed jointly by regional employers and UEA, building on the successes of earlier regional NQSW programmes. The link with Masters level academic credits at UEA was continued by providing a 40 credit module as part of the scheme.

METHODS

This internal evaluation explored the benefits for workers and sponsoring agencies of linking the ASYE with a Masters module at UEA, noting what has worked well, and what has worked less well, using a mixed methods approach.

- The UEA contribution was acknowledged to be both responsive to the needs of the agency partners, and flexible.
- Results from the social work practice questionnaires showed that NQSWs were most positive about their ability to show care and compassion and to consult with service users, and to be able to explain to users what they were doing and why. They also rated on-going learning and training highly, and felt they had been given the opportunity to learn and acquire new skills. NQSWs judged that they were less effective in verifying information and using research evidence to support their decisions in their day-to-day practice. They were also to some extent uncomfortable in dealing with uncertainty and changing situations, managing the emotional stresses of the job and in avoiding being overwhelmed by the demands of the new role. The second round of the questionnaire is currently being analysed.

IMPACT

- Retention rates for new social work staff have improved since the ASYE programme has been introduced.
- Staff development officers report a better 'grounding' for new staff, higher levels of understanding and analysis, and increased confidence.
- Agencies expect ASYE 'graduates' to be able to take on higher levels of responsibility earlier, and to be committed to nurturing future intakes of new staff themselves by becoming supervisors, assessors or practice educators themselves.

PUBLICATIONS

A report of the study is available on the CRCF website. A journal article is planned.

ALL INVOLVED WERE ENTHUSIASTIC ABOUT THE PROGRAMME. SUCCESSFUL COMPLETION RATES ON THE UEA MODULE ARE VERY IMPRESSIVE AT WELL OVER 90%

FINDINGS

- All involved were enthusiastic about the programme. Successful completion rates on the UEA module are very impressive at well over 90%. Involvement with UEA is seen to offer high standards, independent quality assurance and to help with regional standardisation and consistency. It brings added credibility to the whole ASYE programme.
- The encouragement of critical reflection is highly valued. UEA is seen to provide the key bridge for newly qualified staff between their day-to-day social work practice and the research and knowledge base underpinning it. Despite some initial resistance to further study, NQSWs came to value the UEA module as a useful way to reflect on their professional development.



DECISION-MAKING UNDER PRESSURE: IMPACT OF BLAME ANXIETY ON JUDGEMENTS ABOUT RISK

SEP 2011 – ONGOING

RESEARCH TEAM: Dr Piers Fleming, Dr Chris Beckett,
Dr Laura Biggart, Peter Jordan

FUNDER University of East Anglia



CONTEXT

When the Munro review of child protection in England identified ‘unmanaged anxiety about being blamed... as a significant factor in encouraging a process-driven compliance culture’ (2011, p. 107), it was expressing a concern that already had a long pedigree in the social work literature. Much of the literature on this topic, however, is open to the charge that the social work profession is an interested party: of course social workers would say that it was unproductive to blame social workers. This project, which has generated one publication but is still ongoing, is an attempt to use the techniques of experimental psychology to explore the impact of blame anxiety under controlled experimental conditions.

METHODS

The initial phase of the study compared social work students and social work practitioners, inviting them to comment on the risks present in a hypothetical case scenario.

One difficulty with this area of research is that, while risk ratings can be compared between different groups, it is impossible to say what the ‘real’ risk is, and therefore impossible to determine which group has judged the case more accurately. For a second phase of the study, undertaken with newly qualified social workers, a different measure was used. Participants were asked to read a fairly complex case scenario and then answer a questionnaire which measured accuracy of recall. Two different kinds of information were included: firstly information about the children and their families, secondly information about procedures. Participants were asked at the outset to answer questions which provided a measure of their level of preoccupation with personal blame. We hypothesised that those preoccupied with blame might have focused on the procedural issues, at the expense of child-related issues. No conclusive support was found for this hypothesis. However the data suggested that recall type could be useful in understanding subsequent judgements.

