

Children Order Advisory Committee's Multi-Disciplinary Newsletter

Issue 8 Winter 2008 /2009

Introduction

This is the eighth edition of the Children Order Advisory Committee's Multi-Disciplinary Newsletter. The committee are keen to ensure that the newsletter is distributed widely to professionals with roles and responsibilities under the Order. As such, if you know of any individuals or groups that would appreciate being included on the circulation list please send their email address to informationcentre@courtsni.gov.uk.

Recently the newsletter has been expanded to include a new section providing the opportunity to exchange information and to share new developments within the work of agencies and disciplines associated with the Children Order Advisory Committee. As usual the newsletter continues to provide details of recent judgements and new publications of relevance and interest to child care professionals in Northern Ireland.

The newsletter is divided into three sections. The **first section** lists the content with links to the more detailed summaries contained in the next two sections. The **second section** contains the information exchange whilst the **third section** contains the summaries of key literature. The material in this section is arranged under four subject headings: Law reports; Child Welfare; Medicine and Psychology; and, Youth Justice

Where possible the summaries contain hyperlinks to the original material. In other instances professionals will need to make arrangements within their own organisation to access full copies of the material listed. For example, professionals working within the Health & Personal Social Services can access journal articles and books through the Health on the Net Northern Ireland (<http://www.honni.qub.ac.uk/>) and the Medical Library at Queen's University.

We welcome all comments about how the newsletter could be improved and any recommendations from readers of material to include in future editions. Please send these to alicebeggs@courtsni.gov.uk.

Previous editions of the newsletter are also available to download or view at: http://www.courtsni.gov.uk/en-GB/Publications/Family_Law_and_Childcare_Literature/

His Honour Judge Derek Rodgers
Chair of the Multi-Disciplinary Literature Sub-Committee

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Children Order Advisory Committee's Multi-Disciplinary Newsletter

Issue 8 Winter 2008 /2009

The Committee

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(Compiled by Greg Kelly, Robyn McCready and John Devaney)

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Batchelor, J. (2008) Failure to thrive revisited. *Child Abuse Review* 17(3): 147-159.

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Brandon, M., Belderson, P., Warren, C., Gardner, R., Howe, D. Dodsworth, J. and Black, J. (2008) The preoccupation with thresholds in cases of child death or serious injury through abuse and neglect. *Child Abuse Review* 17(5): 313-330.

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Bond, H. (2008) Ten Top Tips for Preparing Care Leavers. BAAF, London

Government and Agency Publications




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Reform Implementation Team - Children's Services




United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child (2008) *Concluding observations and recommendations on children's rights in the UK*. UNCRC, Geneva.

Other Resources



Kilpatrick, R., Berridge, D., Sinclair, R., Larkin, E., Lucas, P., Kelly, B. and Geraghty, T. (2008) *Working with challenging and disruptive situations in residential child care: Sharing effective practice*. SCIE Knowledge Review 22. SCIE, London.



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Medicine and Psychology

(Compiled by Catherine Macpherson and Fionnuala Leddy)

The Lancet Child Maltreatment Series

Gilbert R., Spatz Widom C., Browne K., Fergusson D., Webb E., Janson S. Burden and consequences of child maltreatment in high income countries. *The Lancet*, Early Online Publication, 3 December 2008.

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Day F., Mok J. (2008) Children affected by domestic abuse while abroad on holiday. *Archives of Disease in Childhood* 93 (5) 362-363

Kemp A.M., Dunstan F., Harrison S, Morris S, Mann M, Rolfe K, Datta S, Thomas DP, Sibert JR, Maguire S. (2008) Patterns of skeletal fractures in child abuse: systematic review. *BMJ* 337:1518

McKinney, C., Donnelly, R., Renk, K. (2008) Perceived Parenting, Positive and Negative Perceptions of Parents, and Late Adolescent Emotional Adjustment. *Child and Adolescent Mental Health* 13(2): 66-73.

This is the Fostering Website www.fostering.hscni.net which is designed to promote health and social care fostering. This has also been very useful as many people will now automatically go and look for a relevant website when they want to find out more about anything they are interested in.

With all these regional initiatives, it is important to have a consistent feel or “brand” for Health and Social Care fostering. To do so, we have developed the regional fostering logo above along with Regional Information Packs/ leaflets / posters etc. and this all helps to give a consistent and professional feel to our fostering materials and activities. These have been particularly useful when used alongside our current television advertisement which is designed to promote Health and Social Care fostering. This advertisement has been a very useful way to get the fostering message out to the general public and we plan to repeat this again in early 2009.

We are continuing to look at how we can best assist Trusts and hope that our attempts to co-ordinate all our activities will result in a more efficient and effective fostering service.

Marian Hall
Regional Manager

The Northern Ireland Care Pathways and Outcomes Study: Research Summary



Introduction

The Northern Ireland *Care Pathways and Outcomes Study* has been following a population (n=374) of children who were under five and in care in Northern Ireland on the 31st March 2000, tracking the types of placements provided for these children, and examining how the children and their carers are getting on. A more detailed report for practitioners, together with a report for parents, and for children and young people, is available free from <http://www.qub.ac.uk/cpo>. The research is funded by the Northern Ireland Research & Development Office.

Where were the children living?

The percentage of children staying in non-relative foster care fell between 2000 and 2004 (from 61 to 22%). This was mostly explained by the rise in the number of children being adopted (0 to 38%). There was also an increase in the percentage of children living with their birth parents (14 to 27%), with this increase slowing with time, i.e. there was an 8% rise between 2000 and 2002, but only a 5% rise between 2002 and 2004.

What influenced where the children were living?

Location (Board area)

Higher percentages of children followed the adoption pathway in the Northern (59%) and Southern (69%) Boards, compared to the Eastern Board (33%) and the Western Board (19%). Higher percentages of children followed the non-relative (46%) and relative foster care (14%) pathways in the Western Board; and a higher percentage of children followed the birth parents (34%) pathway in the Eastern Board.

Parental alcohol problems

Children whose parents had a history of alcohol problems were 3 times less likely to be returned to their birth parents by 2002 than those who did not. Only 8% of children who were returned to birth parents by 2004 came from a family with a history of alcohol problems.

Age the child first entered care

Children who first entered care under one year old were 2½ times more likely to be adopted than those who first entered care aged between 1-2 years old. Most of the children (70%) who were adopted by 2004 were less than one year old when they first entered care.

The parents' perspectives

Contact

What the foster parents said:

Some foster parents said that contact visits disrupted the children's routines and explained how children were sick and aggressive after they returned from the visits. Other foster parents felt that the disruptive effects of contact visits wore off once a child had settled long-term in a placement; and that contact was less of an issue if the child had been placed quite young.

What the adoptive parents said:

Adoptive parents mentioned some concerns about contact:

- The child would be too young to make sense of contact;
- The child might be upset by parent(s) not availing of contact;
- There may be difficulty retaining anonymity; and
- It challenged parental role identity.

Adoptive parents also mentioned some benefits of contact:

- Facilitating an ongoing exchange of information between the child and his/her birth family;
- Useful source of information on the child and his/her background
- Helped the children to make sense of the key people in their lives; and
- Could reduce feelings of abandonment.

What the birth parents said:

For some birth parents, contact visits were emotionally difficult and stressful, particularly when contact sessions were regulated, highly supervised, in awkward and hard-to-reach places, and fairly short in duration. They felt that this often put restrictions on the communication between themselves and their children, and they felt intimidated by the continual surveillance from social workers.

What support was provided?

Support from Social Services was not initially wanted by many adoptive parents; deemed insufficient (or nonexistent) by most birth parents; and mostly basic by foster parents.

Some foster parents said that they did not rely on Social Services support but they felt reassured by the knowledge that support was there if needed. Most felt that the financial support was little more than adequate and far from generous.

Most adoptive parents felt support was more intense and frequent at the start but that it petered out afterwards, although they felt that help was still available 'at the end of the phone'. They were quite keen to have social services out of their lives in the beginning, so that they could get on with a 'normal' family life. However, a few adoptive parents whose children had more difficulties were not happy with the level of support available to them.

Some birth parents felt that Social Services failed to give them the practical help needed to prevent their children being taken into care. Many felt Social Services were only concerned about checking up on them, rather than providing practical help. Because of the perceived pressure 'not to slip up', some were afraid to ask for support. Most said they needed respite care that would give them 'a break'.

Parental stress

The parents interviewed in this study completed a questionnaire (Parenting Stress Index – Short Form) (Abidin, 1995) that measures parental stress in relation to interactions with their children. Compared to foster parents and birth parents, adoptive parents experienced significantly less overall parenting stress, and were significantly more likely to perceive that their child matched their expectations and that interactions with the child were rewarding. However, a percentage of adoptive and foster parents were found to be experiencing significant problems in relation to parenting stress. Birth parents experienced very high levels of stress.

Children's strengths and difficulties

The birth parents, adoptive parents, and foster parents interviewed also completed a questionnaire (Strengths and Difficulties) (Goodman, 1997) that evaluates children's pro-social behaviour, and behavioural and emotional problems. All the parents thought their children were considerate of others, helpful and kind (pro-social behaviour scale). Children who had been returned to their birth parent/s appeared to have more difficulties than the adopted and fostered children in terms of behaviour problems, hyperactivity and overall difficulties. However, a significant number across all three groups showed signs of hyperactivity, behaviour problems and overall difficulty.

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Goodman, R. (1997). The Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire: A research note. *Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry*, **38**, 581-586.

For further information please contact **Dr Dominic McSherry**, Senior Research Fellow, Institute for Child Care Research, Queen's University Belfast.
Email: dominic.mcsherry@qub.ac.uk, Tel: 02890 975980.

An Introduction to Residential Care Resource



The Social Care Institute for Excellence has developed e-Learning resources to support staff working in residential child care. These e-Learning resources are freely available to all users and, through audio, video and interactive uses of technology, will provide the user with an engaging introduction to different residential care settings, the needs that children may have in care, young people's own concerns, interpreting and acting on children's behaviour, helping children achieve better outcomes, key legislation and managing challenging behaviour.

The resources can be accessed at:

<http://www.scie.org.uk/publications/elearning/rcc/index.asp>



SECTION THREE

Law Reports

(Compiled by Siobhan Keegan)

SUMMARY

In Re LS Mr Justice Weir deals with a freeing for adoption case which he adjourned for further assessment of the mother and her new partner. Mr Justice Treacy also issued an important decision dealing with the proofs required in sexual abuse cases. It follows from a decision of the House of Lords in REB wherein the civil standard on the balance of probabilities is restated.

