



RESEARCH DIGEST

2003 Issue 1

Prepared by

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Research studies and articles based on research

Author	Aris R, Harrison C and Humphreys C
Title	Safety and child contact: An analysis of the role of child contact centres in the context of domestic violence and child welfare concerns
Date	December 2002
Publisher	LCD
Subject (key words)	Contact, Domestic violence
Summary research study	<p>An Executive Summary is available on the LCD website. Hard copies can be obtained from the LCD 020 7210 8520.</p> <p>The study found that there was disagreement and confusion about the terms 'supervised' and 'supported' contact which could result in inappropriate referrals. Levels of screening varied, there was no consistency in giving feedback to professionals or courts and there were different expectations about levels of vigilance. There were a wide range of services provided under the heading 'supervised' contact.</p> <p>Some mothers felt that the use of contact centres perpetuated harassment and control. Fathers felt that the use of the centres was itself an unnecessary form of control. Some mothers gained a sense of security from the centres and others did not. There are few 'high-vigilance' centres outside London. Most parents felt that their children benefited from contact but a significant minority of mothers felt contact negatively affected their children.</p> <p>Most children valued their contact with their fathers but for a minority contact was neither a positive nor a safe experience. Mothers and fathers differed in their views about the appropriateness of moving contact out of a centre.</p> <p>The researchers concluded that in a significant minority of cases the safety and well-being of children and their mothers was compromised.</p>

Author	Bauserman R
Title	Child Adjustment in Joint Custody Versus Sole Custody Arrangements: A Meta-Analytic Review
Journal	Journal of Family Psychology
Date	2002
Volume and issue no	16/1
Subject (key words)	Family problems (Transitions), Residence (Shared parenting)
Summary of article or research study	<p>The article records the findings of a meta-analysis of 33 US studies in which outcomes for children in joint physical or legal custody (these are different in the US) arrangements were compared with children in sole custody and where possible children in intact families. The review found that children in joint physical and legal custody were better adjusted than children in sole custody settings and no different from those in intact families though a causal relationship between joint custody and better adjustment cannot be inferred. Measures of adjustment were general</p>

	adjustment, family relationships, self-esteem, emotional and behavioural adjustment and divorce-specific adjustment. Joint custody parents reported less current and past conflict but this did not statistically explain the better adjustment of joint custody children.
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Author	Bernard C
Title	Giving voice to experiences: parental maltreatment of black children in the context of societal racism
Journal	Child and Family Social work
Date	Nov 2002
Volume and issue no	7.4
Publisher	Blackwell
Subject (key words)	Child protection (Child abuse), Diversity (Ethnic minority)
Summary of article or research study	While many factors mediate the effects of abuse on children's development, being able to 'tell your story' is critical in the healing process for promoting psychological well-being. The article explores how black children who have been abused by their parents deal with the additional problem of societal racism, which reinforces their abusive experiences, and can obstruct their routes to psychological resilience.

Author	Bruch C S
Title	Parental alienation syndrome and alienated children – getting wrong in child custody cases
Journal	Child and Family Law Quarterly
Date	2002
Volume and issue no	14/4
Subject (key words)	Contact (Parental alienation syndrome)
Summary of article or research study	The author criticises the scientific basis for the theory of PAS and examines its application in court proceedings primarily in the US. She examines references to PAS in two cases in the UK and in the Sturge and Glasser 'Contact and Domestic Violence – The Experts' Court Report'. She ends by reviewing current therapeutic approaches to children who resist contact and concludes that no interventions have been proven to be effective and that in some cases they may be positively harmful. Resistance to contact needs to be understood more broadly than by the application of one theory.

Author	Dale P, Green R and Fellows R
Title	Serious and fatal injuries to infants with discrepant parental explanations: some assessment and case management issues.
Journal	Child Abuse Review
Date	Sept-Oct 2002
Volume and issue no	11.5
Subject (key words)	Child protection (Child abuse), Parents
Summary of article or research study	NSPCC study, based on the case records of 38 children, which identifies inconsistent practice in the initial agency

	<p>responses to such injuries, and in the later risk assessment, particularly where there were few other grounds for concern. A more systematic approach is advocated incorporating knowledge from the substantial research available on fatal child abuse, rather than a simpler Assessment Framework approach, or, worst of all, a 'no blame' compromise negotiated by lawyers at court to allow children to return home. 90% of the surviving children returned home, of whom half were reinjured. The study is equally concerned to identify 'false-positives', where children could have returned home, but did not.</p>
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Author	Flynn R
Title	Research review: kinship foster care
Journal	Child and Family Social Work
Date	Nov 2002
Volume and issue no	7.4
Publisher	Blackwell
Subject (key words)	Kinship foster care, research
Summary of article or research study	Another summary of research into kinship foster care, concentrating on English studies over the last 5 years. Concludes that appropriate models are still required for promoting kinship care, and developing effective supportive roles for professionals