A subsequent iteration of this second experiment would introduce, first, a standard general anxiety measure, in order to differentiate blame preoccupation with general anxiety, and second, a measure that invites participants to assess courses of action after reading a case study. These courses of action again can be divided into those that are directly related to the child and family, and those which are procedural.

FINDINGS

The initial study found that the largest variation in risk judgements between practitioners and students was for emotional aspects of risk, where student scores were significantly higher. However for practising social workers, the perceived likelihood of being blamed was significantly positively correlated with risk judgements (that is to say: the greater chance of blame, the higher the risk rating). No such correlation was found for students.

IMPACT

What are the optimum environmental conditions for social workers to make judgements about children in conditions of uncertainty? Practitioners, policy-makers and politicians have different views on this but there is little in the way of “hard” data. This project aims to use the techniques of experimental psychology to explore factors that affect decision-making. It has the potential to have a significant impact in the field because it does not rely on the intuitions of practitioners, valuable as these are, but tests the effect of different factors in controlled conditions.

PUBLICATIONS

Fleming, P., Biggart, L. and Beckett, C. (2014: advance access) Effects of Professional Experience on Child Maltreatment Risk Assessments: A Comparison of Students and Qualified Social Workers. *British Journal of Social Work* doi: 10.1093/bjsw/bcu090.



PRACTISING SOCIAL WORKERS' JUDGEMENTS OF RISK WERE SIGNIFICANTLY CORRELATED WITH THEIR VIEW OF THE LIKELIHOOD OF BEING BLAMED, BUT STUDENT SOCIAL WORKERS' JUDGEMENTS WERE NOT.



CARE PLANNING AND THE ROLE OF THE INDEPENDENT REVIEWING OFFICER

AUG 2012 – OCT 2014

RESEARCH TEAM Professor Jonathan Dickens, Professor Gillian Schofield, Dr Chris Beckett, Dr Georgia Philip and Julie Young

FUNDER Economic and Social Research Council



CONTEXT

Effective care planning and review has long been regarded as essential for children in care, to ensure their well-being and best possible outcomes. Since 2004 there has been a statutory system of 'independent reviewing officers' (IROs) to monitor the way that local authorities implement the plans, and ensure that the child's wishes and feelings are fully considered. In April 2011, new government regulations and statutory guidance came into force, which tightened the requirements and strengthened the IRO's role. But there has been heated debate about how effective and how truly 'independent' IROs are.

AIMS

The aims of the study were 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
- Highlight key messages for policy and practice from the histories of the children and views of practitioners, parents and children.

METHODS

The research was a mixed methods study. It included a case file study of 122 looked after children from four local authorities in England. There were in-depth interviews with social workers (54), IROs (54), parents (15) and young people (15), four inter-professional focus groups and two focus groups with young people. There was also a nationally-distributed survey of IROs (65), social work managers (46) and children's guardians (39).

FINDINGS

The study finished in October 2014. Findings show the challenges of care planning for children and young people with considerable needs, and often changing circumstances. Beyond that, the political and policy context is demanding, and the organisational context is complex and multi-layered, with limited resources, tiers of decision-making and the involvement of other agencies. The ways that IROs carry out their tasks have to be understood in these contexts. The complexity is shown in the wide range of views on almost every question. The data showed that overt challenge is employed on occasions, but more often IROs work in more subtle and collaborative ways: discussion, advice, following-up and negotiation.

IMPACT AND PUBLICATIONS

There is great public, political and professional concern and debate about how children and young people in care can best be helped, and the role that the IRO can play. This study brings well-grounded analysis to add evidence and depth to these discussions.

The project ended with a launch conference in London and the publication of a research briefing. We are continuing to disseminate the messages through writing, presentations at professional and academic conferences, and engaging with relevant bodies in national and local government.

The full research report will be published on the CRCF website in summer 2015, together with a good practice guide for IROs, social workers and LAC managers. Papers for social work journals are in preparation.

OVERT CHALLENGE IS EMPLOYED ON OCCASIONS, BUT MORE OFTEN INDEPENDENT REVIEWING OFFICERS WORK IN MORE SUBTLE AND COLLABORATIVE WAYS: DISCUSSION, ADVICE, FOLLOWING-UP AND NEGOTIATION.