RE L & M (MINORS) 2008 NI FAM 100

In this case a Trust applied for a care order in relation to two children aged 6 and 4. Her Honour Judge Loughran heard the application at first instance. She was asked to rule on threshold and after a contested hearing she made a finding that the 4 year old had been sexually abused by her father. The Judge went on to make an interim care order on that basis. That order was appealed and the finding of sexual abuse was examined. The appeal court pointed to the fact that the core of the Trust case was the work undertaken by the Child Care Centre in relation to sexual abuse. That work was not videoed but the Child Care Centre witness gave evidence as to her impression of the words and actions of the child. The appellate court considered that the approach was flawed as the interviews were not videoed and did not accord with good practice. The appeal was allowed and the finding of sexual abuse was overturned.

At paragraph 23 of his judgement, Mr Justice Treacy says 'In my view this unjustified and self imposed handicap was contrary to the interests of justice, compromised the search for the truth, and deprived the court of evidence of sufficient quality which would enable it to make a reliable finding of sexual abuse. It is also unfair because it deprived the appellant, the children and the court of making its own assessment and of obtaining an independent analysis and compelled the court to rely on the ipse dixit of the person conducting the forensic or investigative sessions.'

SE & SOCIAL SERVICES TRUST –V-LS& ANOR 2008 NI FAM 12

In this case Mr Justice Weir adjourned a freeing application brought by a Trust. The application was in relation to two children, separately placed in foster care. The mother opposed the application. The father consented. The mother had a difficult life herself experiencing neglect, sexual abuse and learning difficulties. The father had not been a positive influence. The mother has failed to progress to successful rehabilitation through a PACT placement. The Trust had therefore decided upon adoption albeit that there was significant delay in progressing this.

The core of the case was that the mother had a new and older partner who was committed to helping the mother parent the children. Mr Justice Weir felt that further time should be allowed to test whether the couple could parent the children. He considered the Trust and Guardian's assessments too pessimistic in relation to this and he criticised an emphasis on past history rather than present potential.

RE B (CHILDREN) UKHL 2008 35

This case involved a consideration of the correct standard to be applied in children's case ie the balance of probabilities following from a previous decision of the House of Lords in RE H& R. Baroness Hale sets out the facts in her speech and points to the difficulty in the case wherein the trial judge failed to reach findings. There is a criticism of his approach. Baroness Hale says that 'In our legal system, if a judge finds it more likely than not that something did take place, then it is treated as having taken place. If he finds it more likely than not that it did not take place, then it is treated as not having taken place. He is not allowed to sit on the fence. He has to find for one side or the other. Sometimes the burden of proof will come to his rescue: the party with the burden of showing that something took place will not have satisfied him that it did. But generally speaking a judge is able to make up his mind where the truth lies without needing to rely upon the burden of proof.'

The test of balance of probabilities was clearly affirmed. Lord Hoffman states as follows:

'I wish to lay some stress upon the words I have italicised. Lord Nicholls was not laying down any rule of law. There is only one rule of law, namely that the occurrence of the fact in issue must be proved to have been more probable than not. Common sense, not law, requires that in deciding this question, regard should be had, to whatever extent appropriate, to inherent probabilities. If a child alleges sexual abuse by a parent, it is common sense to start with the assumption that most parents do not abuse their children. But this assumption may be swiftly dispelled by other compelling evidence of the relationship between parent and child or parent and other children.'

Adoption and Fostering Journal

Kerru O'Halloran writes a regular 'Legal Notes' column in the journal *Adoption and Fostering*. In volume 32(2) he discusses: The Children (Northern Ireland) Order 1995, Article 50: the best interests of the child; alleged parental culpability; medical evidence; and the rules governing publicity *In the matter of the Children (NI) Order 1995 and in the matter of LM1, LM2 and SM* The High Court Gillen J Delivered 20 February 2008.

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Child Welfare

(Compiled by Greg Kelly, Robyn McCreedy and John Devaney)

Peer Reviewed Journal Articles

Bacon, H. (2008) Cleveland 20 years on: what have we learned about intervening in child sexual abuse? *Child Abuse Review* 17(4): 215-229.

This paper examines the main changes in approach to child sexual abuse that have occurred since the events in Cleveland 20 years ago. Comparison between estimated prevalence rates and registrations for sexual abuse suggests that we are aware of only the tip of the iceberg. It is argued that in many cases uncertainty may have to be accepted, and that protection may be better achieved through a protective parent than through the child protection system. Clinical examples of cases presenting to a specialist child and adolescent mental health service are given. It is argued that, although society is now more willing to recognise the existence of child sexual abuse and professionals are better at dealing with families, outcomes for this group of children are not much improved.












Batchelor, J. (2008) 'Failure to thrive' revisited. *Child Abuse Review* 17(3): 147-159.

The term 'non-organic failure to thrive' (FTT) has long been used in relation to young children with faltering growth for which no organic cause is found. In this paper, problems arising from dichotomised organic/non-organic responses to FTT are explored and reasons for the assumption that non-organic FTT was always due to emotional abuse or neglect are presented. The case is made that, except in a minority of cases, children fail to grow because they consume insufficient calories. Research studies on reasons for poor intake, from factors related to the child and their parents to the wider family and environment, are summarised. Following a brief reference to literature on outcomes, the author argues that centile charts should be routinely completed for all young children. If faltering growth is identified, a multi-factorial assessment should be undertaken. Such an assessment reduces the risk of interventions being based on outdated assumptions about non-organic FTT and maximises the potential for successful resolution of poor growth. After briefly summarising the literature on interventions, the author concludes with suggestions for improving practice in this field, including working in partnership with families and with health and social care professionals already known to them.

Baynes, P. (2008) Untold stories: A discussion of life story work. *Adoption & Fostering Journal* 32(2): 43-49

This article focuses on life story work with looked after children and is based on the authors 20 years' experience as a practitioner, independent life story work trainer and





mentor, independent reviewing officer and children's guardian. The article traces the history of life story work and considers how changes within social work have affected practice, and are played out within the narratives that we create for children who cannot live with their birth families. The re-emergence of life story work within the current 'target-led, evidence-based' culture of social work is discussed and the impact of attitudes to gender, poverty and professional accountability is considered. Finally, there is a discussion of respectful practice with children and the issue of social work power, as manifested in the writing of children's stories.

Brandon, M., Belderson, P., Warren, C., Gardner, R., Howe, D. Dodsworth, J. and Black, J. (2008) The preoccupation with thresholds in cases of child death or serious injury through abuse and neglect. *Child Abuse Review* 17(5): 313-330.

Thresholds into and between services emerged as a significant theme in the biennial analysis of cases of child death and serious injury through abuse and neglect 'serious case reviews' carried out in England for the (then) Department for Education and Skills between 2003-05. The preoccupation with thresholds was one of a number of interacting risk factors and many children's cases were on the boundary of services and levels of intervention. In most cases child protection did not come 'labelled as such' which reinforces the need for *all* practitioners, including those working with adults to be alert to the risks of significant harm. Policy makers should acknowledge that staff working in early intervention are working *within* the safeguarding continuum and not in a separate sphere of activity. The emotional impact of working with hostility from violent parents and working with resistance from older adolescents impeded engagement, judgement and safeguarding action. In the long term neglect cases that were reviewed, the threshold for formal child protection services was rarely met and some agencies and practitioners coped with feelings of helplessness by adopting the 'start again syndrome'. Adequate resources are essential but not sufficient to redress the problems. Effective and accessible supervision is crucial to help staff to put into practice the critical thinking required to understand cases holistically, complete analytical assessments, and weigh up interacting risk and protective factors.

Brandon, M. and Thoburn, J. (2008) Safeguarding children in the UK: a longitudinal study of services to children suffering or likely to suffer significant harm. *Child & Family Social Work* 13(4): 365-377

This paper presents findings from a prospective longitudinal study which set out to track the progress of 105 children and young people newly identified as having suffered, or being likely to suffer, significant harm through maltreatment or neglect. Baseline data were collected on these children in four English social services departments. Descriptive data on the services and child outcome data were analysed on all the children between 12 and 18 months later, and on 77 of the young people 8-9 years after concerns were first identified. Forty per cent of the children stayed at home with a parent throughout, while the majority of children experienced either some or considerable disruption to their lives. Fifty-seven per cent experienced further maltreatment or neglect. Some children appear to have made good progress in spite

of repeated moves, disruption and re-abuse. The paper examines the pattern of services to children and parents. Factors are explored which appeared to either help or hinder the children's capacity to deal with the stresses and adversities faced over the 8 years. Implications for policy and practice are explored which may be more likely to promote positive outcomes for these high-risk children.

Campbell, A. (2008) The Right to be Heard: Australian Children's Views about their Involvement in Decision-making following Parental Separation. *Child Care in Practice* 14(3): 237-255.

This article describes the findings from a qualitative study that explored the views of a small group of Australian children about their involvement in decision-making processes following their parents' separation. Sixteen children, aged between seven and 17 years, participated in in-depth interviews that focused on their understandings of the rights of children in decision-making, their descriptions of how decisions about their future were made following their parents' separation, and their views on their own participation in decisions that directly affected them. Findings indicated that children need information from their parents about what is happening at the time of separation. Children expressed a belief that their opinions should be respected and acted upon, but that final decisions about children following separation should be made by parents. Additionally, the children in this study recognised the importance of members of the extended family in helping separated families to reach important decisions about their children. While this study involved a very small sample, these findings reflect those of other studies in the United Kingdom and New Zealand and underscore the importance for children of being included in the experience of family separation rather than having parents attempt to "protect" them. The findings suggest that such inclusion will ensure that children's best interests are the central focus of decisions made about them.

Colton, M., Roberts, S. and Williams, M. (2008) The Recruitment and Retention of Family Foster-Carers: An International and Cross-Cultural Analysis. *British Journal of Social Work* 38(5): 865-884

Fostering services across the globe encounter difficulties in recruiting and retaining family foster-carers. Yet, we know little of the international and cross-cultural issues which impact on recruitment and retention. In this article, we draw on previous empirical research, and also on information collected during a recent study of global trends in family foster-care, to present an international comparative analysis of those issues. Three key themes emerged from the study: motivation and capacity to foster; professionalism versus altruism; and criteria for kinship and unrelated carers. Each of these presents a considerable challenge to foster-care services. Here, we explore these key themes further, and reflect on the implications for policy and practice.

