



RESEARCH DIGEST

2005 Issue 3

Prepared by

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Research studies and articles based on research

Author	Advisory Council on the Misuse of Drugs
Title	Hidden Harm: Responding to the needs of children of problem drug users Executive Summary Full Report
Date	2003
Publisher	Home Office
Key words	Drug dependence, Support services
Summary	<p>(Only the Executive Summary has been read for this review.)</p> <p>Aim of study: To estimate the number of children affected by parental drug misuse, to examine the short- and long-term effects on children, to consider the involvement of statutory services, to identify the best policy and practice and to make policy and practice recommendations.</p> <p>Methodology: reviews of published research were carried out, surveys or existing data were commissioned and evidence was taken from expert witnesses.</p> <p>Findings:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It is estimated that there are between 250,000 and 350,000 children of problem drug users in the UK (2-3% of children under 16) – about one for every problem drug user • 37% of fathers and 64% of mothers were still living with their child. 5% of children were in care. • Parental problem drug use can and does cause serious harm to children at every age from conception to adulthood. • Reducing the harm to children from parental problem drug use should become a main objective of policy and practice. • Effective treatment of the parent can have major benefits for the child. • By working together, services can take many practical steps to protect and improve the health and well-being of affected children. • The number of affected children is only likely to decrease when the number of problem drug users decreases.”
Reviewed by	HB

Author	Barn R, Andrew L and Mantovani N
Title	Findings: The experiences of young care leavers from different ethnic groups Full report: Life after care: The experiences of young people from different ethnic groups
Date	2005
Volume/issue	0115
Publisher	JRF
Key words	Diversity (Ethnic minority), Looked after children (Care leavers)
Summary	Aim of study: To explore the impact of ethnicity on the social

exclusion experience on leaving care.

Methodology: A quantitative questionnaire was completed by 261 care leavers in 6 LAs shortly after the introduction of the Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000. Two-fifths of the sample were from minority ethnic backgrounds. The response rate varied from a quarter to a half.

36 young people (from the questionnaire sample) took part in semi-structured interviews. Four were white and the others were from ethnic minority backgrounds. Semi-structured interviews were carried out with 13 managers and practitioners in Leaving Care teams.

Findings:

- Most of the young people were aged between 16 and 20
- A quarter of the care leavers were parents and two-fifths of young women were mothers
- White young people left care earlier than other groups
- White and mixed parentage groups suffered more placement disruption than other groups and white young women were particularly prone to disruption
- Caribbean young people were generally placed with foster carers from a similar background. This may have protected them against placement disruption
- White, mixed parentage and Caribbean young people were more likely to have been excluded from school than other groups. However those from Caribbean backgrounds were more likely to undertake training or education after school. Lack of qualifications meant most care leavers were unable to find work although they wanted employment.
- Less than a tenth of the sample were living in unsuitable or temporary accommodation
- Half of the sample had engaged in criminal activity and two-fifths had been victims of crime. African and Asian groups reported under-involvement on both counts. Care leavers were disproportionately likely to be users of illegal drugs. See in this PRD [Drug use among vulnerable groups of young people: findings from the 2003 Crime and Justice Survey](#)
- Caribbean, African and Asian young people were more likely than white or mixed parentage groups to have given thought to and be confident in their identity. Social services departments had done little positive work to help young people express and explore their identity. Care leavers were more concerned that the professionals they encountered should be competent than that they should share the same ethnic background
- The care leavers reported lack of preparation and support although the professionals believed they provided an adequate service in these areas
- Those with poor in-care experiences suffer greatest disadvantage on leaving care
- White young people experienced the worst outcomes in relation to placement disruption, educational attainment, homelessness and risky behaviour. Caribbean and mixed parentage groups were the next most disadvantaged. Asian

	<p>and African young people were the least disadvantaged possibly because they had on average spent less time in care</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Many young people reported continued support from their foster carers. <p>Limitations: The sample only included those young people in touch with Leaving Care teams. Those who were not in touch may have had very different experiences. It would have been useful to know more about the experiences of the many care leavers who were parents and about the contact care leavers maintained with their birth families.</p>
Reviewed by	HB

Author	Barton A, & Welbourne P
Title	Context and its significance in identifying 'what works' in child protection
Journal	Child Abuse Review
Date	May - June 2005
Volume/issue	Vol.14 Issue 3
Subject (key words)	Child protection (Inquiries)
Summary	<p>Can lessons from one area of work be transposed to other areas without reference to existing practice bases? In other words, is the effectiveness of introducing recognised good practice - 'what works' - into an area dependent on the context of existing practice in that area?</p> <p>The authors' answers to these questions are respectively: no and yes. They suggest that addressing some of the factors that underlie the success or failure of existing policies would be more effective than simply trying to import 'what works' from elsewhere.</p> <p>This paper is a spin-off from a wider piece of research by the authors into variation in the quality of multi-agency working between authorities, which is currently seen as the central key to improved child protection practice. They identified a number of factors present in some areas which would present obstacles to the implementation of good practice: different geographical boundaries for agencies; the absence of a focused facilitating individual with credibility across agencies; rapid changes in personnel; and varying agency commitment to prioritising child protection issues.</p> <p>The authors recommend two questions be asked: -</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are the circumstances of our practice sufficiently similar to those of the research context to make it a good bet that what worked in the research will work for us? • Insofar as there are differences, how feasible and how desirable would it be to change the context of our practice to bring it into line with that described in the research? <p>They believe that 'what works' can deteriorate into quick fixes, attractive to managers and policy makers, but destined to fail in a hostile organisational environment. They wish to replace the question 'what works' with 'what works for whom in what circumstances'.</p>

	See also A Systems Approach to Investigating Child Abuse Deaths in this PRD as an alternative way of thinking about process in child care organisations.
Reviewed by	SH

Author	Bradshaw J
Title	The Well-being of Children in the UK - Summary
Date	2005
Publisher	Save the Children
Key words	Social policy (Social trends), Health
Summary	<p>(Only the Summary has been read)</p> <p>Aim of study: To offer an independent and critical review of the data on child well-being across 12 key areas.</p> <p>Methodology: The report reviews data on child well-being from a wide range of sources</p> <p>Findings: (Taken from the Key trends)</p> <p><i>Child well-being is improving...</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Child poverty rates using a relative measure have been steadily declining since 1999/2000. However, in 2002/3, 28 per cent of children in Britain were still living in poverty. • Educational attainment has been increasing year on year throughout the last decade and those from working class/manual labour households have shown the most marked improvements. • Numbers of 16–18-year-olds not in education, employment or training have begun to decline. • The infant death rate continues to drop across the UK. • Child pedestrian death and serious injuries are declining among all age groups and for both boys and girls. • In England, Wales and Scotland, there are signs that youth crime has reached a plateau and may be beginning to fall. <p><i>...But not for everyone</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The UK continues to have the highest proportion of children living in workless households in the European Union at 17 per cent – nearly twice the EU average. • Children’s use of public space particularly for younger children has decreased since the 1970s. • School exclusions have started to increase since the end of the 1990s in England and Wales, although 2002/03 figures show a slight improvement. • Despite the emphasis on formal measures of literacy and numeracy at key stages in education there is little indication of marked improvements in the numbers reaching or exceeding expected standards. • A range of health indicators for children and young people have taken a downward trend. This includes the percentage of low birth-weight babies and rates of childhood asthma, diabetes

	and HIV/AIDS. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Homelessness among families with children has risen in recent years The full report is available from NBN International order@nbninternational.com price £19.95 plus p&p
Reviewed by	HB