DECISION-MAKING IN CHILD WELFARE: A FOUR-COUNTRY STUDY

JAN 2014 – AUG 2016

RESEARCH TEAM Professor Jonathan Dickens with international colleagues: Professor Marit Skivenes (Norway), Professor Jill Berrick (USA) and Professor Tarja Poso (Finland)

FUNDER Norwegian Research Council



CONTEXT

The compulsory removal of children from their parents is one of the most intrusive interventions that a state can make in the lives of its citizens, and imposes great responsibilities on the various professionals involved. In difficult and often uncertain circumstances, they have to try to engage with the families, work with professionals from other disciplines, and comply with legal requirements and organisational procedures. All this takes place within a wider context of the state's overall welfare approach and its specific child and family welfare policies.

AIMS

Jonathan Dickens is a member of a cross-national study of decision-making in child protection and care order cases, with colleagues from Norway, Finland and the USA. The aim is to explore how decisions about taking children into care are made by social workers and the courts in these countries. What knowledge and expertise is relied upon? How tightly regulated are the processes, and what room is there for individual professional judgement? What priority is given to involving parents and young people? What biases are more or less likely in the four countries? And what is the potential for cross-national learning to improve policy and practice?

METHODS

The study is a three stage project. The first stage (before Professor Dickens joined the project) was a cross-national comparison of the wider legal and policy framework – key legislation, government policy, regulations and guidance. The second stage was a questionnaire survey of social workers who are involved in 'edge of care' work and deciding whether cases should go to court. The third stage, currently in progress, is a questionnaire survey of judges and others involved in decision-making in the courts.

FINDINGS

Findings so far confirm that there are both similarities and important differences in the day-to-day practice and decision-making of child welfare workers in the four countries. In broad summary, the two Nordic countries aim to divert cases from court through high levels of family support and generous provision of universal and early intervention services; the USA aims to divert them through a much more 'hands off' approach, upholding a stronger sense of family autonomy and seeing state intervention as warranted only when the child is at immediate risk. England has an elaborate intermediate stage, its child protection system. Here, monitoring and 'supportive' services are provided to children and families when the child is the subject of a multi-agency child protection plan, but with the possibility that more coercive intervention will follow if the parents do not comply.

IMPACT

Awareness of the similarities and differences between the four countries creates an important opportunity to reflect on the policy underpinnings of welfare practice, and the implications for the children and their families.

PUBLICATIONS

The researchers have given presentations on the early findings at two major international social work conferences. A number of papers from stages 1 and 2 of the study are currently in preparation, for publication in social work and social policy journals.

AWARENESS OF THE SIMILARITIES AND DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THE FOUR COUNTRIES CREATES AN IMPORTANT OPPORTUNITY TO REFLECT ON THE POLICY UNDERPINNINGS OF WELFARE PRACTICE, AND THE IMPLICATIONS FOR THE CHILDREN AND THEIR FAMILIES.



FOLLOW-UP STUDY OF OUTCOMES OF THE TRI-BOROUGH CARE PROCEEDINGS PILOT

JAN 2015 – OCT 2016

RESEARCH TEAM Professor Jonathan Dickens, Dr Chris Beckett, Sue Bailey

FUNDERS The Department for Education and Cafcass



CONTEXT

Long-standing concerns about unnecessary delay in care proceedings led to major reforms in 2013-14, intended to reduce the normal duration to 26 weeks. Prior to those national changes, the Tri-borough authorities in London (Hammersmith and Fulham, Westminster, Kensington and Chelsea) launched a pilot project to try to hit the 26 week target. It ran from April 2012 to March 2013. The project was evaluated by a team from the CRCF. They have now been commissioned to undertake a follow-up study to track and evaluate the longer-term outcomes for the children.

AIMS

The original evaluation compared the timings and outcomes of care proceedings in the pre-pilot year (2011-12) and the pilot year (2012-13). This gives a combined database of 180 cases (259 children), and a unique opportunity to track and compare longer-term progress and outcomes for the children.