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Cramer, H. and Carlin, J. (2008) Family-Based Short Breaks (Respite) for Disabled Children: Results from the Fourth National Survey. *British Journal of Social Work* 38(6): 1060-1075

A survey of family-based short breaks for disabled children in the UK was undertaken in order to investigate the state of current services. The research builds on the work of previous surveys and takes the perspective of the service co-ordinators. The findings show that family-based short breaks are rapidly changing and diversifying. The number of schemes with contract carers has gone up and the number of schemes with additional sitting and befriending services has gone down. The reasons for the growth in contract carers are understood better than the reasons for the decline in sitting and befriending. The changing population of disabled children and the increased number of children with complex needs wanting a service are key contributory factors in these trends. The most common profile of children waiting the longest for a service is still teenage boys with autism or 'challenging behaviour'. Some improvements have been observable in the numbers of families and children from ethnic minorities accessing services. The introduction of Care Standards has received a mixed response. The challenge for short breaks is to be flexible and responsive to the local needs of children and families.

Devaney, J. (2008) Chronic child abuse and domestic violence: children and families with long-term and complex needs. *Child & Family Social Work* 13(4): 443-453.

It is estimated that up to one million children may have been exposed to domestic violence in the UK, with significant consequences for their social and emotional development in childhood and later life. At a time when the central and devolved administrations in the UK have developed strategies to tackle domestic violence, this paper reports the findings from a study conducted on children in the child protection system with long-term and complex needs as a result of experiencing domestic violence. The research identifies the characteristics of the children and their families and tracks their careers through the child protection system. The findings indicate that professionals have an awareness of domestic violence, and that younger children with younger parents are most likely to experience prolonged periods in the child protection system. Domestic violence in this context typically co-exists in families experiencing other difficulties such as substance misuse and socio-economic deprivation. In conclusion, the paper argues that Government policy and professional practice should primarily be concerned with assessing the risk that men present, rather than the risk that children are at. By reframing professional interventions, men are more likely to be challenged to accept responsibility for their behaviour and the consequences for their families.



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Devaney, J. (2008) Inter-professional working in child protection with families with long-term and complex needs. *Child Abuse Review* 17(4): 242-261.

Within the United Kingdom there is growing awareness of the need to identify and support the small number of children who are living in families experiencing multiple problems. Research indicates that adverse experiences in childhood can result in poor outcomes in adulthood in terms of lack of employment, poorer physical and mental health and increases in social problems experienced. It is acknowledged that most of these children are known to child welfare professionals and that some are referred to social services, subsequently entering the child protection system. This paper reports research conducted with 28 experienced child welfare professionals. It explores their views about families known to the child protection system with long-term and complex needs in relation to the characteristics of children and their families; the process of intervention with families; and the effects of organisational arrangements on practice. The research indicates that these families are characterised by the range and depth of the problems experienced by the adults, such as domestic violence, mental health difficulties and substance misuse problems, and the need for professionals to have good inter-personal skills and access to specialist therapeutic services if families are to be supported to address their problems.

Fernandez, E. (2008) Unravelling Emotional, Behavioural and Educational Outcomes in a Longitudinal Study of Children in Foster-Care. *British Journal of Social Work* 38(7): 1283-1301

The experience of out-of-home care has the potential to impact on children's psychosocial outcomes in significant ways. This article highlights the interactive contribution of carers, teachers and children to the fostering experience. The paper reports on a strand of a longitudinal study of children in long-term foster-care. Using a mixed-methods, repeated-measures, multi-informant approach, it focuses on emotional, behavioural and educational outcomes. Children in the study were assessed by carers and teachers for competencies and problem behaviours using the Achenbach Child Behaviour Checklist and its companion, the Teacher Report Form. The results suggest high prevalence rates of Externalizing and Internalizing problems with demonstrated gains in terms of improved scores and adaptive functioning at subsequent assessments as they progressed in placements. While drawing attention to the adversities reflected in the children's experience, the findings go some way in demonstrating the positive outcomes of care. One striking finding is the similarity between care children and controls in later assessments. Discussion of results and implications for practice centre on the need for a co-ordinated strategy for improved recognition and integrated responses to children's psychological and educational needs that draw on resilience oriented interventions and target interrelated systems of service delivery. The findings have broad implications for practitioners concerned with psycho-social outcomes for children in care, and for researchers interested in integrating multiple perspectives in longitudinal research.



Forrester, D., McCambridge, J., Waissbein, C., Emllyn-Jones, R. and Rollnick, S. (2008) Child Risk and Parental Resistance: Can Motivational Interviewing Improve the Practice of Child and Family Social Workers in Working with Parental Alcohol Misuse? *British Journal of Social Work* 38(7): 1302-1319


Motivational Interviewing (MI) is a client-centred, directive counselling method. This study evaluates the effectiveness of a two-day workshop in MI for forty social workers in changing self-reported practice over a three-month period, the levels of skills achieved, and factors associated with acquired skills, including the impact of post-workshop supervision. The focus of training was alcohol misuse but participants were encouraged to explore the use of MI with other issues. A multi-method pre and post-design was used, utilizing both quantitative and qualitative data and employing an embedded randomized controlled trial of the impact of supervision. The two-day workshop had a modest positive impact on evaluations of simulated practice, on some measures of attitudes to working with problem drinkers and in qualitative accounts of practice. Despite this, three months post-workshop, workers generally had not reached a skilful level of MI practice as measured in ratings of an interview with a simulated client. Offer of post-workshop supervision had little impact on skill, with take-up being low. There was a significant difference between participants in the two workshops, despite identical programmes and trainers. Qualitative data suggested that participants had found the training useful and many reported a positive impact on their practice.

Glover, J. (2008) Mediation in a Family Court Setting: Does it Work? *Child Care in Practice* 14(3): 293-310

Family mediation is described as "helping to find a solution that meets the needs of you, your partner and any children, and that you all feel is fair". There is a growing consensus that, in comparison with court hearings, family mediation improves outcomes for parents and children, in cases of child contact and residence dispute. However, in practice, government data show that only 20% of couples accessing legal aid for family breakdown cases in the United Kingdom use family mediation. In Northern Ireland in particular, mediation services are limited and there exists a variety of different approaches. An evaluation of a Family Centre's mediation service in one Health and Social Service Trust area in Northern Ireland found that agreement rates in mediation were higher than the national average, and that there were clear and quantifiable time and resource savings for the Health and Social Services Trust. The model of practice is presented to stimulate much needed further discussion about family mediation in Northern Ireland and to advocate for an agreed model of service delivery and increased availability of family mediation in Northern Ireland.

Halpenny, A., Greene, S. and Hogan, D. (2008) Children's Perspectives on Coping and Support following Parental Separation. *Child Care in Practice* 14(3): 311-325.

Families represent the primary setting in which most children's lives are shaped and determined. Increasingly, children experience ongoing change in family formation and structure, and such fluctuation may threaten or diminish their feelings of security with regard to established family roles, relationships and routines. A number of studies














have explored available support for children in the context of family transition, focusing in particular upon those organisations providing services to children and families. However, in order to gain more precise insight into the mechanisms through which children can best be supported, it is necessary to consult children themselves and to elicit their perspectives and responses to the changes in their family contexts. A primary aim of the present study, therefore, is to gain an understanding of children's strategies for coping with parental separation, and the sources of support that they find most helpful in order to adjust to these changes. The present study was carried out in the Republic of Ireland. Central to the framework of the study is the view that children are competent in expressing their perceptions and feelings regarding their relationships with their parents post-separation. Sixty children, in two age groups (8-11 years old, representing middle childhood, and 14-17 years old, representing adolescence) participated in the study. A qualitative approach was adopted with semi-structured interviews exploring children's perspectives on the role played by different types of support, both informal (family, friends) and formal (counselling/peer support services, school). Key findings in the present study highlight the importance for children of being selective about whom they seek and accept support from, with the family being the preferred source of support for the majority of children. The study also highlights the need to provide a broad range of services in outside agencies in a non-stigmatising way and at various stages throughout the separation process.

Hicks, L. (2008) The role of manager in children's homes: the process of managing and leading a well-functioning staff team. *Child & family Social Work* 13(3): 241-251.

This paper is based on qualitative findings from a mixed methods project which investigated the roles of managers of children's homes and the relationship of these to their use of resources and the outcomes for young people in their care. The research formed part of the *Costs and Effectiveness of Services to Children in Need* research initiative, originally funded by the Department of Health. Main findings from the project overall and in particular from the multi-level modelling analysis indicated that the influence which the *process* of providing care has on the kind of outcomes experienced by young people is of paramount importance. This paper provides a brief overview of the project and its aims. Drawing on the qualitative strand of the project and overall project findings, the paper investigates three aspects of managing children's homes: establishing working relationships with staff teams, the role of managers and bringing about working with the young people in their care. It situates the role of manager within the wider context of literature on leadership and investigates what leadership in children's homes entails. Finally, the paper highlights the importance of the role of manager in relationship to the development of good practice in children's homes.

Luke, N. And Coyne, S.M. (2008) Fostering self-esteem: exploring adult recollections on the influence of foster parents. *Child & Family Social Work* 13(4): 402-410.



Foster parents are in a unique position to improve the self-esteem of children in their care, which may be lower than that of their non-fostered peers. According to Harter's dual-influence model, both general support or attachment and domain-specific support contribute to self-esteem. The current study used this model to explore the ways in which foster parents had influenced the self-esteem of a sample of five adults with differing foster care experiences. Retrospective interviews were used to gather memories of high self-esteem from time spent in foster care. A thematic analysis of the interview transcripts supported Harter's model, and provided a number of examples of ways in which foster parents could boost children's self-esteem. The model was further extended to show the importance of 'normality' and inclusion for this sample of fostered adults. Further research on this topic is recommended with a view to widening the scope of foster carer training beyond attachment theory.

Mantle, G., Williams, I., Leslie, J., Parsons, S. and Shaffer, R. (2008) Beyond Assessment: Social Work Intervention in Family Court Enquiries. *British Journal of Social Work* 38(3): 431-443.

Most parents or carers who separate or divorce are able to make arrangements themselves about where their children will reside and how the children's contact with the non-resident parent will be managed. A further group of parents or carers are able to come to agreement with the assistance of community- or court-based dispute resolution/ mediation services. There are times, however, when disputes cannot be resolved without recourse to the courts and, when this happens, the court will normally request that a welfare report be prepared by a CAFCASS (Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service) practitioner. While the boundary between assessment and intervention in social work is often less than clear, the commissioning of a court welfare report in family proceedings strongly suggests an assessment focus and appears to carry little expectation that the practitioner should intervene in order to meet the needs of the children or adults involved. This article presents recent research findings that illustrate ways in which CAFCASS practitioners do go beyond the assessment role expected of them in the course of the enquiries they undertake. Implications for policy and practice in this area of social work are then discussed.