Author	Brandon, M, Dodsworth J and Rumball D
Title	Serious case reviews: Learning to use expertise
Journal	Child Abuse Review
Date	May - June 2005
Volume/issue	Vol.14 Issue 3
Subject (key words)	Child protection (Inquiries)
Summary	<p>Every 2 years all individual serious case reviews, formerly known as Part 8 or Chapter 8 reviews, are read nationally to see what lessons can be drawn. This research is the product of such work on 18 reviews conducted in Wales between 1996 and 1998. Some familiar findings continue to recur stubbornly: inadequacies of assessment, agencies' inability to communicate with each other, poor supervision arrangements, and lack of attention to the voice of the child.</p> <p>Significant new lessons, in the view of the authors, include the need to: -</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use specialist expertise in substance misuse, psychiatry and learning disability when such issues arise • Recognise verbal warning signs from parents, rather than dismiss them as ventilation of feelings • Involve probation officers in assessing high risk behaviour • Avoid professional insularity and not trusting other professional groups ('tribal behaviour') • Collect and analyse information rigorously on the actual life of a child in his or her family • Appoint lead professionals in complex cases, who have easy access to trusted experts • Appoint specialist child protection advisors in areas, such as health and education, where child protection issues are less familiar • 'Do the basic job properly', and develop mutual respect between professionals <p>Such an approach can be questioned regarding its scientific rigour, but it is based on experience at the sharp end of the child protection system, when children have died or been seriously harmed.</p> <p>See also A Systems Approach to Investigating Child Abuse Deaths in this PRD for an alternative approach to understanding failures in the child protection system.</p>
Reviewed by	SH

Author	Butler I, Robinson M and Scanlon G
Title	Findings: Children's involvement in family decision-making Full report: Children and decision-making
Date	2005
Publisher	JRF (Findings) NCB (Full report)
Key words	Children's views/ participation
Summary	<p>Aim of study: To discover how children aged between 8 and 11 participate in everyday decision making within their families.</p> <p>Methodology: Phase 1 involved discussions in small group (total number of children 69) about the range and 'territory' of family decision-making. In phase 2, interviews with a further 48 children explored the issues identified in phase 1. 10% were BME children.</p> <p>Findings: (Only the Findings have been read for this review)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The ways in which families made decisions involved a subtle, complex and dynamic set of processes in which children could exert a decisive influence. • Most families operated democratically but children accepted the ultimate authority of their parents, provided that they felt their parents acted 'fairly' • For children, 'fairness' had more to do with being treated equitably than simply having the decision made in their favour. Children could use claims to fairness as a moral lever in negotiations with parents • Children varied in the degree to which they regarded themselves as competent decision-makers: most of those in this age group regarded themselves as in the process of learning how to make 'better decisions' • For many children in this age group, the proving ground for learning how to make decisions coincided with their developing sense of identity and wish for greater independence • Family precedent, especially that set by older brothers and sisters, was an influential factor in 'good decision-making' and was a more common point of reference than the experience of peers and other families • Children regarded fathers as less actively involved in making domestic decisions, except where these affected the whole family or when decision-making concerned 'public' rather than simply 'domestic' matters. For most children it was mothers, rather than fathers, who were the most frequently consulted source of domestic authority. <p>The authors note that decision-making processes in families are 'complex, cumulative, subtle and dynamic' and have to be learned over time. They point out the difficulties for children in stepfamilies where divergent family 'cultures' have to be blended without 'the necessary inmate knowledge, common experience and trust'. There may be even greater difficulty for children separated from their parents through admission to care, particularly if they experience multiple moves, as they may never develop the tools and skills needed to negotiate family decision-making.</p>

	Limitations: Only four of the 48 children interviewed in phase 2 were not living in families with both birth parents. It would be interesting to know how children whose parents have separated experience family decision-making. It seems surprising that different degrees of 'democracy' were not observed in families. One would expect some families to be more 'participative' than others.
Reviewed by	HB

Author	Frost N, Robinson M & Anning A
Title	Social workers in multidisciplinary teams: issues and dilemmas for professional practice
Journal	Child and Family Social Work
Date	August 2005
Volume/issue	Vol. 10 Issue 3
Subject (key words)	Case practice, Partnership (Multidisciplinary practice)
Summary	<p>The authors seek to examine the reality behind the rhetoric of 'joined-up thinking', a key principle behind the Government's current reform of social welfare.</p> <p>They studied the views and behaviour of five multi-agency teams, four of whom had social work members. The teams included ones working with young offenders, young people with emotional and behavioural issues, children injured in accidents, children with development issues, and a special needs nursery team.</p> <p>A common theme was the challenge to all professionals in such teams of valuing the diversity of approaches and views, whilst not sacrificing those beliefs which underpin their own professional perspective and commitment. Other issues which had to be dealt with were: relative professional status and power; the weaker position of peripheral, often part-time team members; restrictions on information sharing caused by different agency protocols on confidentiality; the varying compatibility of agency agenda and procedures; and boundary issues regarding who does what.</p> <p>The authors argue that social work has traditionally joined up the gaps between other agencies and professions, so social workers should be well placed to be able to work in this way. On the other hand, the authors say that professions require communities of practice, where groups of one profession share experience and develop collective knowledge and skill. First you must learn your own discipline, before becoming an effective multi-disciplinary team member.</p>
Reviewed by	SH

Author	Greco V, Sloper P, Webb R and Beecham J
Title	An exploration of different models of multi-agency partnerships in key-worker services for disabled children: Effectiveness and costs Brief RB656
Date	2005
Publisher	DfES
Key words	Disability (Children with disabilities), Support services
Summary	<p>Aim of study: To evaluate the different models of key worker services for disabled children and their families.</p> <p>Methodology: Questionnaires were sent to 225 Children with Disability teams (70% responded). Seven services providing different models of key working were selected for detailed case studies. 87 interviews were conducted with key workers and managers. 250 parents and 30 children completed questionnaires on their experience of the services. 68 parents and 9 children were interviewed.</p> <p>Findings:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Key workers provided a valuable service for families and had a positive impact on their lives • However outcomes varied between and within areas • Better outcomes were associated with a better managed service, a clear definition of the role of the key worker including the frequency of contact, and regular training, supervision and peer support • Higher costs of more intensive contact were associated with greater parental satisfaction and quality of life. However, when controlled for other aspects of the service, costs were not directly related to better outcomes suggesting that the methods of working may be more important than the overall level of contact. <p>The full report can be obtained from DfES Publications, PO Box 5050, Sherwood Park, Annesley, Nottingham NG15 ODJ, price £4.95</p>
Reviewed by	HB