The follow-up study aims to assess whether or not delay has shifted to the post-court stage, and whether the new regime leads to different long-term outcomes. For example, it will be possible to compare the two cohorts in terms of planned and actual outcomes, time to reach the planned placement, whether placements endure (at home, kinship care or foster care), and the children's well-being.

METHODS

The original evaluation combined quantitative and qualitative elements. We analysed data such as the ages of the children, the start and end dates of the proceedings, orders made, plans and placements. We interviewed a range of professionals, including social workers, lawyers, children's guardians, and judges. We also held a focus group with young people in care.

FINDINGS

- The follow-up is in progress, but the original evaluation found that the pilot had led to shorter care proceedings. The median duration of care proceedings was 27 weeks compared to 49 weeks the year before, a reduction of 45%
- The fact that the median length of proceedings fell to around 26 weeks means that half the cases were still taking longer than that. The pilot showed that it is important to retain some flexibility, and this can coexist with meaningful efforts to bear down on unnecessary delay.

- The pattern of final orders was broadly the same for cases in the pilot year as in the year before. The proportion of cases ending in care orders only had fallen, and the numbers ending in special guardianship orders had risen, but these differences were not statistically significant. The proportion of cases ending in a care order and placement order was almost exactly the same. This suggests that the drive to speed up proceedings does not result in significantly different court outcomes.

IMPACT

The original evaluation was widely quoted and circulated, because it shows that the 26 week target can be achieved without compromising justice and thoroughness, as long as there is proper regard for flexibility. The researchers have continued to disseminate the key messages through publications and presentations at professional and academic conferences.

The new study will give important information about what happens after proceedings, the outcomes of the care plans agreed by the court, and the factors that may affect that.

PUBLICATIONS

The full report on the original evaluation is available free of charge on the CRCF website. Two papers have been published in social work journals:
Beckett, C. and Dickens, J. (2014) Delay and anxiety in care proceedings: grounds for hope?, *Journal of Social Work Practice*, 28(3): 371-382.
Dickens, J. Beckett, C. and Bailey, S. (2014) Justice, speed and thoroughness in child protection court proceedings: messages from England, *Children and Youth Services Review*, 46: 103-111.



THE EVALUATION OF THE TRI-BOROUGH CARE PROCEEDINGS PILOT SHOWED THAT THE 26 WEEK TARGET CAN BE ACHIEVED WITHOUT COMPROMISING JUSTICE AND THOROUGHNESS, AS LONG AS THERE IS PROPER REGARD FOR FLEXIBILITY.



AN EVALUATION OF THE ASSIST TRUST, NORWICH: A VOLUNTARY SERVICE FOR ADULTS WITH INTELLECTUAL DISABILITIES

DEC 2014 – MAR 2015

RESEARCH TEAM Dr Penny Sorensen, Sue Bailey, Dr Pippa Belderson

FUNDER The Assist Trust, Norwich



CONTEXT

Day services for adults with intellectual disabilities are often viewed as underperforming although there is very little evidence of evaluations of such services. Day services that purely provide a space for people to be kept busy are not likely to offer much other than company for the people attending and respite for the carers. However, services that are able to provide a wider range of activities in more integrated and diverse settings are more likely to enable people to form relationships within their communities. Options available within day services should include work experience and placements, voluntary work, training and social and leisure opportunities. In addition, day services can provide an advocacy role and take lead responsibility for negotiating with other agencies.

THE WORK AT ASSIST APPEARS VERY MUCH IN TUNE WITH CURRENT POLICY AND RECOMMENDED PRACTICE.

AIMS

The aim of the evaluation was to provide a deeper understanding of the work at Assist to gain a clearer picture of what elements of the service appear to make a difference and for whom as well as the barriers and opportunities encountered. The research questions included:

- What is already known about provision of day services for adults with intellectual disabilities in the UK?
- How is the service at Assist experienced by members?
- How do members of staff understand the ethos of the organisation?

In addition to the above research questions, questionnaires were designed for future use by Assist Trust staff to explore the following:

- How is the service experienced by carers?
- Why do some members cease to use the service?