Mason, J. (2008) A Children's Standpoint: Needs in Out-of-Home Care. *Children & Society* 22(5): 358-369

This article discusses research reported in 'The Needs of Children in Care' (Mason and Gibson, 2004) in which children participated in defining their needs in out-of-home care. In this study a central research presumption was that children are knowledgeable about their own needs. The methods used to facilitate the involvement in the project of children and adult stakeholders in out-of-home care are described. Also described are findings from the research which identified that of prime importance to the children were their connections with others and their agency in their own lives. These findings are compared with findings from the narratives of the adult stakeholder groups. Finally, the implications of the findings, for improving children's participation in decision-making around their needs in care are considered in the context of broad adult-child social relations in the care system.

Montgomery-Devlin, J. (2008) The Sexual Exploitation of Children and Young People in Northern Ireland: Overview from the Barnardo's Beyond the Shadows Service. *Child Care in Practice* 14(3): 381-400.

The present paper provides an overview of child sexual exploitation in Northern Ireland and related issues. It focuses on Barnardo's response to the problem of sexual exploitation and sets it in both a historical and a contemporary context. The paper considers the importance of recognising exploitation as child abuse and addresses specific myths associated with this. It makes use of recent research and campaigning by Barnardo's to challenge and change public perception. The paper presents a range of risk factors and indicators that are used to identify children and young people who are most likely to experience or be at risk from sexual exploitation. It examines the who, what and why of sexual exploitation of children in Northern Ireland, presenting local research and anecdotal evidence to demonstrate the extent and range of the problem, while acknowledging the often hidden nature of this activity. As well as focusing on young people abused through prostitution, the paper also makes reference to the issue of human trafficking and the increasing problems of abuse via the Internet and mobile phone technology. The paper draws on international human rights standards and domestic legislation in relation to child sexual exploitation and explores the existing legislative context in Northern Ireland. Included is a summary of the Barnardo's Beyond the Shadows Service established to respond to this issue. The paper lays out the four main aims of the service and provides an overview of its work. It concludes by challenging the audience, legislators, policy-makers and service providers to respond strategically and operationally to the experiences and needs of children and young people who are sexually exploited or at risk of this.

Saunders, H. And Selwyn, J. (2008) Supporting informal kinship care *Adoption & Fostering Journal* 32(2): 31-42

National statistics show that on 31 March 2007 about 7,000 looked after children in England (11% of the total) were placed in kinship care with relatives or friends. There has been no national prevalence study on kinship care in England, so we do not know how many children are living in kinship care arranged *informally* by family members or friends. However, the Family Rights Group estimates that there are over 200,000 households where kinship carers (usually grandparents) are looking after children who cannot live with their parents. In the London Borough of Greenwich, this hidden population of 'children in need' has been targeted for extra support by a Kinship Care Team, which aims to enable children to remain within their family network and to reduce the risk of their becoming 'looked after'. The authors report on their evaluation of this initiative.

Sen, R., Kendrick, A., Milligan, I. and Hawthorn, M. (2008) Lessons learnt? Abuse in residential child care in Scotland. *Child & Family Social Work* 13(4): 411-422.

This paper draws on work carried out commissioned as part of the Historic Abuse Systemic Review by the Scottish Executive in 2007. It considers the evidence-based regarding abuse in residential child care from 1945 with a specific focus on Scotland. It reviews the context set for residential child care post-1945 by the Clyde and Curtis reports, outlines how the residential child care sector developed following this,

provides an overview of evidence and awareness of abuse in residential child care establishments after the 1948 Children's Act, giving particular consideration to the public inquiries and reviews of residential child care which there have been in Scotland, explores research evidence regarding the safety of convictions of residential child care workers found guilty of child abuse, and provides an overview of the main policy and practice developments which there have subsequently been in Scotland. The paper concludes by considering the progress that has been made in developing safeguards in Scotland and identifying areas where further research and development are required.

Stevens, I. and Cox, P. (2008) Complexity Theory: Developing New Understandings of Child Protection in Field Settings and in Residential Child Care. *British Journal of Social Work* 38(7): 13320-1336

The protection of children, whether living at home or in residential care, is a core endeavour of residential and field social work with children. Yet, despite broad support from politicians, policy makers and the majority of the public for this work, child protection practice and practitioners are frequently criticized for perceived or actual failures to protect. Successive inquiries produce reports with similar recommendations, yet children continue to be abused and harmed, sometimes fatally. Clearly, better understandings and more effective protective practices need to be developed. Current research in the area of complexity theory is encouraging the development of concepts and applications which are powerful aids to understanding the issues that child protection practitioners experience daily. Child protection is not simple because of the multiplicity of factors that result in children being at risk. Complexity theory provides a framework for understanding the processes involved but without the problems of reductionism. The purpose of this paper, therefore, is to explore the potential contribution of complexity theory and concepts that have relevance to the protection of children in both field and residential child care practice. It is argued that complexity theory offers new and helpful ways to conceptualize and work with the processes which underpin keeping children safe.

Taylor, A., Toner, P., Templeton, L. and Velleman, R. (2008) Parental Alcohol Misuse in Complex Families: The Implications for Engagement. *British Journal of Social Work* 38(5): 843-864.

The impact of chronic parental alcohol misuse on both parenting and child welfare is being increasingly recognized, with such problems featuring in a significant proportion of families in which there are identified child-care concerns. There is a growing body of research which suggests that there are often particular difficulties in gaining access to such families, with effective engagement seen as central to appropriate intervention and to assessing children's welfare in these situations. Establishing and sustaining engagement may be particularly problematic where these families experience a constellation of impacting pressures, of which alcohol and/or drug misuse is a central component. This article explores some of the challenges of reaching children and parents in such circumstances. Based on research that included a wider evaluation of a specialist service for children and families in which alcohol is a problem, a sample of families who 'dropped out' of contact are presented and discussed. The authors

suggest that particular responses to engaging such families are needed and identify the challenges in gaining access to children in such circumstances.






Timms, J., Bailey, S., and Thoburn, J. (2008) Children's Views of Decisions Made by the Court: Policy and Practice Issues arising from the Your Shout Too! Survey. *Child Care in Practice* 14(3): 257-274.

Your Shout Too! reports on a National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children survey of the views of 141 children and young people involved in private law court proceedings following the separation of their parents. All of the children who responded had either been the subject of a Welfare Report prepared under the provisions of Section 7 of the Children Act, 1989, or had been separately represented in the proceedings under the provisions of Rule 9.5 Family Proceedings Rules, 1991. The research was carried out with the assistance of the Children and Family Courts Advisory and Support Service. This article looks at current arrangements for hearing the voice of the child and considers how society views the involvement of children and young people in parental disputes about their children's residence and contact arrangements. Drawing on the views and experiences of the children responding to the survey, it goes on to explore the implications for developing policy and practice in relation to the approximately three million children in the United Kingdom who will experience the separation of their parents during the course of their childhood.


Weatherall, K. and Duffy, J. (2008) Are We Listening to Children? An Examination of the Child's Voice in Social Work Reports to the Court following Parental Separation Disputes. *Child Care in Practice* 14(3): 275-292.

This paper examines the findings from a recent study investigating how children's interests and their rights are safeguarded through the representation of social workers in reports prepared for Court following parental separation disputes. A small-scale research study describes the views of family and childcare social workers on how children's wishes and feelings are reflected in Court-directed assessments in a large Health and Social Services Trust in Northern Ireland. The research employs a multi-data collection methodology involving the use of a focus group, postal questionnaires and semi-structured interviews. The data were thematically analysed in relation to representing the voice of the child, and examined both the social work task and the role of training as a form of support for social workers in this demanding area of work. The findings demonstrate that social workers do seek and represent the views of the child within Article 4 reports, but identify factors that impinge on the accuracy of representing children's views and promoting their rights. These factors relate to Trust and Court priorities, lack of therapeutic intervention for children, variation in social work practice, lack of training for social work staff in this area and, consequently, the need to increase confidence and support for social work staff undertaking this work. As a result of these findings, suggestions are proposed for informing practice and improving service delivery in this key area of family and childcare social work practice.

Welbourne, P. (2008) Safeguarding children on the edge of care: policy for keeping children safe after the Review of the Child Care Proceedings System, Care Matters and the Carter Review of Legal Aid. *Child and Family Law Quarterly* 20(3): 335-358




The number of children referred to the courts under section 31 of the Children Act 1989 and the cost of care proceedings have been the target of several recent policy documents. Alongside a commitment to improving preventative or diversionary approaches, they contain incentives for courts, local authorities and lawyers to find mediated alternatives to local authority care. The main route by which it is hoped this is to be achieved is through involving children's extended families and networks in alternative care arrangements. The effect of such a change would be to move decision-making for some vulnerable children on the edge of care away from the courts, with their attendant safeguards for children's and parent's rights, into administrative settings managed or commissioned by local authorities. The potential impact of such a change on children and parents and their rights is explored. There is also a discussion of some additional safeguards that will be needed if there is to be continuing adequate protection of their rights as well as their safety and welfare.



The following three contributions debate Shihning Chou and Kenin Browne's article in *Adoption and Fostering* Volume 32 Number 1 entitled: 'The Relationship between institutional care and the international adoption of children in Europe'. The first 2 question the methodology and the conclusions of the original article and the third is a defence of their position by Chou & Browne.






Gay y Blasco, P., Macrae, S., Selman, P. and Wardle, H. (2008) *Adoption & Fostering* 32(2)63-67.



This contribution challenges the methodology and findings of an article published in the previous edition of *Adoption & Fostering* (Chou and Browne, 2008). The debate continues with a letter from the USA, followed by Browne and Chou's response.

Carney, K. and Sacco, P. (2008) Institutional care and international adoption *Adoption & Fostering Journal*, 32(2): 68-69 – A letter to the editor

Browne, K. and Chou, S. (2008) Child rights and international adoption: A response to critics *Adoption & Fostering Journal* 32(2): 69-74



In this commentary, the authors focus on the issues raised by the critical responses to their article in *Adoption & Fostering* (Chou and Browne, 2008).

Books

Argent, H. (2008) Ten Top Tips for Placing Siblings. BAAF, London

A practical guide to placing looked after brothers and sisters, which emphasizes the importance of getting to know each individual child as well as considering the needs of the sibling group as a whole.

Bond, H. (2008) Ten Top Tips for Preparing Care Leavers. BAAF, London

A practical reference guide for all those working with young people who are preparing to leave care and step into life as independent young adults.

