

Research Update

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This is the first in a series of regular articles providing summaries of forthcoming and recent research. The four research projects featured in this article are taken from the SSRG Research Database, which is available on the SSRG website (<http://www.ssr.org.uk>). All four projects focus on children and young people's services and three are due to be completed within the next few months.

Evaluation of a Behaviour Resource Service

This research project evaluates a new service for children and young people experiencing complex mental health and behavioural difficulties. The Behaviour Resource Service (BRS) is a multi-professional, interagency team offering both short-term assessment and treatment using residential and community provision to children in Southampton and South West Hampshire. The evaluation observed the BRS as it evolved; analysed outcomes for services users in terms of behavioural and social changes and service satisfaction levels; examined the nature of interagency relationships; and looked at the impact of the BRS on existing allied agencies. Methods used in the research included mixed method participant observation, questionnaires, statistical analysis of routine data, and a review of documentation. Findings so far show that the BRS service has exceeded its target caseload of 50 in its first year of operation. However, too few cases had closed at the time of the last progress bulletin (April 2001) to present outcome data, though placement stability and offending patterns have been highlighted as two outcomes to monitor in the future. Overall young people, parents and carers were positive about the development of the BRS, although they were less positive about some of the formal meetings and the handling of transition and closure issues. Preliminary findings are already available on the BRS website, University of Southampton at <http://www.sws.soton.ac.uk/brs/>. The evaluation was due to end on 31 March 2002 and a final report will follow.

For further details about the research, contact Julia Waldman, Senior Research Fellow at the Department of Social Work Studies, University of Southampton, Southampton, SO17 1BJ, e-mail: jw@socsci.soton.ac.uk. Details of the service are also available on the Young Minds website as part

of a listing of projects funded as part of the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) Innovations Fund within the Mental Health Grant <http://www.youngminds.org.uk/professionals/MHG/projects.html>.

Family Group Conferences

This research looks at Family Group Conferences (FGCs) in child protection. The research is jointly funded by the Nuffield Foundation (<http://www.nuffieldfoundation.org/home/index.asp>) and the Centre for Evidence-based Social Services (<http://www.ex.ac.uk/cebss/>), and is being undertaken in collaboration with the Wiltshire R & D Partnership at the University of Bath (<http://www.bath.ac.uk/wissp/>). The research aims to: provide an overview of the outcomes of all cases entering the child protection system of one local authority following a Section 47 enquiry; examine how the outcomes of those cases experiencing FGCs compare with more traditional ways of working; and look at the type of family situations in which the FGC approach may be more successful than more traditional ways of working. During the twelve-month recruitment phase, all open child protection cases referred to Wiltshire social services were randomly allocated to either a FGC or a non-FGC pathway. FGCs were only used in cases where a Child Protection Conference was not required, and where ongoing risk was not identified. Outcomes were assessed using validated off the shelf instruments (General Health Questionnaire, Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire and Social Network Questionnaire); questionnaires to participants; and child abuse events monitoring. Final analysis and a written report are expected in July 2002. Further details of the project can be found on the CEBSS website <http://www.ex.ac.uk/cebss/pages/projects.html> and the website of the Wiltshire R & D Partnership <http://www.bath.ac.uk/wissp/research.htm>, or by contacting Louise Brown, Lecturer in Social Work, Department of Social and Policy Sciences, University of Bath, Claverton Down, Bath BA2 7AY, email: L.Brown@bath.ac.uk.

Using Concurrent Planning with Looked After Children

This project is being carried out by the Thomas Coram Research Unit (<http://ioewebserver.ioe.ac.uk/ioe/cms/get.asp?cid=470>), and is funded by the

Nuffield Institute (<http://www.nuffieldfoundation.org/home/>). The research evaluates the use of concurrent planning in achieving identifiable benefits for children, birth families and carers. Outcomes are compared for groups of children and families following the traditional social services route to permanence, or a traditional adoption agency route. Three groups of children were involved in the research: those in the concurrent planning projects; those taken into care over a two year period by one social services department in Greater Manchester; and all children placed by one adoption agency. Children were followed from entry to care, through placement, and 12 to 15 months later. Data on behaviour, health, social relationships and attachment to carers were collected. The evaluation focuses on assessing the number of moves experienced by the child and the time taken to achieve a permanent family. A brief summary has already been published outlining progress to date (Monck E., Reynolds J., Wigfall V. 2001 'Work in progress: concurrent planning in the adoption of children under 8 years'. The research is reported in *Adoption and Fostering*, 25 (8), Spring 2001, 67-68), and the project itself will end in May 2002. Further details can be found at: http://ioewebsserver.ioe.ac.uk/ioe/cms/get.asp?cid=470&470_0=1550, or by contacting Elizabeth Monck, Senior Research Officer and Project Director, Thomas Coram Research Unit, 27/28 Woburn Square, London WC1H 0AA, e-mail: e.monck@ioe.ac.uk. For information about other current research projects at the Coram Research Unit, see their website at: http://ioewebsserver.ioe.ac.uk/ioe/cms/get.asp?cid=470&470_0=892.

Disabled Young People's Experiences of Social Exclusion

The last piece of research to be featured from the SSRG Research Database is a project completed last year by Jenny Morris. The research was commissioned by Scope (<http://www.scope.org.uk>) and funded by the National Lottery Charities Board (now the Community Fund <http://www.community-fund.org.uk/>). The aim of the research was to find out from disabled children and young people what their experiences of social exclusion were; identify barriers to social inclusion; identify where barriers to social exclusion were already being tackled; and to analyse the implications for national and local policies and practice. The first stage of the research consulted with four groups of young disabled people to find out what social exclusion meant to them. The second stage of the research looked at the experiences of 44 young people, aged between fifteen and twenty, who all had high levels of support needs. A literature review and an examination of national datasets about young disabled people and social exclusion were also included as part of the research. A summary of the findings available on the Scope website <http://www.scope.org.uk/cgi-bin/eatsoup.cgi?id=999851903r195u40f185c130>. A full report of the research, '*That kind of life: Social exclusion and young disabled people with high levels of support needs*', is available from Scope Library and Information Unit. For more details about the project contact the Scope research department on 020 7619 7100 or email: research@scope.org.uk.

If you are currently carrying out research and would like to add details of your project to the SSRG Research Database and/or to this column, a research entry form is available online [http://www.ssr.org.uk/resources\(menu\)/researchdatabase/dbform.htm](http://www.ssr.org.uk/resources(menu)/researchdatabase/dbform.htm) or you can contact Karen Winchester at SCIE to request a paper copy: Social Care Institute for Excellence, 1st Floor Goldings House, 2 Hay's Lane, London SE1 2HB, email: karen.winchester@scie.org.uk.