Author	Harold G and Murch M
Title	Inter-parental conflict and children's adaptation to separation and divorce: theory, research and implications for family law, practice and policy
Journal	Child and Family Law Quarterly
Date	2005
Volume/issue	Vol 17, No 2
Subject (key words)	Divorce/separation (Family Conflict), Child psychology, Family law
Summary	The first part of this article is required reading for anyone involved in family law. It details the current state of research on how children are affected by parental divorce and separation. It is evident that the impact of separation and divorce may be determined more by the level of conflict that exists between the parents before, during and after the breakdown of the parental relationship than the actual breakdown itself. The shape of families and households is less important than the nature of the

	<p>relationships within them and the extent to which they remain stable. The authors believe that recent research now indicates why some children adjust well to their parents' separation and divorce, while others do not.</p> <p>It appears that it is not simply the degree of conflict that is critical, but also the perceptions and evaluations which children assign to the source, content, duration, level of intensity and resolution properties of those conflicts. Conflict must be considered a natural and normal part of family life. Where the conflict is expressed without animosity, is unrelated to the child and successfully resolved, "children learn valuable lessons about dealing with conflict which they may apply in their own lives". Where the conflict is frequent, intense, child-related and poorly resolved, this is particularly upsetting for children of all ages. Children expect parents to behave towards them as they behave towards each other. Emotional withdrawal between parents - non-acrimonious conflict, or the 'silent treatment' - has been found to be as damaging for children as open conflict.</p> <p>The second part of the article looks at the implications for the family justice system. The authors state that practitioners divide between those who conclude from their experience that the less children are involved in child care disputes the better, favouring mediation and in-court conciliation, and those who believe that it is unhelpful and unrealistic to exclude children, whose voice should be heard, if not separately represented in court. The authors believe that the research quoted above wholly supports the latter viewpoint. They argue that because the research considers the child's perception of the conflict to be critical in influencing the degree to which it is damaging, the 'voice of the child' therefore needs to be heard in court. This view seems to assume that the child, often young, is aware of their reaction to parental conflict, and able to articulate it; and this constitutes a different third position on the issues before the court, which requires separate legal representation.</p> <p>The authors conclude by being highly critical of government moves towards the resolution of disputes outside courts, for diminishing in their opinion the voice of the child. They say further that the views of children in undefended divorces are also largely ignored.</p> <p>The authors do not consider seriously the alternative view that the state needs to make every effort to ensure that it does not, through the family justice system, perpetuate and deepen the parental conflict which is clearly so damaging to children.</p>
Reviewed by	SH

Author	Harper Z and Scott S
Title	Meeting the needs of sexually exploited young people in London Summary Report
Date	2005
Publisher	Barnardos
Key words	Child protection (Sexual exploitation), Support services, Safeguarding
Summary	(Only the Summary was read for this review)

	<p>Aim of study: To map the service needs of young people at risk of sexual exploitation in London.</p> <p>Methodology: 100 informants were interviewed including child protection co-ordinators and lead officers for sexual exploitation from 30 London boroughs, representatives from the police, health, education and specialist sexual exploitation services and young people.</p> <p>Findings:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sexual exploitation primarily occurred because young women were making choices constrained by a background of social, economic and emotional vulnerability • The range of sexually exploitative situations was wider than prostitution. It was therefore unhelpful to construe the problem solely in terms of commercial sexual exploitation • The total number of young people at risk in London is estimated to be 1,000, double the number identified by services. Some boroughs may be under-identifying by 80% • Early identification of young people at risk is needed • Continuity of care, specialist services and safe accommodation are all needed to empower young people and widen their choices • More resources are needed to provide adequate services. <p>Limitations: The prevalence of cases of sexual exploitation is very difficult to estimate given its hidden nature. The full report (147 pages) can be downloaded</p>
Reviewed by	HB

Author	Henricson C and Bainham A
Title	Human rights obligations and policy supporting children and families JRF Findings 0255 The child and family policy divide: Tensions, convergence and rights Full report (124 pages)
Date	2005
Publisher	JRF
Key words	Human rights (Human Rights Act), Human Rights (European Convention on Human Rights), Social policy, Families
Summary	<p>(Only the JRF Findings have been read for this review)</p> <p>Aim of study: To stimulate debate about the tensions in family and child policy in the context of international human rights commitments.</p> <p>Methodology: Documents from the last 20 years have been reviewed across the fields of family law, education, criminal justice, child protection and financial support.</p> <p>JFR Findings:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Human rights commitments require the government to formulate policies that take account of the rights and needs of children and parents, but these needs are often competing • Progress in balancing individual and collective needs of different family members across policy areas varies • Children’s welfare has dominated both the social exclusion agenda and issues of residence and contact. In both cases, this may have been to the detriment of the rights of parents

	<p>and other adults</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In education, the balance is in favour of parents' rights; children do not have rights to representation, consultation or choice • Tough youth justice measures promote the welfare of society above the rights and welfare of children and their parents. As such, they risk breaching the spirit, if not the letter, of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and the European Convention on Human Rights • The greatest balance has been achieved in managing commitments to universal family support alongside investment in child protection • The researchers conclude that: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The field would benefit from an overarching child and family policy that takes account of the separate and collective needs and rights of family members ○ Such a policy would need underpinning by a consideration of human rights to ensure that the entitlements of individuals are protected and balanced across the generations."
Reviewed by	HB

Author	Kielty S
Title	Mothers' Perspectives on Non-residential Parenthood
Journal	Journal of Social Welfare and Family Law
Date	2005
Volume/issue	27/1
Key words	Mothers (Non-resident parent), Fathers (Non-resident parent)
Summary	<p>Aim of study: To understand women's experience of non-resident motherhood</p> <p>Methodology: Narrative (undirected) interviews were held with 20 mothers living apart from their children. 17 were recruited through MATCH (Mothers Apart From Their Children). They were all white, aged between 25 and 53 and diverse social and economic backgrounds.</p> <p>Findings:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mothers fell into four categories, 'Voluntary' who were either 'Self-elected' or 'Escaping' and 'Involuntary' who were either 'Ejected' (by the ex-partner) or 'Rejected' (by their children) • All mothers believed in the importance of children maintaining a relationship with both parents and in the importance of stability and security. However, the extent to which they felt the children's needs were being met depended on the degree of choice they had over the arrangements. • 'Self-elected voluntary' (6) non-resident mothers focussed on children's need for environmental stability and the ability of fathers to meet the children's needs and foster positive relationships with both parents • 'Escaping voluntary' mothers (2) were ambivalent towards their non-resident motherhood and their children's adjustment • 'Ejected involuntary' mothers (7) had all lost residence as a

	<p>result of residence orders being made to the father. They believed that children needed their mother as the primary carer. Although six out of seven maintained contact, they were profoundly dissatisfied with the level of involvement with their children and regarded their position as the NRP as harmful to the children.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 'Rejected involuntary' mothers (5) had been rejected by their children. Most no longer had contact with their children. They blamed the father for the lack of contact, they felt marginalised as mothers and they stressed the importance for children's emotional stability of ongoing maternal care and the deficiency of fathers as promoters of a positive relationship with the non-resident mother <p>Limitations: The sample is small and not random so generalisation is problematic.</p>
Reviewed by	HB