Government and Agency Publications

Area Children and Young People's Committees (2008) Draft Regional Children's Services Plans for Northern Ireland 2008-2011. HSSB's, Northern Ireland

http://www.ci-ni.org/index.php/weblog/services_draft_ni_childrens_services_plan_2008_2011_ni/

This plan sets out the regional priorities for the next three years and provides a common framework for each Area Committee to address local needs. It is based on the six outcomes set out in "Our Children and Young People - Our Pledge - a ten year strategy for children and young people in Northern Ireland 2006-2016.


Chapter 1 sets out the foundations necessary for effective planning. These have been developed through experience, research and practice and include:-

- The participation of children and young people.
- An outcomes approach to needs and rights based on the six outcomes set out in the ten year strategy.
- The whole child model which provides a way of understanding the dynamic influences impacting on children's lives.
- Locality planning which supports communities to improve outcomes for children and young people.
- A model of family support which can be used to analyse levels of need and service provision from early intervention and prevention through to specialist services.
- Our thoughts as to possible future structures to enable integrated planning and commissioning from Government to local levels.

Chapter 2 sets out the core indicators agreed with OFMDFM to measure the ten year strategy's six outcomes.

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Chapter 3 sets out specific groups of children who are deemed by agencies to be children in need or at risk and for whom a more focussed approach is required if their health and well being is to be improved. Indicators are presented which will allow us to measure progress over time and by geographical area for these young people. The priority themes and issues which the four Committees have agreed to work on during 2008-2011 are also presented with an immediate action plan for 2008-09 for your local area.




Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety (2008). *NI Executive Response to Delivering the Bamford Vision Consultation*. Mental Health Unit, DHSSPS. Belfast.


http://www.dhsspsni.gov.uk/bamford_consultation_document.pdf



In 2002 DHSSPS initiated an independent review of mental health and learning disability law, policy and service provision, now referred to as the Bamford Review. The Review published a series of 10 detailed reports with almost 700 recommendations; these reports can be accessed from the Review's website at <http://www.rmhdni.gov.uk>



While many of the recommendations relate to DHSSPS responsibilities, the review also touched on issues relating to human rights, equality of opportunity and social inclusion, and to wider services needed such as education, training and employment, housing, transport and leisure.




This cross departmental response sets out proposals to take the recommendations forward over the next 10-15 years.





Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety (2008) *Standards for Child Protection Services*. Office of Social Services, DHSSPS, Belfast.

http://www.dhsspsni.gov.uk/standards_for_child_protection_services.pdf



The DHSSPS standards stem from the publication of 'Our Children and Young People – Our Shared Responsibility' (DHSSPS, 2006), the overview report of the regional Inspection of child protection services.

The inspection standards were influenced by:

- 
- 
- a review of existing standards in the area of child protection;
 - a review of a wide body of literature and research on child protection;

- the recommendations contained in The Victoria Climbié Inquiry Report. This report made many far-reaching and challenging recommendations for all engaged in the governance, planning, management and delivery of child protection services, which are still applicable;
- “Co-operating to Safeguard Children” (CtSC), is the current DHSSPS child protection guidance. This will be periodically updated and amended to reflect changing practice in the field of child protection;
- the learning from inspection and Case Management Reviews (CMRs) in Northern Ireland; and
- a series of workshops and wide consultation with the range of disciplines and agencies involved in child protection work in Northern Ireland.

The implementation of the standards will assist the planning, delivery, audit, review and inspection of child protection services across the region and provide the foundation for informing practice and improving the services to children, young people and their families.

Under each of these headings, there is a standard statement which explains the level of performance to be achieved. The standard statement is supported by criteria which provide further detail of the areas to be considered in the application of the standard to professional practice, service provision, governance and workforce issues.

DHSSPS & NIO (2008) *Tackling Sexual Violence and Abuse - A Regional Strategy 2008-2013*. DHSSPS, Belfast.

http://www.nio.gov.uk/tackling_sexual_violence_and_abuse_a_regional_strategy_2008-2013.pdf

DHSSPS and the NIO have jointly published a new five-year cross governmental strategy which aims to address the serious problem of sexual violence and abuse in Northern Ireland in a co-ordinated and focused manner

The strategy sets out a series of robust measures under four key strategic strands which seek to:

- ensure a joined-up, targeted approach by all government departments, agencies and partner organisations (Leadership and Direction strand);
- reduce risk and prevent sexual violence and abuse; (Prevention strand);
- build confidence in the criminal justice system, through an appropriate professional and sensitive approach to reported crime (Protection and Justice strand); and

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- provide and deliver easily accessible, co-ordinated, quality support services for victims, survivors and their families (Support strand).

Equality Commission for Northern Ireland (2008) *Let's Talk, Let's Listen, Guidance for public authorities on consulting and involving children and young people.* Equality Commission for Northern Ireland, Belfast.

[http://www.equalityni.org/archive/LetsTalkLetsListen\(Final\).pdf](http://www.equalityni.org/archive/LetsTalkLetsListen(Final).pdf)

The guidance is an aid for public authorities to advise them on how to consult with children and young people.

The aims of the guidance are to:

- set out why it is important for you to consult children and young people;
- explain what we mean by 'consultation', 'engagement' and 'active participation';
- provide guidance on how you can identify the effects of your policies on children and young people;
- identify the problems preventing public authorities from consulting children and young people, and to set out ways in which you can overcome them;
- provide advice on how you should include the duty to consult children and young people in the strategic planning process; and
- help you to identify other issues which you need to take into account when you consult children and young people, including confidentiality and ethics, monitoring and assessment, feedback, providing information in other formats, and training.

NI Assembly DHSSPS Committee (2008) *Report on the Inquiry into the Prevention of Suicide and Self Harm.* NI Assembly, Belfast.

http://www.niassembly.gov.uk/health/2007mandate/healthreport_07.htm

The DHSSPS Committee report looks at the current strategic approach to the prevention of suicide and self harm in Northern Ireland.

This report sets out the results of the Committee examination of:

- the scope and appropriateness of the strategy 'Protect Life: A Shared Vision';
- the level of stakeholder involvement;
- the level of services and support available to promote good mental health, to prevent suicide and self harm; and to support those affected by suicide; and

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- any further action required, taking account, as appropriate, of experience elsewhere.

The Committee identified a number of areas where it believes the strategy can be strengthened and enhanced. These include the following:

- There is a recognition that one size does not fit all and the focus of the strategy needs to be refined to take account of the significant suicide risk among older people and those living in rural areas.
- Central co-ordination and delivery of the strategy could be improved by the establishment of a designated suicide prevention director. This would help to build a higher degree of expertise and experience in planning and delivering the strategy, working closely with the Suicide Strategy Implementation Body and taking account of the views of key stakeholders, and providing a direct central contact point for all stakeholders.
- The funding provided to implement the strategy must remain ring-fenced for a number of years and community groups need a greater degree of financial certainty and sustainability to concentrate on providing their services.
- Preventing suicide and providing help and support for those affected is not solely a matter for the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety. Greater commitment and involvement is required from all other Departments. For example, the Department of Education can play an influential role in supporting primary and post-primary schools in the development of coping skills and character building which can better equip young people in confronting the challenges of modern life.
- The level of stakeholder involvement could be further enhanced by incorporating a greater role for churches and developing strong partnerships with local authorities and sporting bodies.
- A suicide prevention telephone helpline provides a vital lifeline for those in crisis but it must be backed up with sufficient referral and support services. The decision to set up a regional helpline, without an evaluation of the pilot in north and west Belfast and in the absence of an assessment of existing referral and support services to cope with a significant increase in calls, was considered premature.
- Extensive training has already taken place particularly through the ASIST (Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training) programme. However, there is still a significant need for additional and improved training for those who may come into contact with people at risk of suicide.

The Committee made a total of 26 recommendations as a result of this Inquiry.

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NI Assembly OFMDFM Committee (2008) *Final Report on the Committee's Inquiry into Child Poverty in Northern Ireland.* NI Assembly, Belfast.

http://www.niassembly.gov.uk/centre/2007mandate/reports_07.htm

The Committee for OFMDFM has published their findings and recommendations from the Inquiry into Child Poverty. This Inquiry sought to develop a detailed understanding of child poverty in Northern Ireland and to use this understanding as the basis for the development of constructive suggestions to assist the Executive, and indeed future administrations, in developing a robust strategy to eliminate child poverty.

The Committee examined the current strategic approach to tackling child poverty in Northern Ireland. Specifically the Committee sought to:

- Examine the extent, intensity and impact of child poverty in Northern Ireland
- Consider the approach taken when formulating the current strategy including the extent of the engagement with key stakeholders
- Assess whether the existing strategy is capable of delivering the key targets for 2010 and 2020
- Examine whether the implementation mechanisms, resources and monitoring arrangements currently in place are adequate to ensure delivery of the key actions/targets
- Identify and analyse relevant experience elsewhere in terms of policy interventions and programmes
- Consider what further actions could be taken to tackle child poverty with particular focus on those that would be deliverable by the devolved administration
- Report to the Assembly by March 2008

Recommendations where made on the following


- Definition and Measurement of Child Poverty
- Strategies to Tackle Child Poverty in Northern Ireland
- Policies to Increase Income
- Tackling Rising Costs and Financial Exclusion
- Promoting Employment
- Measures to Tackle Long-term Disadvantage
- Cross-Cutting Approaches

The Committee made a total of 47 recommendations to OFMDFM as a result of this Inquiry.




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Northern Ireland Courts Service (2008) *Children's Order Bulletin January 2008 - March 2008*. NICS, Belfast.




http://www.courtsni.gov.uk/en-GB/Publications/Targets_and_Performance/p_tp_ChildrensOrderBulletinJanuaryMarch2008.htm?UserPref=culture%5Een-GB




The report details the volume of Children's Order business received and dealt with during the quarter [January 2008 - March 2008], as well as looking at waiting times and numbers of children involved.




Joint publication by Ofsted, Healthcare Commission, HM Inspectorate of Constabulary (2008) *Review of services for children and young people, with particular reference to safeguarding*. London, Ofsted.



The inspection was conducted using the arrangements for joint area reviews as required under section 20 of the Children Act 2004. It is a special joint area review, commissioned in November 2008 by the Secretary of State for Children, Schools and Families. It was commissioned following the death of Baby P in Haringey and the subsequent findings of the serious case review, which examined the circumstances of the baby's death and the role of each of the services involved with the family.