METHODS

The study involved photo-elicitation interviews with ten participants who were using the service. Photographs used during interviews were taken by the participants to document their time at Assist. Questionnaires were completed by all staff members, researcher observations of activities at both sites took place and questionnaires were developed for carers and service users who leave the service for Assist staff to use in the future.

FINDINGS

The evaluation uncovered some promising outcomes for service users at Assist. They particularly expressed enjoyment at the opportunities to make friends and the camaraderie and banter with both staff and other service users. They valued their increased independence which usually involved travel training, internal or external work placements and a move out of home and into shared, supported housing. The work at Assist, therefore, appears very much in tune with current policy and recommended practice.

Staff worked hard to provide an appropriate and stimulating environment for the service users. They were always focused on the needs of individual members and those needs were catered for by constant consultation with the service users. Over 50 different activities, from gardening to Zumba and football, were available on a timetabled basis every four months.

IMPACT

A report has been produced with suggestions for some future changes and developments which could be considered by Assist. The evaluation adds to a very limited pool of independent evaluations of services for adults with intellectual disabilities.

A FOLLOW-UP REVIEW OF COMMUNITY SOCIAL WORK IN A LONDON BOROUGH

MAY – OCT 2015

RESEARCH TEAM Professor Marian Brandon, Dr Penny Sorensen, Sue Bailey, Dr Ann Anka, Dr Sara Connolly

FUNDER London Borough



CONTEXT

The current fiscal climate and the ageing population have sharpened the focus on the capacity of local communities to fill some support needs of disabled working aged and older adults. The Care Act 2014 emphasises prevention and a duty to promote the wellbeing of individuals and their communities. Local authorities are required to put in place community support before a crisis point is reached to prevent or at least delay the need for statutory care services. Whilst many London Boroughs have seen a decline in their older population, this particular Borough has seen an increase by 5%. It is estimated that by 2025, both health and social care will need to provide care or services for an additional 12,000-14,000 people.

The literature shows that people living in the community need to be at the centre of service design, and are best placed to advise on what works. Low-level practical support, providing that 'little bit of help', is generally well-liked, good value for money, and can be an important factor in enabling an older person or younger disabled person to remain independent. Such schemes are often low-cost as they involve volunteers. However, without appropriate support, older people in particular can be left increasingly isolated in their own homes.

The approach this Borough has chosen to embrace in the spirit of the new Act is community social work since it encourages choice and control for older adults and people with disabilities of all ages and is in line with current policy initiatives.

METHODS

The aim of the review is to provide a follow up of the practice of community social work (CSW) in one team in a London Borough Adult Services. The review follows a previous evaluation of the service and will examine the continuing development and refinement of the work since April 2014 when the service changed substantially. The study will focus in depth on the 20 cases where a community based, preventative service has been delivered.

The study will include:

- Client interviews with up to 20 individuals who have experienced involvement with the CSW team.
- Individual phone interviews with members of the CSW team will explore the work of the team, the CSW role and changes in working practices.
- Analysis of Older People's Quality of Life Questionnaires administered by social workers and analysis of other outcome measures collected by the team in relation to the 20 cases.
- Analysis of one month time use diaries to provide outline costs of this new way of working as in the earlier evaluation.

IMPACT

The funders will use the evaluation to plan future services.

PUBLICATIONS

Once this evaluation is completed together with the earlier evaluation, it will provide the basis for a journal article.

THE REVIEW FOLLOWS A PREVIOUS EVALUATION OF THE SERVICE AND WILL EXAMINE THE CONTINUING DEVELOPMENT AND REFINEMENT OF THE WORK SINCE APRIL 2014 WHEN THE SERVICE CHANGED SUBSTANTIALLY.