Author	Larkin E, McSherry D and Iwaniec D
Title	Room for improvement? Views of key professionals involved in care proceedings
Journal	Child and Family Law Quarterly
Date	2005
Volume/issue	Vol 17, No 2
Subject (key words)	Case practice, Family law (Family proceedings)
Summary	<p>The equivalent in Northern Ireland of the Children Act 1989 is the Children (NI) Order 1995, which established similar principles and provisions to its predecessor. Has practice in Northern Irish courts also followed English and Welsh experience? The authors were commissioned by two of the four Health and Social Service Boards in the province to investigate concerns about the growing dominance of court work over other work with families, and the draining effect of legal advice costs on budgets.</p> <p>The researchers interviewed a total of 27 professionals in 8 groups about their views. The sample was broad if not deep, including only one judge and two social workers. Data from 25 care order applications was analysed, and discussed with the groups.</p> <p>Findings were very familiar; there have been more, longer proceedings with increasing complexity, and concern for the human rights of parties involved. In 2003/4 the average duration of care proceedings was 296 days, similar to the last published English figures. The authors describe their results as 'strikingly similar' to published research on practice in England.</p> <p>Problems and solutions recurred: -</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The need to retain experienced social workers • The shortage of experts • The value of consolidating care and freeing proceedings • The need for strict timetabling and early transfers up • The struggle to balance parental rights to family life with the paramountcy of children's welfare • The shortage of fostering and adoption placements

	Notable comments were that guardians were very effective in driving cases forward in children's interests, but that the voice of the child was often silent in the court process.
Reviewed by	SH

Author	Levene S & Bacon CJ
Title	Sudden unexpected death and covert homicide in infancy
Journal	Archive of Diseases in Childhood
Date	2004
Volume/issue	Vol. 89 pp 443-447
Key words	Child abuse, sudden unexpected death of an infant (SUDI)
Summary	<p>Covert homicide is by definition difficult to analyse given its seriousness and hidden nature. Nevertheless the authors of this summary of available research, from the Foundation for the Study of Infant Deaths, (the 'UK's leading cot death charity', according to their website), estimate that in addition to the approximately 30 homicides of infants resulting in convictions, there is a slightly higher group each year of infants who are the victims of covert homicide. The challenge for medical practitioners is to identify cases of covert homicide amidst the larger group of SUDI cases. The perils for doctors operating in this field have become more evident this year. Indeed two of the main pieces of research, with the largest samples of child deaths are by Drs. Meadows and Southall.</p> <p>The article raises the question of the status now of the Meadows and Southall research, which was based, it appears, on their own diagnoses of homicide and abuse. This article was accepted for publication in December 2003. If their research were to be regarded as discredited, this would exclude some of the most valuable information on this critical group, who can be seen to represent the greatest failing of our child protection system.</p> <p>Professor J L Emery in 1993 estimated that there were between 100 and 200 covert homicides in England and Wales each year. The number of SUDI cases as a whole has now dropped dramatically to below 200 each year, although more child deaths are being registered as "unascertained", because in some instances the deaths are viewed as suspicious. The whole area is bedevilled by problems of definition and diagnosis. Any attempt to distinguish differences between covert homicides and SUDI deaths in general is limited because the latter group will include some of the former group. The article touches on the issue of the probability of repeat SUDIs (ref. Sally Clark case), including the original American source for the much criticised "a third case....is a case of homicide" dictum. These authors conclude from the research that between 30 and 55% of recurrent infant deaths result from homicide. Their conclusion is that "a previous unexplained infant death in a family should always raise serious concern, but this must be balanced by awareness that second and subsequent deaths can also arise from natural causes."</p> <p>Similarly they say "whilst there should be serious concern when a baby dies immediately after being in hospital for investigation</p>

	<p>of sudden unexplained illness, many genuine SIDS [sudden infant death syndrome] victims have been the recipients of various forms of medical attention.”</p> <p>The authors make recommendations for good practice in responding to SUDIs, proposing comprehensive investigation of every SUDI, including a meticulous history and detailed post-mortem examination, involving a paediatrician and a paediatric pathologist. They point out that a wrong diagnosis in either direction can lead to disaster.</p> <p>This research is critical not only for its professional and legal implications, but also because it influences the starting presumptions made by professionals meeting new cases e.g. ‘many child homicides remain undetected’.</p>
Reviewed by	SH

Author	Mullender A, Pavlovic A & Staples V
Title	'I have no beginning and no end' The experience of being a foundling
Journal	Adoption & Fostering
Date	Summer 2005
Volume/issue	Vol. 29 No. 2
Subject (key words)	Adoption, Child psychology (Identity)
Summary	<p>Whilst now rare, a handful of children are left to their fate each year in England and Wales by a parent who is never traced. The authors interviewed 10 adults who had been foundlings about their thoughts and feelings. The old term foundling is used because it is the one used by themselves. Of particular interest was whether they had distinct differences in experience from other adoptees. The researchers attempted to recruit a spread of interviewees but the sample was of necessity small. Finding out that one was a foundling, could be linked to finding out about being adopted, or occur many years later. Questions and emotions recur: why was I abandoned, what must the birth mother have gone through to do something so desperate? Sensing that one's origins were dramatic, if not tragic, but now there is little or no evidence.</p> <p>Any connection with the past had special meaning. Two of the respondents reverted in adulthood to the names pinned to their clothing on abandonment, but not used in their childhood. Fundamental identity issues are common, with probably no known name, date of birth, ethnicity or history. The place and circumstances where they were found took on special significance, possibly indicating the intentions of the mother, such as whether she wanted the child to be found. Early anger - 'how could she do this' - had matured often into feelings of deep sympathy for the mother.</p> <p>The foundlings approved of the modern practice of keeping original clothing, and retaining as much information as possible. The study re-emphasises the importance of personal roots and identity, and makes a connection with those new 'semi-foundlings' - the children of donor assisted reproduction.</p>
Reviewed by	SH

Author	Parentline Plus
Title	Isolation and loneliness
Date	2005
Publisher	Parentline Plus
Key words	Parents (Lone parents), Divorce/separation
Summary	<p>Aim of study: To highlight the problems faced by callers to Parentline Plus who are lonely and isolated and have no informal support</p> <p>Methodology: 18,000 calls from parents who mentioned isolation and loneliness were examined in depth.</p> <p>Findings: (Taken from the report)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “66% of these parents were bringing up their children on their own • 50% were worried about issues concerning divorce and separation • There were very high rates of self identified emotional and mental health problems – nearly 80% of all callers talked about their stress and anxiety • 35% were worried about finances. The average recorded across all calls of parents worried about money is considerably lower at 14% • 82% were worried about their child’s emotional state • Conflict between parent and child and between siblings were higher than average (when compared to rates recorded across all calls) • Figures around abuse, and in particular emotional abuse and domestic violence both past and present, are worryingly high.” • Parents who lack informal support often make little use of formal services <p>Limitations: This report relates only to callers to Parentline Plus. It does not therefore give any indication of the experiences of lone parents in the general population.</p>
Reviewed by	HB