Author	Hall E
Title	'Multi-Storyed Lives' – an exploration of the life story knowledge held by foster carers in relation to seven young people
	MA Dissertation in Child Protection Studies University of Northumbria
Date	2000
Publisher	Unpublished
Subject (key words)	Child psychology (Children's narratives), Fostering
Summary of article or research study	Study based on interviews with 6 foster carers about 7 children in long-term foster placements on Care Orders. The theoretical literature on self-esteem, identity and resilience emphasised the importance for young people of understanding their history. Carers were asked to tell the story of the children in their care. This method showed that carers could help children develop positive stories about their current situations but that they lacked the detailed knowledge of the court proceedings and the child's family history to enable them to develop stories about the past.

Author	Harris R and Lindsey C
Title	How Professionals Think About Contact Between Children and Their Birth Parents
Journal	Clinical Child Psychology and Psychiatry
Date	2002
Volume and issue no	7 (2)
Subject (key words)	Case practice CAFCASS (Assesment), Contact
Summary of article or research study	Qualitative research study based on interviews with 3 Guardians, 3 child experts and 3 judges. The objective was to understand how professionals' beliefs about contact between birth parents and children placed permanently with alternative carers affected their assessments. Beliefs on contact and identity, the weight to be given to children's wishes and feelings and the significance of attachment were explored. Professionals used the same terms in different ways. Their beliefs were formed by their social, personal and professional experiences. Beliefs can mitigate against evidence based practice. Participants described contradictions within their own beliefs about indications for contact. The authors recommend that professionals reflect on the personal and professional influences that organise their assessments and that where terms such as 'attachment' and 'trauma' are used they are defined.

Author	Hayes H
Title	Family Mediation in the UK – a Survey of Practice
Journal	Family Law
Date	October 2002

Volume and issue no	32
Publisher	Jordan, Bristol
Subject (key words)	Dispute resolution (Mediation)
Summary of article or research study	On the basis of 283 questionnaires to members of the UK college (37% reply rate) the author identifies a trend towards mediators coming from the private sector and analyses the techniques used in the various stages of family mediation.

Author	Hunt J
Title	Family and Friends Carers: Scoping paper prepared for and submitted to the DOH
Date	November 2001
Publisher	DOH
Subject (key words)	Kinship placements, Fostering care, Contact
Summary of research review	This comprehensive Report examines UK and international research evidence on the outcomes for children placed with family members as against fostering in non-related families. The evidence on benefits and risks for children is complex and inconclusive, and depends on the particular children and the circumstances in which the placement is made. The report also addresses the implications for policy and practice.

Author	Hunt J,Drucker N and Gill B
Title	<i>Understanding Variation in the Hours Guardians Spend on Care Cases</i> Summary Need to insert HL
Date	2003
Publisher	Oxford Centre for Family Law and Policy Working Paper, Department of Social Policy and Practice, University of Oxford
Key words	Case practice CAFCASS, Family Court Advisor (Children's Guardian)
Summary	<p>Aim of study:To investigate the apparently wide variation in the average time panels of guardians took to complete cases. Funded by the DOH.</p> <p>Methodology: Stage 1.A comparison fo the average hours spent on care cases from 1996-99 using the annual reports of 42 (from 58) GALRO panels Stage 2. A quantitative analysis of all cases completed by 6 panels in 1999-2000 (569) Stage 3. In-depth analysis of 132 of the 569 cases examined at stage 2</p> <p>Findings: This report shows that there was a wide variation in time individual guardians take to complete cases and that this is associated with the duration of proceedings, the maximum expected length of the final hearing, the actual length of the final hearing, a change of social worker and an application at the final hearing other than from the local authority. Practice related factors also influenced time.</p> <p>Limitations: The evaluative data for stages 2 and 3 was provided by Guardians with no means of cross checking their</p>

	assessments.
Reviewed by	HB

Author	Lewis C, Papacosta A and Warin J
Title	Cohabitation, separation and fatherhood
Date	2002
Publisher	Joseph Rowntree Foundation York
Subject (key words)	Fathers, Divorce/separation, Families (Cohabitation)
Summary of article or research study	<p>Summary</p> <p>Research based on interviews with 50 individuals (one or two ex-partners from 36 relationships where there had been at least one child). The study explored the changing role of men as fathers following separation. The father's role in childcare dropped considerably following separation. Mothers were experienced as controlling paternal contact either by encouraging it or keeping the father at arms length. The same events were experienced very differently by each partner. Some fathers felt that they did not have the support networks to support ongoing parenting. Mothers were seen as having natural ownership of the child and many fathers felt powerless in relation to their responsibilities including contact.</p>