PhD RESEARCH

PhD STUDENT Sophie Bagge
SUPERVISORS Dr Judi Walsh, Dr Laura Biggart

AN EXPLORATION OF THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN BIRTH EXPECTATIONS AND POST-TRAUMATIC STRESS DISORDER (PTSD) FOLLOWING CHILDBIRTH

The process of birthing a baby is an event filled with physical and psychological complexity. The event itself is thought about and planned for in the preceding months, and the consequences whether positive or negative are likely to remain a lasting memory (McCorville, 2014). Research suggests that between 20-33% of women report a traumatic birth experience (Ayers and Ford, 2009; Slade, 2006), with a small number developing clinical PTSD (0-7%; Ayers, Joseph, McKenzie-McHarg, Slade and Wijma, 2008). However, up to a third of women report symptoms relating to at least one cluster of PTSD symptoms at six weeks post-birth (Slade, 2006). The large number of women who perceive birth as a trauma, and the link between this and negative psychological well-being (Boorman, Devilly, Gamble, Creedy and Fenwick, 2014) illustrates the importance of future research in this area.

Research suggests that incongruence between birth expectations and the actual childbirth experience has the potential to cause adverse emotional outcomes (Gibbins and Thomson, 2001). These findings need to be extended to capture the possible relationships between antenatal and delivery factors, and later post-natal functioning, the emotional well-being of the mother, and any potential effects on the mother-infant relationship. The proposed research will explore the relationships between birth expectations and hopes, the experience of and satisfaction with the birth experience, and PTSD following childbirth. Initially two qualitative studies will investigate how primary health care providers and post-natal women view the concepts of birth expectations and PTSD following childbirth. These studies will also examine the views of these groups in regards to the provision and accessibility of care following a traumatic birth. Following this a large scale prospective, longitudinal study will be carried out, following women from 36 weeks gestation to 3 months post-partum to quantitatively examine possible relationships between expectations of birth and PTSD following childbirth.

PhD STUDENT Kate Blake-Holmes
SUPERVISORS Prof Marian Brandon, Prof Gillian Schofield

GROWING UP WITH A PARENT WITH A MENTAL ILLNESS: MAKING SENSE OF THE EXPERIENCE THROUGH THE REFLECTION OF ADULT OFFSPRING

Many children are cared for by a parent (or parents) with a severe and enduring mental illness, this can have a significant impact on their experience of childhood and subsequent formation of adult identities. Historically, research has focused on the risks and detrimental effects for these children. Whilst such risk and disadvantage must be considered, research also suggests that the stigma of mental illness, assumption of poor parenting and subsequent fear of intervention, further disables parents and negatively impacts on their children. Additionally, not all children in such families experience significant difficulties and research shows that multiple sources of risk and resilience can be influential. As such the impact on and needs of the child cannot be measured by psychopathology alone, but rather assessed within an understanding of their individual experience.

The goal of this research is to explore how adults, who grew up with at least one parent with a mental illness, make sense of their childhood and family narrative. By reflecting on their experiences, themes and processes can be identified which, when considered in the light of existing research could offer further understanding of this particular issue. It is hoped that this study will contribute to a better understanding of children's conceptualisations of parental mental illness, which in turn can inform the development of resources to support children and their families make sense and foster resilience.



PhD STUDENT Jessica Brennan
SUPERVISORS Dr Judi Walsh, Dr Laura Biggart

BECOMING A MOTHER: THE TRANSITION TO PARENTHOOD

The mother-infant relationship during pregnancy has been the subject of research in many areas of psychology. Bowlby (1988) 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. In addition, he suggested that we have an evolutionary need to want to protect our young. This system is reciprocal to the attachment system and is known as our caregiving behavioural system, which promotes our genetic fitness (George and Solomon, 2008).

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.

PhD STUDENT Laura Cook
SUPERVISORS Prof Gillian Scofield, Prof Marian Brandon

ENCOUNTERS WITH THE FAMILY IN CHILD AND FAMILY SOCIAL WORK: SOCIAL WORKERS’ REFLECTIONS ON THE INITIAL HOME VISIT

This doctoral research project examines how the experience of encountering a family in the ‘intimate space’ of the home impacts on the task of social work assessment. It aims to investigate how social workers make sense of what they see, hear and feel during the visit in order to arrive at a professional judgement. The project has used narrative interviews and focus groups in order to ascertain workers’ experiences of encountering the family during an initial home visit. It explores: how workers begin to ‘construct’ the family on the basis of an initial encounter, the overt communication and meta-communication involved in the encounter between family and professional, and how the worker’s emotional experiences during the home visit affects and informs their claims to knowledge about the case. The study, which is now in its final year, will contribute to our understanding of how social workers exercise their professional judgement and the systemic, procedural and psychodynamic factors that impact on this process.