The report considers the case of Baby P and firstly examines practices relating to safeguarding; effectiveness of arrangements to identify and respond to concerns, quality of recording, assessment and child protection planning and effectiveness of interagency child protection. Secondly the inspection considered aspects important aspects of service management including; effectiveness of governance arrangements, effectiveness of performance management and workforce development and safe recruitment practice.



This inspection identifies a number of serious concerns in relation to safeguarding of children and young people in Haringey. It concludes that the contribution of local services to improving outcomes for children and young people at risk or requiring safeguarding is inadequate and needs urgent and sustained attention. A number of recommendations are made and directed at the Department for Children, Schools and Families and the Local Authority.



Reform Implementation Team - Children's Services



<http://www.dhsspsni.gov.uk/index/ssi/oss-childrens-services.htm>

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The Reform Implementation Team was established by Paul Goggins, former Minister for Health, Social Services and Public Safety on the 15th January 2007, to drive forward the comprehensive change agenda for child protection services in Northern Ireland, based on a Care Pathway approach. The Team is led by Mrs Fionnuala McAndrews, Director of Social Services, Southern Health and Social Services Board, supported by Mr Tony Rodgers, Assistant Director of Social Services.

Key areas of responsibility include:

- ensuring the implementation of reform, including:
- the development, piloting and implementation of a single assessment framework, including risk assessment and mental health needs component, for Children in Need across Northern Ireland (UNOCINI). Refer to links below.
- the development of common regional thresholds to determine when services are needed and standards of practice that underpin the Children's Pathway model and associated guidance;
- the establishment of common roles within the Children's Services structures in the 5 HSC Trusts;
- the development of a common model for the delivery of high quality supervision within the Children's Services structures in the 5 HSC Trusts and oversight of the recruitment and induction of Principal Practitioners;
- the establishment of a common format for case records and an agreed standard for recording practice;
- identification of the range of information required to facilitate high quality performance amongst managers and practitioners and how it will be provided;
- identification of the range of mechanisms to be used to ensure high quality performance in Children's Services;
- undertaking a training needs analysis, developing training materials and beginning the implementation of a training programme; and
- promoting effective engagement of all relevant disciplines and agencies.

United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child (2008) *Concluding observations and recommendations on children's rights in the UK*. UNCRC, Geneva.

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<http://www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/crc/docs/AdvanceVersions/CRC.C.GBR.CO.4.pdf>

The Concluding Observations and Recommendations from the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child mark the end of the current UK reporting process, which occurs once every five years for countries that have signed up to the UNCRC. The UN report has been prepared after papers on the state of children's rights across the UK were submitted and oral evidence delivered by the UK Government, and the Governments of all the devolved administrations, the Children's Commissioners, non-governmental organisations and children and young people themselves.

Recommendations were made under the following cluster headings:

- General measures of implementation
- Civil right and freedoms
- Family environment and alternative care
- Basic health and welfare
- Education, leisure and cultural activities
- Special protection measures.

Key Recommendations to State Parties were made on the following areas of concern:

- the existence of a culture of intolerance towards children and young people [paragraphs 24 and 25];
- the impositions of restrictions on the freedom of movement and peaceful assembly by children as a result of ASBOs [paragraphs 34,35, 79 and 80];
- the failure to ensure the protection of children from physical punishment in the home [paragraphs 40 and 41];
- the ongoing discrimination and social stigmatisation of vulnerable groups of children [paragraphs 24 and 25];
- the continued low age of criminal responsibility [paragraphs 77.a) and 78.a];
- and the lack of compliance with international standards in relation to juvenile justice generally (paragraphs 77 and 78);
- poor Mental Health services which fail to address the legacy of the conflict [paragraphs 56 and 57]
- the extent of persistent poverty in Northern Ireland [paragraphs 64 and 54]

In relation to the implementation of UNCRC, observations were made about:

- the failure to ensure that the Children's Commissioners are fully independent and have adequate powers to receive and investigate complaints [paragraphs 16 and 17];

- the lack of systematic awareness raising of the Convention [paragraphs 20 and 21] and;
- inadequate resources provided by government to implement children's rights [paragraphs 18 and 19].

Other Resources

Kilpatrick, R., Berridge, D., Sinclair, R., Larkin, E., Lucas, P., Kelly, B. and Geraghty, T. (2008) *Working with challenging and disruptive situations in residential child care: Sharing effective practice*. SCIE Knowledge Review 22. SCIE, London.

<http://www.scie.org.uk/publications/knowledgereviews/kr22.asp>

Residential care for children should be a positive resource. Homes providing a strong nurturing culture give children the care they need at certain times in their lives. Residential care which meets the personal, social, health and educational needs of children are much more likely to be safe places for children. This knowledge review examines a particular aspect of keeping children safe and promoting their well-being by managing challenging and disruptive situations.

Roberts, D., Bernard, M., Misca, G. and Head, E. (2008) *Experiences of children and young people caring for a parent with a mental health problem*. SCIE Research Briefing 24. SCIE, London.

<http://www.scie.org.uk/publications/briefings/briefing24/index.asp>

Children and young people with caring responsibilities are often referred to as 'young carers' and this is the term used throughout the briefing. This briefing focuses on the experiences of approximately 60,000 children and young people under 18 years of age caring for a parent or parents defined as having mental health problems that are 'serious' or 'severe', and 'enduring'. The unpredictable nature of some mental health problems can create difficulties for young carers whose behaviours are not always correctly attributed. In addition, the high level of stigma attached to mental health problems may lead young carers to exclude themselves from social involvement.

Sinclair, R. and Geraghty, T. (2008) *A Review of the Use of Secure Accommodation in Northern Ireland*. National Children's Bureau, London.

This report sets out to provide an up-to-date assessment of:

- the numbers of young people in Northern Ireland who require secure care

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- the level and range of services currently available to meet the needs of these young people
- possible alternative ways in which the needs of these young people can be met

Worrall, A., Boylan, J. and Roberts, D. (2008) *Children's and young people's experiences of domestic violence involving adults in a parenting role*. SCIE Research Briefing 25. SCIE, London.

<http://www.scie.org.uk/publications/briefings/briefing25/index.asp>

This briefing focuses on the experiences of children and young people (under the age of 18 years) of domestic violence between those adults who have, or previously held a parental role towards them. It includes both biological parents and non-related adults significant to the young people, but does not include the perpetration of violence by children and young people towards those in a parental role. While recognising the existence of a variety of models of the family, this briefing generally refers to currently or previously married or cohabiting adults, including lone, two-parent and step families.

The effectiveness of interventions is beyond the scope of this briefing which is concerned with the experiences of children and young people in the context of this type of inter-partner violence. In examining experiences and coping strategies, however, it also considers how the voices of children and young people are heard in research and practice, advocacy on their behalf, and evidence-based practice relating to work with children and young people affected by domestic violence. The briefing draws predominantly on British research, but refers to North American and Australasian research where relevant.

Medicine and Psychology

(Compiled by Catherine Macpherson and Fionnuala Leddy)

The Child Maltreatment Series

The Lancet has collaborated closely with the Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health in formulating the Child Maltreatment Series. It is aimed at clinicians and other professionals responsible for caring for children, with the intention of providing them with a rigorous and up to date summary of scientific and conceptual work on this complex and demanding topic.

A summary of this series can be found on the following website:

<http://www.thelancet.com/series/childmaltreatment>

A podcast is also available at this web address of highlights from the recent press conference to launch the series.

Four comprehensive papers detail different perspectives on the subject of child maltreatment:

Gilbert R., Spatz Widom C., Browne K., Fergusson D., Webb E., Janson S. Burden and consequences of child maltreatment in high income countries. *The Lancet*, Early Online Publication, 3 December 2008.

The opening paper in the series outlines the prevalence and consequences of child maltreatment in high income countries. Every year it is estimated that 4-16% of children are physically abused and one in ten is neglected or psychologically abused. During childhood between 5% and 10% of girls and up to 5% of boys are exposed to penetrative sexual abuse and up to three times this number are exposed to any type of sexual abuse. However official rates for substantiated child maltreatment indicate less than a tenth of this burden. Exposure to multiple types and repeated episodes of maltreatment is associated with increased risks of severe maltreatment and psychological consequences. Child maltreatment substantially contributes to child mortality and morbidity and has long-lasting effects on mental health, drug and alcohol misuse (especially in girls), risky sexual behaviour, obesity and criminal behaviour, which persist into adult life. Neglect is at least as damaging as physical or sexual abuse in the long-term but has received the least scientific and public attention. The authors emphasise that the high burden and serious and long-term consequences of child maltreatment warrant increased investment in preventive and therapeutic strategies from early childhood.

Gilbert R., Kemp A., Thoburn J., Sidebotham P., Radford L., Glaser D., MacMillan HL. Recognising and responding to child maltreatment. *The Lancet*, Early Online Publication, 3 December 2008

This paper discusses the issues of recognising and responding to child maltreatment concerns. It recognises that professionals in child health, primary care, mental health, schools, social services and law-enforcement services all contribute to the recognition

of and response to child maltreatment. In all sectors, children suspected of being maltreated are under-reported to child protection agencies. Lack of awareness of the signs of child maltreatment and processes for reporting to child protection agencies, and a perception that reporting might do more harm than good, are among the reasons for not reporting. Strategies to improve recognition, mainly used in paediatric practice include; training, use of questionnaires for asking children and parents about maltreatment, and evidence based guidelines for who should be assessed by child protection specialists. Internationally, studies suggest that policies emphasising substantiation of maltreatment without concomitant attention to welfare needs lead to less service provision for maltreated children than do those in systems for which maltreatment is part of a broad child and family welfare response.

MacMillan HL., Wathen CN., Barlow J., Fergusson DM., Leventhal J., Taussig HN. Interventions to prevent child maltreatment and associated impairment. *The Lancet*, Early Online Publication, 3 December 2008

This review starts from the premise that although a broad range of programmes for prevention of child maltreatment exist, the effectiveness of most of these is unknown. Two specific home-visiting programmes – the Nurse-Family Partnership and Early Start – have been shown to prevent maltreatment and associated outcomes such as injuries. One population-level parenting programme has shown benefits but requires further assessment and replication. Additional in-hospital and clinic strategies show promise in preventing physical abuse and neglect. The authors report that it is unknown if school based educational programmes designed to prevent child sexual abuse actually have this effect and that there are currently no known approaches to prevent emotional abuse or exposure to intimate partner violence. A specific parent-training programme has shown benefits in preventing recurrence of physical abuse; no intervention has been shown to prevent recurrence of neglect. Cognitive behaviour therapy for sexually abused children with symptoms of post-traumatic stress has been shown to be the most effective in reducing mental health conditions. For maltreated children the authors found that foster care placement can lead to benefits compared with young people who remain at home or those who unify from foster care; enhanced foster care shows benefits for children.