Author	O'Brien M and Shemilt I
Title	Working fathers: Earning and Caring
Date	2003
Publisher	Equal Opportunities Commission
Subject (key words)	Fathers, Child care
Summary of article or research study	<p>The summary and full report are available online.</p> <p>Research based on questionnaires to 7500 fathers and 2500 employers.</p> <p>Fathers do a third of all childcare but do not have the work flexibility they need. Long working hours prevent fathers from being as involved in childcare as they would like. Fathers are now responsible for a greater degree of childcare than in the past.</p>

Author	Painter C
Title	Repeat victimisation? An investigation of the experiences of survivors of domestic abuse within the civil court system
	MSc Criminology University of Leicester
Date	2002
Publisher	Unpublished
Subject (key words)	Domestic violence, family proceedings, contact, screening
Summary research study	<p>The qualitative study aimed to explore the functioning of the family court from the perspective of survivors of domestic abuse. 14 survivors of domestic abuse (13 mothers and 1 father) were interviewed following private law proceedings.</p> <p>Findings:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • screening procedures for domestic violence were used in very few cases • over half the participants did not feel that they were given

	<p>enough opportunity to disclose and describe abuse</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • over half did not feel fully believed and understood. This was particularly the case if there was no evidence to support the allegations • no participant believed that the family court system fully understood domestic abuse or the effect it had on the children • the majority did not feel that abuse had been appropriately taken into account in making decisions about their children • in all but one case at the time of the research interview contact was not taking place according to the court order.
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Author	Paul A & Clawson P
Title	Safeguarding disabled children in residential settings
Journal	Child Abuse Review
Date	Sept – Oct 2002
Volume and issue no	11.5
Publisher	Wiley
Subject (key words)	Disability (Children with disabilities) Looked after children (Residential care), Child protection (Child abuse)
Summary of article or research study	Explores what we know and don't know about the protection from abuse of children with disabilities who live away from home. The particular vulnerability of this group of children to abuse has been established internationally.

Author	Schofield G
Title	The significance of a secure base: a psychosocial model of long-term foster care
Journal	Child and Family Social Work
Date	Nov 2002
Volume and issue no	7.4
Publisher	Blackwell
Subject (key words)	Fostering (Long-term fostering), Child psychology (Attachment)
Summary of article or research study	Long-term foster care (LTFC) has a mixed public image; children can, in the media eye, 'languish' in it, but not in adoptive care. The paper, based on interviews with 40 adults who grew up in LTFC, seeks to identify a positive model of how it can be made to work for children. The key test was whether the LTFC family could provide the child with a family to rely on and call their own, including beyond childhood. Without this, the child's ability to hope for the future and cope with challenge was damaged.

Author	Smith C and Logan J
Title	Adoptive parenthood as a 'legal fiction' – its consequences for direct post-adoption contact

Journal	Child and Family Law Quarterly
Date	2002
Volume and issue no	14/3
Subject (key words)	Adoption (Contact in adoption), Contact
Summary of article or research study	This article discusses policy and case-law relating to 'openness' in adoption and particularly to direct post-adoption contact. It considers critically the proposition that courts should be more proactive in safeguarding contact through making contact orders alongside adoption orders. The authors discuss their empirical research (based on interviews with adoptive parents in 59 families where the children were having direct contact with members of their birth families). They conclude that the adoptive parents' construction of parenthood which included a sense of ownership and control served to facilitate continuing contact which they saw as in the child's interest.

Author	Stanley L
Title	Disagreement and conflict between Children's Guardians and Local Authorities: the issues and implications
	MA thesis University of Northumbria
Date	2002
Publisher	Unpublished
Subject (key words)	Guardian, care proceedings, social worker, conflict management
Summary of research study	Summary of findings 6 guardians were interviewed about situations in which they had disagreed with the local authority. The study examines the role of the guardian and the social worker and potential problems in their relationship. Negotiation skills and the ability to manage conflict are identified as important in managing the relationship. Differences of opinion were not viewed in terms of conflict and can positively lead to a more thorough investigation of options for a child, but poorly handled can have a negative impact.

Author	Stevens M & Higgins D
Title	The influence of risk and protective factors on burnout experienced by those who work with maltreated children.
Journal	Child Abuse Review
Date	Sept-Oct 2002
Volume and issue no	11.5
Subject (key words)	Child protection, Local authorities, Management (Staff care)
Summary of article or research study	An Australian study of 44 child protection workers. In examining the background of staff, negative childhood experiences was linked with having current trauma symptoms, but not with burnout (had resilience developed?). No relationship was found between the use of deliberate coping strategies by workers, and the presence of trauma symptoms or burnout.