PhD STUDENT Delia Gheorghe
SUPERVISORS Dr Nicholas Walsh, Dr Martin Doherty

AN INVESTIGATION OF THE NEURO-PSYCHOLOGICAL CONSEQUENCES OF FAMILY-FOCUSED CHILDHOOD ADVERSITIES

Family-focused childhood adversities (FFCAs) are significant risk factors for later adolescent and adult onset-psychopathology. Such FFCAs are widely prevalent. The foundations for the current project are based on the ROOTS project, a population-based longitudinal cohort study. In ROOTS, based on the Cambridge Early Experience Interview (CAMEEI), 41% of sampled Cambridgeshire 14-year-olds had been exposed to prior mild-moderate FFCAs (Dunn et al. 2010). In an embedded ROOTS sub-study of the effects of such adversities on brain development, individuals with exposure to FFCAs demonstrated reduced volume in the cerebellum (Walsh et al. 2014). The aim of the proposed project is to therefore build on this prior work and investigate whether exposure to such FFCAs is also associated with subtle, yet detectable neuropsychological changes compared to non-exposed individuals, in behaviours closely associated with cerebellar functioning. To achieve this aim we will conduct a cross-sectional, community-based investigation of Norwich-based adolescents.

The study will be composed of two parts. The first part will involve interviews with the adolescent and their primary care-giver. The second will involve inviting a selected number of participants to attend a follow-up experimental lab session at UEA to undergo a number of neuropsychological tasks. This quantitative and qualitative mixed-methods approach will provide novel data of the effects of common forms of developmental psychosocial experiences. Such data will aid further understanding of the mediating mechanisms between exposure to FFCAs and subsequent psychopathology. Understanding such mediators of psychopathology are critical for the future development of theory-based prevention and early intervention strategies.

PhD STUDENT Jane Hernon

SUPERVISORS Prof Marian Brandon, Prof Gillian Schofield

EXPLORING DISABLED YOUNG PEOPLE AND THEIR FAMILIES' VIEWS AND EXPERIENCES OF CHILD PROTECTION

Research indicates disabled children and young people are at significantly greater risk of experiencing maltreatment, therefore protecting them should be a priority. Yet disabled children are less likely to be made the subject of child protection plans in England (DfE, 2011). Disabled children's equal rights to participation and the provision of support are integral to upholding their right to protection (UNCRC 1989). The Munro Review of the Child Protection System in England (DFE, 2011) also identified focusing on children's own views as essential to effectively protecting them.

While there is a growing literature exploring young people's experiences of child protection, there are virtually no studies focusing on disabled young people's perspectives. This study aims to begin to address this gap in research knowledge. Activity based interviews were undertaken with 16 disabled young people and their parents or carers, who have been the subject of a child protection conference and/or child protection plan. Interviews explored disabled young people and their families':

- Access to and priorities for support
- Experiences of having a social worker
- Understanding and views about the child protection process.

Data analysis is currently in progress, but initial findings suggest that while young people's understanding of child protection varies, all had clear views about their lives that they were able to express. Many had supportive relationships with practitioners, but found frequent changes of worker unsettling, were unsure about how their views are represented or felt these were not listened to. Young people and their families especially valued practitioners who took time getting to know them and understand their needs. It is hoped that the findings of this study will improve understanding of best practice in child protection with disabled children.

PhD STUDENT Gregory M Howard

SUPERVISORS Dr Victoria Scaife, Dr Charles Seger

DECISION MAKING PROCESSES OF YOUNG PEOPLE TO BINGE DRINK: AN AUGMENTED THEORY OF PLANNED BEHAVIOUR, SOCIAL IDENTITY THEORY, AMBIVALENT AND IMPLICIT ATTITUDES

Binge drinking and risky single occasion drinking (RSOD) are leading causes of injury and death among university students and young adults in the UK and internationally. Drinking alcohol is a particular problem among students as 45% of pupils aged 11-15 said they have been drunk at least once in a year in the UK (NHS, 2010) and young adults aged 18 to 25 are more likely to use alcohol than youths and older adults. Young adults (especially undergraduates) have a tendency towards binge drinking, putting themselves at risk of alcohol related harm. University life can provide a social setting that facilitates excessive alcohol consumption which appears to lead to higher binge drinking rates in undergraduates than other young adults. Therefore, steps should be taken to decrease the levels of drinking for young adults.