Author	Pollock S & Farmer E
Title	A hidden population: Understanding the needs of sexually abused and abusing children in substitute care
Journal	Adoption & Fostering
Date	Summer 2005
Volume/issue	Vol. 29 No. 2
Subject (key words)	Fostering, Adoption, Child protection (Sexual abuse), Adolescence (Adolescent perpetrators)
Summary	<p>The challenges presented in caring for this particularly vulnerable, testing and needy group out-of-home are well known: disturbed psychological functioning, risk to other children, risk to carers of allegations of abuse. The abuse may well have also not been detected prior to placement.</p> <p>The authors of this DoH funded research sought to compare such children with other children in care where sexual abuse was not a factor, from an overall sample of 250 children from a cross-section of authorities.</p> <p>Definition and identification were a problem, but they chose to</p>







	<p>define the target group as those where 'a professional concern had been noted on file about one or more sexual incidents in a child's life'.</p> <p>38% of the children admitted to care met this definition. There was however a higher representation of girls; 48% of the girls admitted to care were in the sexual abuse group, as opposed to 31% of boys. Of those in the sexual abuse group, 75% had been sexually abused only, 18% had been sexually abused themselves and had sexually abused another child, and 7% (N=7 i.e. 7 in number) were only known to have abused another child.</p> <p>In summary, a higher prevalence was found of adversities (deficiencies in the young person's 'caretaking environment') and behaviour problems in the sexual abuse group. The authors see the former adversities as the cause of the later problems, particularly because practice post-Cleveland has been to seek to remove alleged perpetrators rather than victims from households, which suggests that the move into care was also for additional reasons. They see sexual abuse as being linked to particularly poor care - multiple separations from the main carer, parents with multiple partners, parental management damaging to the child's emotional development, child beyond control at home.</p> <p>Based on a reading of the relevant literature on caring for sexually abused or abusing children they suggest the following areas need to be addressed: -</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The impact of the sexual abuse <i>per se</i> • Their likely multiple separations and rejections • Their likely current behaviour problems • Their likely educational difficulties • Protection from sexual risks or their own risky behaviour <p>[The same issue of <i>Adoption & Fostering</i> contains an article on the experience of 11 foster carers looking after children with sexualised behaviour.]</p>
Reviewed by	SH




Author	Rees G , Franks M, Raws P and Medforth R
Title	Responding to Young Runaways: An Evaluation of 19 Projects, 2003 to 2004
Date	2005
Publisher	The Children's Society University of York
Key words	Runaways, Looked after children, Safeguarding, Support services
Summary	<p>(This review is largely based reading the Executive Summary)</p> <p>Aim of study: To evaluate the services offered young people who ran away from home in 19 projects funded by the Children and Young People's Unit between January 2003 and June 2004.</p> <p>Methodology: Data was gathered in relation to 1400 young people who were in contact with the projects and 62 in-depth case studies were undertaken</p> <p>Findings:</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 17% of the young people in contact with the projects were looked after children • Successful intervention needed to be early • Short-term crisis intervention was effective for young people who had run away for the first time • Runaway projects demonstrated some success in engaging older runaways who were at risk of social exclusion though some of these runaways slipped through the net • Projects were able to achieve a substantial amount of change in working with looked after children. But this required creativity in making contact with the children and engaging them in medium- to long-term work • Achievement of positive change with young people who were at risk of sexual exploitation was not generally high projects were able to engage these young people which may lead to significant outcomes in the long term.
Reviewed by	HB

Author	Research, Development and Statistics Directorate Home Office
Title	Drug use among vulnerable groups of young people: findings from the 2003 Crime and Justice Survey Findings 254
Date	2005
Publisher	Home Office
Key words	Drug dependence, Looked after children (Care leavers)
Summary	<p>Aim of study: To understand the patterns of drug use amongst vulnerable young people</p> <p>Methodology: The data was collected as part of the 2003 Crime and Justice Survey which was boosted to include a disproportionate youth sample (4574 with response rate of 74%)</p> <p>Findings: (Quoted from the Key points)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There are five vulnerable groups of young people identifiable in the Crime and Justice Survey: those who have ever been in care, those who have ever been homeless, truants, those excluded from school and serious or frequent offenders. • While those in vulnerable groups represented less than a third (28%) of young people in the sample, they accounted for more than half (61%) of Class A drug users in the last year. • Only 5% of those who were not vulnerable used drugs frequently during the past 12 months, while 24% of those in vulnerable groups were frequent drug users in the same period. • Only 4% of those who were not vulnerable used Class A drugs in the last year, while 16% of those in vulnerable groups used Class A drugs during the same period. • Young people who were members of more than one vulnerable group had significantly higher levels of drug use than members of just one vulnerable group. For example, frequent drug use in the last year for those in more than one vulnerable group was 39%, compared with 18% for those in just one vulnerable group.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Comparing individual vulnerable groups, those who had been in care or homeless had the lowest levels of drug use while serious or frequent offenders and truants showed the highest levels of drug use. For example, Class A drug use in the last year was 5% for those who had been in care or homeless, 13% for serious or frequent offenders and 16% for truants. <p>See also The experiences of young care leavers from different ethnic groups</p>
Reviewed by	HB

Author	Ribbens McCarthy J and Jessop J
Title	The impact of bereavement and loss on young people JRF Findings 0315
Date	2005
Publisher	JRF
Key words	Bereavement, Child psychology (Loss)
Summary	<p>(Only the JRF Findings have been read for this review.)</p> <p>Aim of study: To understand the extent of young people's experience of bereavement and its impact on them</p> <p>Methodology: A literature review was undertaken and case studies were written up from a current study.</p> <p>Findings: (Taken from the JRF Findings)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mortality rates vary strongly by social class and geography; young people's likelihood of experiencing bereavement will vary accordingly. Those living in disadvantaged circumstances are most likely to experience serious and multiple losses. <small>related Findings</small>  Researchers, and service providers, have focused on parental and sibling deaths, largely ignoring the death of peers. <small>related Findings</small>  While many young people find bereavement deeply upsetting, not all the consequences are necessarily negative; opposite effects may occur for different individuals or at different times. Much depends on the context and nature of the bereavement and the meaning it holds for individuals. <small>related Findings</small>  Those who experience multiple bereavements, or bereavement alongside other difficulties, are statistically 'at risk' of experiencing negative outcomes (in areas such as education, depression, self-esteem and risk-taking behaviour) later in life. <small>related Findings</small>  Young people's own accounts of bereavement point to the need to take a much longer perspective in understanding its significance in their lives. <small>related Findings</small>  High numbers of bereaved young people report never having spoken with anybody about their experiences. <small>related Findings</small>  Current provision is patchy. Counselling is just one possible response: services need to offer a range, from basic information to in-depth individual help, provided by both mainstream and specialist organisations to be potentially

	<p>available to all. <small>related Findings</small> </p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is also a case for paying particular attention to troubled young people who may have faced significant bereavement earlier in their lives, and to bereaved young people living in disadvantaged circumstances. <p><small>related Findings</small> </p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The researchers conclude that further research is needed into the complexity of young people's experiences, with particular attention on the social context of bereavement and why individuals may respond differently to it. <p><small>related Findings</small> </p> <p>Limitations: The JRF Findings do not make clear the inclusion and exclusion criteria for the research review nor the basis on which the literature was assessed. There is little information on the study from which case studies were drawn. (No doubt this information would be in the full report.) The full report, <i>Young people, bereavement and loss: Disruptive transition?</i> is available from the NCB tel 020 7843 6000) priced £13.95.</p>
Reviewed by	HB