Reading R., Bissell S., Goldhagen J., Harwin J., Masson J., Moynihan S., Parton N., Santos Pais M., Thoburn J., Webb E. Promotion of children's rights and prevention of child maltreatment. *The Lancet*, Early Online Publication, 3 December 2008

The fourth paper in this series explores the concept of children's rights as laid out in the UN convention on the rights of the child (UNCRC). These provide a framework for understanding child maltreatment as part of a range of violence, harm and exploitation of children at the individual, institutional and societal levels. The author's stress that the greatest strength of an approach based on the UNCRC is that it provides a legal instrument for implementing policy, accountability and social justice all of which enhance public health responses in the area of child maltreatment.

Peer Reviewed Journal Articles

Day F., Mok J. (2008) Children affected by domestic abuse while abroad on holiday. *Archives of Disease in Childhood* 93 (5) 362-363

This paper provides an interesting perspective on the plight of children affected by domestic abuse while abroad on holiday. It sets the scene by outlining why children abroad are more vulnerable as a result of personal and parental factors, such as unfamiliar surroundings, parental stress and substance abuse. It also highlights the fact that institutions that exist within the country of origin to support vulnerable children such as local child protection systems may not be accessible in countries the children are visiting. Patterns and prevalence of travel are explored in addition to an overview of the problem and prevalence of domestic violence. The authors report that in the UK domestic violence claims the lives of two women each week and is the largest cause of morbidity worldwide in women aged 19-44. It accounts for 16% of all violent crime. The number of cases of domestic abuse occurring in families abroad is not known and is currently impossible to calculate given the uncertainties surrounding the data collated.

The authors conclude that there is an absence of research and publications in the child protection literature on this subject. They emphasise that reporting mechanisms need to be developed and that working with the travel industry and umbrella travel organisations such as ABTA, the British Travel Organisation to ensure that some basic child protection policies and training for travel industry staff exist is a priority.

Kemp A.M., Dunstan F., Harrison S, Morris S, Mann M, Rolfe K, Datta S, Thomas DP, Sibert JR, Maguire S. (2008) Patterns of skeletal fractures in child abuse: systematic review. *BMJ* 337:1518

This paper is a systematic review of patterns of skeletal fractures in child abuse. Comparative studies of fracture at different bony sites, sustained in physical abuse and from other causes in children <18 years old were included.

Objectives To systematically review published studies to identify the characteristics that distinguish fractures in children resulting from abuse and those not resulting from abuse, and to calculate a probability of abuse for individual fracture types.

Results In total, 32 studies were included. Fractures resulting from abuse were recorded throughout the skeletal system, most commonly in infants (<1 year) and toddlers (between 1 and 3 years old). Multiple fractures were more common in cases of abuse. Once major trauma was excluded, rib fractures had the highest probability for abuse (0.71, 95% confidence interval 0.42 to 0.91). The probability of abuse given a humeral fracture lay between 0.48 (0.06 to 0.94) and 0.54 (0.20 to 0.88), depending on the definition of abuse used. Analysis of fracture type showed that supracondylar humeral fractures were less likely to be inflicted. For femoral fractures, the probability

was between 0.28 (0.15 to 0.44) and 0.43 (0.32 to 0.54), depending on the definition of abuse used, and the developmental stage of the child was an important discriminator. The probability for skull fractures was 0.30 (0.19 to 0.46); the most common fractures in abuse and non-abuse were linear fractures. Insufficient comparative studies were available to allow calculation of a probability of abuse for other fracture types.

Conclusion When infants and toddlers present with a fracture in the absence of a confirmed cause, physical abuse should be considered as a potential cause. No fracture, on its own, can distinguish an abusive from a non-abusive cause. During the assessment of individual fractures, the site, fracture type, and developmental stage of the child can help to determine the likelihood of abuse. The number of high quality comparative research studies in this field is limited, and further prospective epidemiology is indicated.

McKinney, C., Donnelly, R., Renk, K. (2008) Perceived Parenting, Positive and Negative Perceptions of Parents, and Late Adolescent Emotional Adjustment. *Child and Adolescent Mental Health* 13(2): 66-73.

Many studies have established that warm, authoritative parenting is associated with positive adjustment in children and adolescents. Fewer studies, however, have examined the potential mechanisms driving this relationship. The current study explores the effects of late adolescents' positive and negative perceptions of their parents in the association between perceived parenting and late adolescent emotional adjustment (depression, anxiety, and self-esteem). The sample consisted of 151 males and 324 females ranging in age from 18- to 22- years. Data were analysed with structural equation modelling. Results of the study suggested that perceived parenting, positive and negative perceptions of parents, and emotional adjustments as reported by late adolescents all are correlated significantly. The effects of perceived parenting on late adolescents emotional adjustment, however, were not statistically significant when analysed simultaneously with late adolescents' positive and negative perceptions of parents. Also, the relationship between late adolescents' positive and negative perceptions of parents and late adolescent emotional adjustment became non-significant when examining father relationships. Overall, the importance of considering parenting in the context of parent and adolescents' sex as well as other variables is emphasised.

Paterson, J., Carter S., et al. (2008) Maternal intimate partner violence and behavioural problems among pacific children living in New Zealand. *Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry* 49(4): 395 – 404.

Aims: To examine (1) the association between maternal intimate partner violence (IPV) perpetration, and victimisation and behavioural problems among two- and four-year-old Pacific children, and (2) the socio-demographic and parenting factors that may impact on this association.

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Design: Mothers of the Pacific Islands Families (PIF) cohort of Pacific infants born in New Zealand during 2000 were interviewed when the children were two and four years of age. This data set was based on mothers who were cohabiting in married or de-facto partnerships (N=920) and who completed measures of IPV at the two-year assessment point and the Child Behaviour Checklist (CBCL) at the two- or four-year assessment points. Of these, 709 mothers completed the CBCL at both assessment points.

Results: There were no significant associates between IPV and the prevalence rates of clinically relevant cases of behavioural problems in the two-year-old child cohort. However, the prevalence rates of clinically relevant internalising, externalising and total problem cases were significantly higher among four-year-old children of mothers who reported severe perpetration of IPV. The odds of being in clinical range of internalising were 2.16 times higher for children of mothers who were perpetrators of severe physical violence than for those children of mothers who were not, and for externalising and total problems they were 2.38 and 2.36 times higher respectively. Socio-demographic and parenting factors did not significantly influence the association between IPV and child behavioural problems.

Conclusion: These findings contribute to the complex picture of the consequences that exposure to parental violence may have on the behaviour of young children. The effectiveness of preventative strategies may be maximised if implemented in these early years before such problems become entrenched and lead on to future behavioural problems and impaired family relationships.

Sege R D., Flaherty E.G. (2008) Forty Years Later: inconsistencies in reporting of child abuse. *Archives of Disease in Childhood* 93(10):822-824.

This leading article describes recent health services research that reveals the current barriers to reporting suspected child maltreatment to child protection agencies in the United States. The authors are based at the Boston Medical Centre and Boston University School of Medicine and the review focuses on child physical abuse but recognises that the barriers described and the conclusions presented are likely to be broadly applicable to all types of maltreatment.

The authors conclude that forty years after implementing a mandatory child-reporting system in the United States there continue to be shortfalls in protecting many vulnerable children. Reasons for this include; diagnoses being missed, suspicions of abuse intentionally not being reported, no intervention taking place, or inadequate or inappropriate interventions. They comment that mandatory reporting sets a clear expectation for healthcare providers and offers strong support for protecting abused children. It is argued that even with the shortfalls reported the experience in the USA supports the importance of a reporting mandate in the UK as well, at the very least as a counterweight to the considerable systematic bias against proper child protection.

It is also noted in this review that clinicians routinely fail to identify possible abuse, and, equally routinely, determine that reporting their suspicions to state authorities



would not lead to benefit for the child or family. Four steps are promoted that would lead to an improved outcome for children:

1. Broad education of clinicians likely to encounter children
2. Support for front-line clinicians by providing access to child abuse physicians who would help to guide the children's work-ups and assess the likelihood of abuse.
3. Process-oriented education so that clinicians understand the investigative process undertaken by child protection agencies and the services they provide.
4. Improved child protection services assessments and interventions leading to better outcomes for children and families.

Smith, P.K., Mahdavi, J., et al. (2008) Cyberbullying: its nature and impact in secondary school pupils. *Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry* 49(4): 376 – 385.


Background: Cyberbullying describes bullying using mobile phones and the internet. Most previous studies have focused on the prevalence of text message and email bullying.

Methods: Two surveys with pupils aged 11-16 years: (1) 92 pupils from 14 schools, supplemented by focus groups; (2) 533 pupils from 5 schools, to assess the generalisability of findings from the first study, and investigate relationships of cyberbullying to general Internet use. Both studies differentiated cyberbullying inside and outside of school, and 7 media of cyberbullying.


Results: Both studies found cyberbullying less frequent than traditional bullying, but appreciable, and reported more outside of school than inside. Phone call and text message bullying were most prevalent, with instant messaging bullying in the second study; there impact was perceived as comparable to traditional bullying. Mobile phone/video clip bullying, while rarer, was perceived to have ore negative impact. Age and gender differences varied between the two studies. Study 1 found that most cyberbullying was done by one or a few students, usually from the same year group. It often just lasted about a week, but sometimes much longer. The second study found that being a cybervictim, but not a cyberbully, correlated with Internet use; many cybervictims were traditional 'bully-victims'. Pupils recommended blocking/avoiding messages, and telling someone as the best coping strategies; but many cybervictims had told nobody about it.

Conclusions: Cyberbullying is an important new kind of bullying, with some different characteristics from traditional bullying. Much happens outside school. Implications for research and practical action are discussed. Keywords: Bullying, victim, cyber, mobile phone, Internet, adolescence, aggression, computers.


Watkeys J.M., Price L.D., Upton P.M., Maddocks A. (2008) The timing of medical examination following an allegation of sexual abuse: is this an emergency? *Archives of Disease in Childhood* 93(10):851-856.




This is an important original article that will have implications for clinical practice. It presents the findings in a case series of all the children in a defined population who were referred for assessment when sexual abuse may have been perpetrated. It explores the difference in findings depending on the time elapsed since the alleged abusive incident. It provides information in a difficult area of paediatrics that could help in joint planning of services with investigative agencies.




Aim: To ascertain the frequency of significant anogenital findings at medical examination following an allegation of sexual abuse, in relation to the timing of the examination.