My research is looking at the ability of an expanded theory of planned behaviour (TPB), Habit, Impulsivity, Ambivalent and Implicit Attitudes and Social Identity Theory to predict binge drinking in university students. The theory of planned behaviour is considered to be a deliberative processing model stating that the determinants of future behaviour are one's intentions to perform that behaviour and the subjective perception of having control over that behaviour. In turn, intentions are predicted by attitudes, subjective norms and perceived behavioural control. Knowing more about the factors that play a part in the decision making process of young people to binge drink could help create ways to reduce the amount of RSOD.

PhD STUDENT Birgit Larsson
SUPERVISORS Prof Gillian Schofield, Prof Jonathan Dickens

LIFE PATHWAYS AND NARRATIVES OF YOUNG WOMEN WHO HAVE OFFENDED AND PARTICIPATED IN RESTORATIVE JUSTICE

While several different types of restorative justice have been practiced around the world since the 1970s, research into how and why it works is mixed. For example, while findings suggest that it is an effective way of dealing with some types of juvenile crime, questions remain about how young women experience the process.

This project consisted of a review of the literature; secondary analysis of four years of administrative police data consisting of 17,000 individuals who participated in restorative justice in one county in the UK, including 7,000 offenders; and life history interviews with 12 young women who had offended and participated in restorative justice, sampled from the database. Quantitative findings revealed that restorative justice in this county was mainly used for low-level offences; that a form of restorative justice which was less time intensive than more traditional conferences was most commonly used to respond to offences; and that offenders tended to meet with stand-in victims such as representatives from organisations rather than personal victims. As restorative justice is frequently called a storytelling process, narrative analysis was used to explore young qualitative data, which included analysis of young women's identities (described as 'fighters', 'survivors', and 'good girls'). It also included analysis of their thoughts and justifications around the subject of their offending, ('morality tales'), and of their experiences in restorative justice. Young women presented complex reasons for engaging in offending, often having to do with their own victimisation or complicated relationships with victims. They also reported confusion about what restorative justice was and felt that they had been misunderstood by police officers.

A number of recommendations for police-facilitated restorative justice were created based on these findings, including more carefully selecting types of restorative justice fitting with the offence; properly preparing participants for restorative justice; improving police officers' awareness of the backgrounds of female offenders which often includes victimisation; and providing increased and ongoing support for police facilitators so that they can more easily follow best-practices.

PhD STUDENT David Nevard
SUPERVISORS Dr Chris Beckett, Dr Piers Fleming

DECISION-MAKING UNDER PRESSURE: FACTORS INFLUENCING RISK JUDGEMENTS MADE BY CHILD AND FAMILY SOCIAL WORKERS

Social workers have to make important decisions on a daily basis and work under intense pressure. At the same time, psychological research has shown that cognitive and emotional demands affect peoples' decision-making processes and outcomes. The theory of ego depletion (or cognitive fatigue) suggests that mental processes requiring focused conscious effort draw upon a limited pool of mental resources and these processes therefore worsen over time. Applying this to social work, Kirkman and Melrose (2014) noted that social workers experience 'decision-fatigue' as a result of having to make many sequential decisions throughout the day.

Consequently, this doctoral project is looking at how ego depletion plays out in the context of social work and in turn, how the cognitive and emotional pressures that social workers face, affect their decision-making and risk judgements. It is also examining the interactions between the cognitive and emotional demands, as well as other factors such as emotional intelligence and experience. Finally, the research looks to investigate what can be done to mitigate the effects that the pressures have on social workers' decision-making processes and outcomes, with a hope of informing social work practice and policy.



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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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