Author	Sellick C, Thoburn J and Philpot T
Title	What works in adoption and foster care?
Date	2004
Publisher	Barnardos
Key words	Fostering, Evidence informed practice, Adoption
Summary	<p>Aim of book: To assist managers and practitioners in child care in making decisions based on sound evidence about placement and interventions likely to bring about desired outcomes for children, their birth relatives, carers and adoptive families.</p> <p>Methodology: It is not clear on what basis research studies were included or excluded. The objective is to distil the practice (what works?) implications from the research findings.</p> <p>Findings: It is impossible to summarise a synthesis of findings from many research studies. The contents cover:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Child placement research, theory and practice – (measurement of outcomes, types of study, effective interventions) • What works in short-term and intermediate foster care? (how outcomes are defined, the relative lack of research on short-term placements, the recruitment and training of foster carers) • What works in long-term or permanent family placement? (placement decisions relating to long-term fostering, kinship care and adoption and the training of permanent carers) <p>Each chapter ends with a summary of the key messages and is illustrated with case examples. Issues relating to race and disability are addressed in each chapter.</p> <p>Limitations: Lack of clarity about the inclusion and exclusion criteria for research studies</p>
Reviewed by	HB

Author	Sheehan G and Carson R and Fehlberg B, Hunter R, Tomison A, Ip R, and Dewar J
Title	Children's Contact Service: Expectations and Experiences (320 pages)
Date	2005
Publisher	Australian Government, Griffith University, Melbourne University
Key words	Contact, Support services, Family law (International)
Summary	<p>This report is included in the PRD as a major study on contact services in Australia. Only the Executive Summary has been read for the review.</p> <p>Aim of study: To explore the role of children's contact services (CCSs) and the expectations of different parties on their use. The CCSs assist parents in high conflict situations manage contact arrangements with their children.</p> <p>Methodology: Semi-structured interviews (in total 142) with staff from policy making bodies, staff from CCSs, staff from referral agencies and with parents and children. In addition 396 families were surveyed using a postal questionnaire.</p> <p>Findings:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Families using the CCSs were 'high risk' in the sense that unsupervised contact was likely to place the child's welfare at risk. Most had complex social and economic problems including domestic violence, drug and alcohol problems and entrenched conflict between the parents • The expectations of the referral agents, the CCSs staff, the residence parent and the contact parent were divergent • The safety of the resident parent was seen as less important than that of the children • CCSs were often not clear about their role and functions (to repair and develop the contact parent-child relationship) when first meeting families • Some cases needed long-term supervision • On the whole the CCSs operated in the best interests of the child. However there were a small number of cases where contact was not in the best interests of the child and these were not always identified • Most children reported enjoying their supervised visits to the CCSs and feeling safe. However they wanted to be able to exert some control over whether or not to have contact. This appeared to be an important part of their coping mechanism. In a small number of cases children were not protected from continuing parental conflict or abusive behaviour • Self-managed contact was a difficult task. A quarter of families had been using the CCS for more than 2 years. Many families will never achieve self-managed contact and need an ongoing service.
Reviewed by	HB

Author	Sinclair I
Title	Fostering Now: Messages from Research See also the DfES Choice Protects webpage
Date	2005
Publisher	Jessica Kingsley Publishers
Key words	Fostering, Adoption
Summary	<p>Aim of the report: “To make the messages of research useful and intelligible to policy makers, service providers and practitioners.”</p> <p>Methodology: The findings from 16 studies were analysed. They had all been completed or published since 1998; the focus was an aspect of foster care and with the exception of 3, all were commissioned by the DoH.</p> <p>Findings: This report goes beyond an analysis of prevalence, process and outcomes in relation to foster care. It challenges policy makers and practitioners to rethink the purpose and possibilities of foster care as an option for children who cannot live with their birth parents. It should be seen as part of an overall policy on providing for children in need alongside family support and adoption.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A current weakness of foster care is that children rarely “gain a family for life” experiencing breakdown in adolescence or an enforced move at 18 • The author argues that the research indicates that children who cannot live with their parents want and need a “normal life”. This can be provided through foster care which is designed to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Promote close relationships ○ Promote opportunities for the child to grow and change ○ Pay attention to the child’s choice ○ Offer a coherent connection between what happens in foster care and what happens after ○ Promote a good relationship between school, child and carer <p>‘Family for life’ foster care may be appropriate for many children who cannot return home and treatment foster care will be appropriate for some children.</p> <p>Limitations: The findings do not relate to children who have been fostered for less than 6 months (40% of those who cease to be looked after in any one year.) There is little quantitative evidence relating to minority ethnic groups. Studies which were not funded by government departments have been excluded.</p>
Reviewed by	HB



Author	Sinclair I, Wilson K and Gibbs I.
Title	Foster Placements – Why They Succeed and Why They Fail.
Date	2005
Publisher	Jessica Kingsley
Key words	Fostering, Looked after children
Summary	<p>Aim of study This book looks at the purposes of foster placements, what children want from them and what helps them succeed. They</p>









	<p>examined a cross section of foster children over a six year period in seven Local Authorities in England.</p> <p>Methodology The authors used a mixture of quantitative and qualitative methods including questionnaires, use of case studies and the analysis of statistical data.</p> <p>Findings</p> <p>The study identified that foster care was either used for the purposes of rehabilitation, as a stepping stone to adoption or for older children as a precursor to residential care and independent living. The research identified three important issues concerning foster placements; permanence, the provision of durable and successful placements and the use of foster care as enabling psychological change in the child. Foster care was generally not seen as providing a long term family for life, merely a “port in a storm”. Optimism on the part of social workers often meant that various attempts were made to rehabilitate children to the natural family. This frequently resulted in several admissions to care and `serial parenting` by different foster carers and natural family members. Children rarely stayed on in the foster home after the age of 18 and the study pointed to the need for fostering to be seen as a resource which promotes children’s permanency.</p> <p>The study did not support previous beliefs that the children are better placed with siblings, that placement where the foster child is close in age to other children is risky or that placement with relatives is preferable to placement with strangers</p> <p>The study suggested that the durability of placements was enhanced if the child was `matched` to the long term placement. Carers who were child orientated and provided a loving and caring environment were more likely to provide a successful placement and this was complimented by the positive motivation of children who wanted to remain in their placement. The ability of the child to `fit` into the foster family and the existence of an affinity between the child and the foster carer also contributed to the success of a placement. Children wanted foster carers who respected their culture and values, would listen to them, would not be competitive towards their natural family and who would assert their point of view in discussions with Social Services.</p> <p>The research found little evidence that foster placements or the provision of special services such as psychotherapy were effective in promoting psychological change in children. However they found that the child’s happiness at school was crucial to stability in the placement and this in turn led to a reduction in some of the child’s problematic behaviours and promoted a positive upward behavioural spiral.</p>
Reviewed by	David Jenkins