Method: A case series of 331 children who were referred by the police or social services for examination, following an allegation of child sexual abuse or suspicion of this over a 3½ year period in a defined geographical area.




Results: Two hundred and fifty-seven children alleged penetrative abuse, of whom 114 were seen within seven days of the abuse. Twenty three children alleged penetrative anal abuse within the previous 7 days; 56.5% of these had abnormal findings compared with 18% of those seen after 7 days. Ninety-two girls alleged penetrative vaginal abuse within the previous 7 days and of these 50% had abnormal findings compared with 30.7% of the 101 girls seen more than seven days after the alleged abuse. In addition a high proportion of the girls seen within 7 days had other signs associated with probable assault.




Conclusion: Pubertal and post-pubertal girls are more likely to have significant genital signs if they are examined within 7 days of the last episode of sexual abuse. This study indicates that children should be examined as soon as possible following a referral. Regardless of the lack of accurate history it will always be important to examine the child as soon as possible after disclosure.



Weber MA., Klein NJ., Hartley JC., Lock PE., Malone M., Sebire NJ. (2008)
Infection and sudden unexpected death in infancy: a systematic retrospective case review. *The Lancet* 371(9627) 1848-1853




The interpretation of microbiological findings from samples taken at autopsy in cases of sudden unexpected death in infancy (SUDI) may be difficult and disputed. This paper describes a retrospective systemic review of the autopsy findings, including bacteriology in 507 cases of SUDI from the Great Ormond Street Hospital for children, London.



These researchers conclude that although many organisms grown from post-mortem samples after SUDI may be related to the cause of death, the rates of detection of certain organisms, particularly *Staphylococcus aureus* and *Escherichia coli*, from samples from cases of unexplained SUDI suggest that some of these cases may be caused by bacterial infection.




Weber MA., Ashworth MT., Risdon RA., Hartley., Malone M., Seibre NJ. (2008)
The role of post-mortem investigations in determining the cause of sudden unexpected death in infancy. *Archives of Disease in Childhood* 93 (12) 1048 – 1053




This constitutes the largest single institution autopsy study of sudden unexpected deaths in infancy (SUDI) defined as the sudden and unexpected death of an infant less than 1 year.




Aim: To provide data on the utility of post mortem investigations from a large paediatric autopsy series to inform future policy.



Methods: Retrospective analysis of >1500 consecutive post-mortem examinations carried out by specialist paediatric pathologists at a single centre during a ten year period according to a common autopsy protocol.



Results: Of 1516 paediatric post-mortem findings 546 presented as SUDI. In 202 infants (37%) death was explained by the autopsy findings. The other 344 cases (63%) remained unexplained. Of the explained deaths, over half were infective, most commonly due to pneumonia. The component of the post-mortem examination that primarily determined the final cause of death was histological investigation.




Conclusion: Ten years on from the Confidential Enquiry into Stillbirths and Deaths in Infancy (CESDI) SUDI studies the ascertainment of a cause of death at autopsy has improved. However with almost two thirds of SUDI remaining unexplained, alternative and/or additional diagnostic techniques are required to improve detection rates of identifiable causes of death at autopsy.




Books



Kowalski, R.M., Limber, S.P., Agatston, P.W. (2008) *Cyber Bullying*. Wiley-Blackwell, Malden M.A.



This book draws attention to potential hazards that go along with use of online communication among young people. An account is given by the father of a boy who committed suicide because of being subjected to bullying of this nature.



Text messaging, chat room, and email interactions all provide opportunities for anonymous communications. The authors define the problem, review the research' and give suggestions on how parents, educators and lawmakers can contribute to addressing cyber bullying.

Youth Justice

(compiled by John Devaney)

Peer Reviewed Journal Articles

Convery, U., Haydon, D. and Scratton, P. (2008) Children, Rights and Justice in Northern Ireland: Community and Custody. *Youth Justice* 8(3): 245-263

This article is based on primary research conducted with children in community and custodial settings in Northern Ireland. It provides an analysis of the social, economic and political context in which children's rights are routinely breached. Presenting consultations with children in the community, the article considers the impact of negative assumptions, disrespect and exclusion from participation. It demonstrates how the rights of socially excluded and marginalized children are consistently undermined. Further, it draws on the experiences of children and the views of staff in considering the rights of children in custody. In conclusion, the article explores the contributions of critical analysis and rights-based discourses within an increasingly punitive climate.

Darker, I., Ward, H. and Caulfield, L. (2008) An Analysis of Offending by Young People Looked After by Local Authorities. *Youth Justice* 8(2): 134-148

The association between local authority care and offending behaviour was examined in 250 looked after young people of the age of criminal responsibility. Whilst a greater number of the young people had committed offences than in the general population, the vast majority were law abiding. For those who did offend, the care episode itself was unlikely to have been the sole cause of their delinquency. The findings suggest that the services offered once the young people entered local authority care did not succeed in combating established offending behaviour. Perhaps initiatives targeted in the community prior to entry to care may be more effective.

Hammarberg, T. (2008) A Juvenile Justice Approach Built on Human Rights Principles. *Youth Justice* 8(3): 193-196.

This article by the Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights explains the importance of ensuring that juvenile justice approaches incorporate compliance with children's rights standards in the United Nations and the Council of Europe. It explains the importance of a high age of criminal responsibility, the incorporation into juvenile justice systems of education, reintegration and rehabilitation, and the need to ensure that detention is a last resort. The importance of ensuring that children receive a prompt and a fair trial is also highlighted. The article concludes with reference to measures being adopted by the Council of Europe to secure the rights of children in conflict with the law.

Haydon, D. and Scratton, P. (2008) Conflict, Regulation and Marginalisation in the North of Ireland: The Experiences of Children and Young People. *Current Issues in Criminal Justice* 20(1): 59-78.

Based on primary research and consultations conducted over the last four years in the north of Ireland, this article considers the lives and experiences of children and young

people in communities where the legacy of conflict and economic deprivation are most marked. It explores the reality of differential policing in communities where paramilitaries filled the policing deficit during the Conflict through informal 'justice' and punishment beatings. Finally, it considers the potential for change in a climate increasingly hostile towards children and young people, and the realisation of their rights.

McAlister, S. (2008) Predictable Pathways? Negotiating Risk in the Context of Marginalisation and Social Exclusion. *Current Issues in Criminal Justice* 20(1): 14-28.

This article is based on ethnographic research with young people living in an area of multiple deprivation in the North-east of England. The young people in this study experience many risk factors associated with social exclusion and future offending. Through in-depth examination of crime within the context of their lives, it will be argued that recent theorisations of youth crime and criminal careers do not fully capture the nature of their offending, the contextual circumstances surrounding it and the differential impact of similar risk factors on their lives. The article concludes by suggesting that not only do such theories detract from the situations of poverty and social exclusion in which young people live but that youth policies informed by them potentially add to their experiences of exclusion and marginalisation.

Moore, L. and Convery, U. (2008) Barred from Change: The Incarceration of Children and Young People in Northern Ireland. *Current Issues in Criminal Justice* 20(1): 79-94.

Based on primary research conducted for the Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission this article explores the care of children in the Juvenile Justice Centre for Northern Ireland [JJC or the Centre] in the context of their rights. The research followed from a previous Commission investigation which identified serious breaches of rights. Still in Our Care was based primarily on qualitative research with children, staff and managers in the JJC where children aged 10 to 17 were remanded or sentenced to custody. This article concludes that despite legislative change and various reviews of the youth justice system, the state in Northern Ireland persists in consigning some of the most vulnerable and challenging children to incarceration within a 'total institution' from the industrial and reformatory schools of the 19th century, through to the juvenile justice centre of the 21st century. Finally, the article considers the need for a transformation in the state's response to children in conflict with the law and the potential of the Bill of Rights process for achieving this.

Books

Whyte, B. (2008) *Youth Justice in Practice*. The Policy Press, Bristol.

This book examines youth justice in a UK and international context, while drawing on the author's experience in Scotland to highlight the challenge facing all jurisdictions in balancing welfare and justice. It explores the impact of political ideas and influences on both the structural and practical challenges of delivering youth justice and practice initiatives including early intervention, restorative justice, structured risk assessments, intensive supervision, maintaining change over time, and practice evaluation. The theoretical framework draws on social learning theory and the tradition of socio-education/social pedagogy as reflected in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.



Forthcoming Events

Conferences

'What Do Children Need?' Working with Families Involved with the Family Court'

Date: 27 February 2009

Organisers: CAFCASS

Venue: Birmingham

This multi-agency conference aims to disseminate practice related research.

Further Details: <http://www.cafcass.gov.uk/events.aspx>

Safeguarding Children and Cultural Diversity

Date: 12 March 2009

Organisers: British Association for the Study and Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect and the Volunteer Development Agency

Venue: Armagh

This conference seeks to explore the experiences of minority ethnic families and the staff who provide safeguarding services about issues impacting on them, and to offer practical suggestions for improvements in both policy and practice.

Further Details:

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Youth Suicide and Self-harm: Developing policy and practice from experience and research

Date: 21 April 2009

Organisers: Child Care in Practice Journal

Venue: Northern Ireland

Following on from the success of the 2007 conference 'Going from Strength to Strength: Promoting Children's Mental Health and Resilience', Child Care in Practice will host a one-day conference in 2009 exploring the current policy and practice on suicide and self-harm in children and young people in Northern Ireland and beyond.

Further Details:

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Tel: 028 9097 5912

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Web: <http://www.childcareinpractice.org/events.htm>

Children and Young People in a Changing World

Date: 23&24 April 2009

Organisers: School of Nursing and Midwifery, Queen's University Belfast

Venue: Belfast

This international conference aims to provide academics, researchers, practitioners, parents, children and young people, policy makers and managers with an opportunity to share their knowledge, expertise and experiences of issues which impact on the modernisation agenda for health and social care.

Further Details: <http://www.qub.ac.uk/changingworld/>

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Children and the Law: International approaches to children and their vulnerabilities

Date: 7-10 September 2009

Organisers: Monash University

Venue: Prato, Italy

This international conference aims to examine the vulnerabilities of children and young people and how the systems responding to those at risk of harm must be reshaped to better protect their rights and best interests.

The conference will give particular attention to the following themes:

- The protection of children under the law
- Family law and its impact on children.
- Children as citizens: the vulnerability of indigenous children, the global movement of children, child trafficking, the impact of war and trauma on children
- Youth justice
- Health and mental health impacts on children and their intersection with legal processes.

Further Details: <http://www.med.monash.edu.au/socialwork/conference09/>