Author	Taylor M
Title	Children's separate representation in Private Law Proceedings: What are the criteria?
	MA in Child Care Law and Practice Keele University
Date	2002
Publisher	Unpublished
Subject (key words)	Children's representation, private law, section 9.5
Summary of article or research study	<p>The study examines briefly the historical and legal background to the representation of children and the current context in terms of a case study. It considers the perspectives of rights and welfare.</p> <p>The study used an internal CAFCASS questionnaire indicating that one region had a very substantially higher use of s9.5s than all the others.</p> <p>6 officers were interviewed about 8 cases involving 16 children.</p> <p>S9.5 appointments were made primarily for child protection reasons rather than to give children a voice in private law proceedings.</p>

Author	Thomas-Peter K
Title	An exploration of advocacy services to children and young people
	MSc dissertation Child Welfare Bristol University
Date	July 2001
Publisher	Unpublished
Subject (key words)	Advocacy, care, NYAS, children's representation
Summary of research study	<p>This study explores young peoples' use of advocacy. Nine young people who had used NYAS were interviewed with their advocates. The study aimed to explore their experiences of using the service and the experience of the advocates.</p> <p>The findings reveal that the young people who use the service often have multiple and serious disadvantages and can be isolated in coping with problems which cause them serious concern and affect the quality of their lives. All came into contact with NYAS through adults. Advocates provided a level of emotional support as well as advocacy services.</p> <p>Concerns were expressed about the victimisation of some young people when advocacy services were used. Most young people found the service helpful.</p>

Author	Triselotis J
Title	Long-term foster care or adoption? The evidence examined
Journal	Child and Family Social Work
Date	2002
Volume and issue no	7
Subject (key words)	Adoption, Fostering (Long-term fostering)
Summary of article or research study	Based on an examination of the research literature, this paper contrasts 6 variables connected with the outcomes of adoption and long-term fostering. It provides some answers to

	<p>the question about the relative merits and limitations of these two forms of substitute parenting for children who cannot return to live with their birth families. Because of the type of child currently adopted or fostered, breakdown rates by themselves are increasingly an unreliable outcome measure. The main difference found between the two forms of substitute parenting appears to be the higher levels of emotional security, sense of belonging and general well-being expressed by those growing up as adopted compared with those fostered long term. However, long-term fostering still has a definite place for a range of child who require long-term plans.</p>
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Author	Wallerstein J, Lewis J and Blakeslee S
Title	The unexpected legacy of divorce: a 25 year landmark study
Date	2002
Publisher	Fusion Press London
Subject (key words)	Divorce/separation (Outcomes), Contact
Summary of book	<p>This completes the study begun by Judith Wallerstein 25 years ago with <i>Surviving the Breakup</i> and <i>Second Chances</i>. This study compares the experiences and outcomes for children in the original study (80% of the original 131 middle-class children now between 28 and 43 years old) whose parents had all separated with a comparison group from intact families from the same locality.</p> <p>As with the earlier works, this book is written with passion. The messages are strong and conveyed through the life stories of a handful of individuals. Criticisms have been levelled that the sample was not random, that there is little statistical analysis and that the researcher perspective may have skewed the interpretation of the findings. But it is one of the few studies which gives an adult perspective on the experience of parental separation. The study argues that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The negative effects of divorce on children are long-term and cumulative • Children who could draw on resources outside their birth parents mitigated some of the negative outcomes • Parenting programmes should be provide following separation and specialist services need to be provided for violent or high-conflict families • The voice of the child need to be central to court decisions • Court orders should be flexible and subject to review as the child matures • Issues of domestic violence should be addressed before decisions are made about the arrangements for the children

Author	Waugh F & Bonner M
Title	Domestic Violence and Child Protection: Issues in Safety Planning

Journal	Child Abuse Review
Date	2002
Volume and issue no	11/5
Subject (key words)	Domestic violence, Child protection
Summary of article or research study	This is an Australian study of attempts in New South Wales to identify levels of risk of child abuse, where domestic violence (DV) has occurred, and take appropriate protective measures. It explores definitional problems (what is DV precisely, who is the real client, do CP issues supersede other considerations?), attempts to introduce new policy requirements (mandatory reporting of DV in the presence of children, 'emotional abuse due to exposure to DV' as a new category for CP registration, penalties for non-reporting) and actual experience in New South Wales (the challenge was to identify risk accurately without undermining the position of mothers). The author says that whether children and women were helped depended on luck , and recommends inter-agency guidelines