Author	Smart C, May V, Wade A and Furniss C with Sharma K and Strelitz J
Title	Residence and Contact Disputes in court Volume 2 Full report (p 115) Executive Summary
Date	2005
Publisher	DfES
Key words	Family law (Family proceedings), Contact, Residence, Parents
Summary	<p>This is the second report on a DCA funded study. The first volume is reviewed in the Research Digest 03/4.</p> <p>Aim of study: To establish why parents go to court, what their expectations were, whether they were satisfied with the outcomes, how the arrangements for the children were working and what the effect on them and their children was of going to court</p> <p>Methodology: qualitative, in-depth interviews were held with 61 parents, 34 mothers and 27 fathers. Contact and resident parents were equal in number but fathers were mainly contact parents. The sample was skewed towards high-conflict cases. Questionnaires were sent to 1260 parents but only 112 were returned.</p> <p>Findings (This is a dense and rich report whose findings defy oversimplification. The following are the most significant for the developing family justice system.)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This is a court sample but 89% of the interviewed parents had met a FCA and in 68% of cases a court welfare or social services report had been filed • Parents went to court ostensibly for child welfare reasons but the driving force was often a dispute between the parents arising from their separation. This dispute had to be framed in child welfare terms in effect becoming a 'parenting contest' in which each parent had to prove the other inadequate or unworthy • Parents complained about the decision of the court when it went against them and blamed those involved. They had expected the court to solve disputes and when this did not happen the court was blamed for making the situation worse. • Many parents felt they were not listened to and that the FCA did not spend sufficient time with them and their children • Fathers were critical of the lack of enforcement of contact orders • In many cases the children were seen as 'recruits' and where their distress was acknowledged this was construed in terms of the other parent's behaviour • In 60% of cases conflict continued to be high. In 30% conflict was reduced and in 10% parents thought that there had been no reason to go to court in the first place. • Parents felt that after the hearing they were left to cope on their own with painful decisions and difficult situations • The more complex cases involving domestic violence, substance abuse, child protection and entrenched conflict

	<p>will continue to come before the courts. The proposals in Parental Separation: Children's Needs and Parent's Responsibilities: Next Steps will not necessarily provide appropriate services for all these cases.</p> <p>Limitations: The response to the questionnaire was very low. As the interview sample was recruited from the questionnaire sample, it was in effect self-selecting. Questions inevitably arise as to whether the experience of those who choose to be interviewed was the same as those who did not. There is no analysis according to ethnic background.</p>
Reviewed by	HB

Author	Smart C and May V
Title	Why Can't They Agreed? The Underlying Complexity of Contact and Residence Disputes
Journal	Journal of Social Welfare and Family Law
Date	2004
Volume/issue	26/4
Key words	Contact, Residence, Family law (Family proceedings), Parents
Summary	This article reports on the findings of Residence and Contact Disputes in Court Volume 1 Executive Summary (reviewed in the Research Digest 03/4) and discusses their implications.
Reviewed by	HB

Author	Smith G
Title	Children's perspectives on believing and belonging JFR Findings
Date	2005
Publisher	JFR
Key words	Children' views/participation, Religion
Summary	<p>Aim of study: To explore children's understanding of religion and the role that it plays in their lives in school and the wider environment.</p> <p>Methodology: A range of qualitative methods were used with 100 children between the ages of 9 and 11 from 3 schools, 2 Church of England primary schools in the north of England serving multi-faith and multi-ethnic neighbourhoods and a LA school in an East London borough.</p> <p>Findings: (Taken from the JFR Briefing)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children are more likely to reflect a more complex pattern of religious identity which involves kinship, ethnicity, age and gender. <small>related Findings</small>  • Children display different levels and patterns of understanding, observance and personal commitment to religion, irrespective of their particular religious affiliation. <small>related Findings</small>  • School is one of the few places where children from different religions and ethnic backgrounds get to meet on a

	<p>regular basis. <small>related Findings</small> </p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The majority of children were not aware of any particular religious ethos in their schools and were largely indifferent to faith-based schooling. <small>related Findings</small>  • The opinions of children differ as to whether learning about others' religions in school is a positive experience. <small>related Findings</small>  • Lunch-times and assemblies at school are seen as events which reinforce religious difference and promote grouping together. <small>related Findings</small>  • Religious and ethnic labels are used interchangeably by children as markers of racial difference, underlining how the categories of ethnicity and religion overlap. <small>related Findings</small>  • Friendships develop across, and between, religious and ethnic groups in primary school although this experience changes outside school, where children's choice of friends is often shaped by family circumstance and religious affiliation. <small>related Findings</small>  • The amount of time spent by the more observant children on their religion impacts on their relationships outside of school, with more devout children having less social interaction with other children. <small>related Findings</small>  • Outside school, friendships are often shaped by power relationships between adults and children, with some adults actively discouraging children from mixing across religions. <small>related Findings</small>  <p>The researchers have developed useful ways of thinking about children's beliefs. A typology organises children's accounts into three dimensions: religious identity (feelings of identity with a particular religious tradition and willingness or obligation to participate); social practice (participation in structure learning and ceremonies) and belief and spirituality (personal belief and practice). The degree of involvement is categorised from highly observant to not religious.</p> <p>Limitations: JRF qualitative studies can often be criticised for being too small to produce generalisable results. This is particularly so for this study undertaken in two C of E and one LA school. Studies in Roman Catholic schools, Jewish, Muslim or LA schools in other parts of the country are likely to have found children that had very different experiences of believing and belonging. <i>(Children's perspectives on believing and belonging Full Report is available from the NCB 020 7843 6000 for £10.95)</i></p>
Reviewed by	HB

Author	Statham J and Biehal N
Title	Supporting families RiP Briefing 11
Date	2005
Publisher	RiP
Key words	Support services
Summary	<p>Aim of briefing: To examine and summarise the research evidence on support services for families in the context of the Children Acts 1989 and 2004 and Every Child Matters.</p> <p>Methodology: 11 key texts are listed</p> <p>Findings:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is relatively little evidence on the effectiveness of family support services although there is much descriptive material • Few studies focus on support services for teenagers (possibly because there are few such services available) • Many of the families who access support services live in very disadvantaged circumstances • Multi-faceted interventions tend to be most effective. An integrated approach needs good working links with other local agencies • For families with deep-seated problems, long-term interventions may be necessary • Out of home placement should not always be seen as a last resort • Community support services are often least used by those who need them most, such as families where substance misuse or mental health are problems • Minority ethnic families may be particularly reluctant to use support services <p>Limitations: The lack of robust evidence on effectiveness of interventions.</p>
Reviewed by	HB

Author	Stötzel, M and Fegert, J
Title	Children's Guardians from a Child's Perspective: A Study of the representation of the Legal Interests of Children and Adolescents in Germany
Journal	Representing Children
Date	July 2005
Volume/issue	17(4); pp 239- 51
Subject (key words)	Family Court Advisor (Children's Guardian), Family law (International)
Summary	<p>Children's Guardians and separate representation were introduced into German law in 1998. According to official statistics, their use has steadily increased from 2,544 appointments in 1999 to 7,121 in 2003. Guardians come from varied backgrounds – social work, teaching, law – but most have specialist postgraduate training.</p> <p>The authors explain that children in these proceedings should always have a direct hearing with the judge but the overall structure of proceedings is not clear.</p>

	<p>The researchers lament the lack of government support for research in this area, as a consequence of which it was difficult to achieve random or representative sampling; children were predominantly contacted through their guardians (which the authors acknowledge is a significant source of bias). Of 1,250 questionnaires distributed, 50 pairs of questionnaires (child + guardian) were available for evaluation. The children's ages ranged from 4 – 19 with an average of 13 years, rather more girls than boys.</p> <p>Findings:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The guardians had made a significant difference to the children's understanding of the proceedings; • The children gave high scores for 'positive experience', 'good working relationship', 'explaining the legal procedure' and 'opinion represented in court'. • The children's satisfaction seemed to be most strongly correlated with experiencing the guardian supporting them and expressing their opinions lucidly in court.
Reviewed by	PL

Author	Stuart M and Baines C
Title	Progress on Safeguards for Children Living Away from Home Safeguards for Vulnerable Children
Date	2004
Publisher	JRF
Key words	Child protection, Support services, Looked after children (Residential care)
Summary	<p>Aim of study <i>Progress on Safeguards for Children Living Away from Home</i> reviews the actions taken following Sir William Utting's report (1997), <i>People Like Us</i>, on the safeguards for children living away from home, commissioned in the wake of allegations of abuse in care homes and foster care in Wales. <i>Safeguards for Vulnerable Children</i>, examines issues of sexual abuse, children in prisons and disabled children in more detail.</p> <p>Methodology This was a two year study which commenced in June 2002. It was achieved via consultations with the involved Government departments, and examination of the relevant reports and publications. From this a wide range of organisations and individuals were identified, who were consulted.</p> <p>Findings</p> <p>Whilst the report was positive about the progress that has been made since 1997 to improve safeguards for children, continuing weaknesses were identified in the following areas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Out of Authority placements – insufficient attention to foster and residential care. • Health, education and transfer to independent living – progress slow and more needed. • Disabled children – shortfall in practical help and guidance in protection. • Children with emotional and behavioural difficulties – no progress. • Very young children – no specific action to protect them.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Views of children/young people – way to go in ensuring these are taken into account. • People working with children – need to improve communication skills. • Children`s rights and complaints procedures – require a higher profile. <p>It was found that implementation of the legislation, policy and procedure had been problematical and worries remained for some of the most vulnerable groups, with the safeguards not paying full attention to the more marginalised. Gaps remained in the information available in relation to the sexual abuse of children, and procedures for preventing abusers from working with children were not being consistently implemented. The researchers concluded that a major re-think of policy is required, with the emphasis on prevention and early intervention.</p> <p><i>People like us</i> did not cover all situations in which children lived away from home. These two reports identified the following situations as of particular concern and needing action:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Asylum seekers • Young people in the armed forces • Children attending residential special schools with 52 week provision • Children in hospital on a long-term basis • Children with emotional and behavioural problems • Children in private foster care <p>In addition dangers to children through the use of new technology were identified, and the continuing weaknesses within the Government as a result of the variation in the levels of commitment between the different Departments. There appears to be a continuing gap between policy and practice, which needs to be bridged, with practitioners developing their understanding, and abilities to safeguard children and promote their welfare.</p>
Reviewed by	Nicola Miller

Author	Thoburn J
Title	Adoption and permanence for children who cannot live safely with birth parents or relatives Quality protects research briefing 5
Date	2002
Publisher	RIP
Key words	Adoption, Fostering (Long-term fostering)
Summary	<p>Aim of briefing: This is not made explicit but by implication the briefing is intended to provide research evidence which will promote the stable and lasting placement of children in care who cannot return to their birth parents.</p> <p>Methodology: This is not made explicit. Nine key research texts are listed.</p> <p>Findings:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Research evidence is available and useful, but some is small scale and conflicting

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There are a range of definitions of success in permanent family placement including placement breakdown and adult or child satisfaction • When age at placement and other difficulties at the time of placement are controlled for there is no difference in breakdown rates between those placed with strangers for adoption and those placed with stranger long-term foster carers • Breakdown rates vary from 10% to 50% depending on the age of the child at placement, the nature of the placement, the extent of the child's emotional and behavioural problems and the extent to which the child has been abused • There is no statistical difference in disruption rates for minority ethnic children placed with ethnically matched and white families. However qualitative studies indicate additional obstacles for children and parents who are visibly and culturally different • A flexible approach to legal status is indicated for children who are past infancy. Finding a family who will meet the needs of the child is more important than the legal status. <p>Limitations: The inclusion and exclusion criteria for research studies are not specified.</p>
Reviewed by	HB

Author	Turney D and Tanner K
Title	Understanding and working with neglect (Every child matters Briefing 10)
Date	2005
Publisher	RIP
Key words	Child protection (Neglect), Safeguarding, Support services, Case practice (Assessment)
Summary	<p>Aim of Briefing: To provide key messages for practitioners and managers taking forward the Every Child Matters agenda from the main researchers on child neglect.</p> <p>Methodology: 5 databases were searched</p> <p>Findings:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Neglect is now the highest category on Child Protection Registers (41% of registrations) • The causes of neglect are complex and best understood from an ecological perspective in which different systems (individual, family, community and societal) interact • The consequences of neglect are far-reaching, including neuro-developmental damage (affecting cognitive, social and emotional functioning) , insecure attachment patterns, a sense of powerlessness and poor performance and behaviour in school • An assessment of the circumstances of each family needs to be carried out with appropriate interventions agreed to address the underlying problems. A reactive approach to symptoms is not helpful. The <i>Assessment Framework</i> provides a tool to identify the factors leading to neglect in

	<p>individual families. Assessment should be multi-disciplinary</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Much work is likely to be long-term and should be purposeful and focused • The relationship between the practitioner and the family is central to work with neglectful families • Direct work with children is essential both to gain an understanding of what is happening in the family and to monitor the progress of the parents <p>Limitations: The basis on which the literature review was undertaken is not spelt out.</p>
Reviewed by	HB

Author	White S and Featherstone B
Title	Communicating misunderstandings: multi-agency work as social practice
Journal	Child and Family Social Work
Date	August 2005
Volume/issue	Vol. 10 Issue 3
Subject (key words)	Case practice, Partnership (Multidisciplinary practice)
Summary	<p>The study examined the effect on inter professional communication of moving staff from paediatric, CAMHS, child development and local authority social work teams into an integrated child health service on a single site. The conclusion was that it did not straightforwardly lead to better communication.</p> <p>The researchers used an intensive, ethnographic method, essentially spending long periods of time with the group observing, documenting and analysing interaction. Previous research has suggested that co-location is not sufficient to produce better joint working and that attention needs to be paid to the psychology of inter-personal communication [Reder & Duncan (2003)].</p> <p>The authors agree with the need for training in effective communication, but add that attention needs to be paid to the way separate professions or teams create their own identity by the use of working practices and beliefs, including 'atrocious stories', which are seen to prove why they 'know best'. In 'atrocious stories', the chosen profession or group is seen as rescuing clients from the failures of other ones, thereby providing emotional and moral superiority e.g. the health visitor who spotted the illness which the doctor missed.</p> <p>They recommend professional modesty and self-reflection, together with lifelong listening to, and learning from, others.</p>
Reviewed by	SH