



RESEARCH NEWS 4

Autumn
2009

Recent publications, reports and on-going research in the Making Research Count Universities

Making Research Count is a collaborative national research dissemination network based regionally in the social work departments of the Universities of Bedfordshire, Brighton, Central Lancashire (UCLAN), East Anglia (UEA), Keele, King's College London, Northumbria in association with Teesside, Salford, York and The Open University.

All ten social work departments are actively engaged in research activity, generating research publications, reports and journal articles, as well as in the education of social work professionals, both at qualifying and post-qualifying level. This *RESEARCH NEWS* highlights some recent or current research undertaken in the departments in our network. There are electronic links to the published reports or departmental resources.

Making Sense of Every Child Matters (Edited) Richard Barker, Northumbria University

A number of staff associated with **Northumbria University** have contributed to "*Making Sense of Every Child Matters*" edited by Richard Barker, published by the Policy Press (2009). The book considers the implications for practice of the 'Every Child Matters' agenda for working with children, analysing the key issues from the perspective of the different professions that make up the 'new children's workforce'.

It outlines and analyses the Every Child Matters programme in relation to the wider social context for children, with a consideration of inter-professional issues. Chapters include consideration of practice issues and evidence informed case examples from social work, health, education, playwork, children's centres, early years and CAMHS.

A recent review has described the book as "*a must – have for all those working with, planning for or studying the health and social care of children and their families*" *Community Care 2009*
Further information: www.everychildmattersbook.co.uk

Understanding Serious Case Reviews and their Impact: a biennial analysis of serious case reviews 2005-2007

This DCSF commissioned study analysed 189 serious case reviews (SCRs) arising from incidents occurring in England between April 2005 and March 2007, where a child died or was seriously injured or harmed, and abuse and/or neglect were known or suspected factors. The research was undertaken by a team, led by Marian Brandon, at the **University of East Anglia**, and follows their previous analysis of cases occurring in the earlier timeframe, 2003-2005.

Interviews with practitioners and managers involved in the cases found a concern that there was an increasing emphasis on targets and performance indicators in child protection work, and the potential for a retreat into a blame culture.

The summary report can be accessed from:
www.dcsf.gov.uk/research/data/uploadfiles/DCSF-RB129.pdf

For full report search on RR129 at www.dcsf.gov.uk/ and follow the first link to download the report.

Children and Families Experiencing Domestic Violence: Police and Children's Services' Responses

Nicky Stanley, Pam Miller, Helen Richardson-Foster and Gill Thomson, **University of Central Lancashire**

Police notifications of incidents of domestic violence involving children represent a substantial demand on children's social services. This is the first UK study to investigate these notifications and their outcomes. The research examined police interventions in 250 incidents of domestic violence where children were involved as well as the communication of information to children's social services and the subsequent intervention.

The views of young people, survivors and perpetrators of domestic violence were also captured. Young people reported feeling excluded from communication with police officers attending incidents of domestic violence and police officers interviewed expressed reluctance about engaging with children. Only 15% of families notified received a service from children's social services and two-thirds of these cases were already open. The research highlighted the need for more early interventions for families living with domestic violence and recommended that high quality supervised contact services, that families could access on a voluntary basis, would offer a means of early intervention directed at the situation where domestic violence often arises.

Summary and full reports available at: www.nspcc.org.uk/Inform/research/Findings/researchfindings_wda48259.html

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Effective Interventions with Families who are hard to reach or hard to help

As part of Making Research Count's contribution to the dissemination work of C4EO (Centre for Excellence and Outcomes) **June Thoburn of UEA** was commissioned by SCIE to put together, in consultation with Making Research Count academic colleagues, an 'experts' briefing' on 'Effective interventions for complex families where there are concerns about a child suffering significant harm'.

A shortened version of the briefing and an extended reference list will be on the C4EO website shortly and the full briefing will be on the Making Research Count website. The other two related briefings are on 'auditing child protection systems and decision making' and 'oversight and review of cases'.

C4EO Briefings are available on:

www.c4eo.org.uk/themes/safeguarding/default.aspx?themeid=11&accesstypeid=1

June's paper will be on the Making Research Count website: www.makingresearchcount.org.uk

Working towards Prevention

The **University of Brighton** has recently completed a two year research project as the independent local evaluator of the West Sussex Partnerships for Older People Project (POPP).

The evaluation was informed by a Theories of Change approach. Utilised in evaluations of complex systems and social change this approach offers the scope to clarify and reflect on strategies to implement change and to note outcomes at different points over a lengthy time scale. The approach enabled the evaluation team to encourage reflection on what those developing the work were looking to achieve, how they expected to get there and how they dealt with the changing and developing nature of the work.

Both the full report and summary findings (published July 2009) are available to download:

www.brighton.ac.uk/sass/research/publications/index.php?PageId=800

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SAGE Handbook of Social Work Research

Due for publication in November 2009, and written by Ian Shaw (**University of York**), Katharine Briar-Lawson (University at Albany), Joan Orme (University of Glasgow) and Roy Ruckdeschel (St. Louis University), the *handbook* provides a comprehensive, internationally-focused account of leading social work research, offering an original statement on contemporary theory and practice within the field. The *handbook* engages critically with the nature and role of social work research and evaluation in contemporary societies around the globe, and asks:

- What is the role and purpose of social work research?
- What contexts shape the practice and purpose of social work research?
- How can we maximise the quality of the practice of social work research?
- How can the aims of social work in its varied domains be met through social work research?

The handbook is written for academics, advanced postgraduate students, social work researchers, experienced practitioner and user researchers, commissioners and end users of social work research.

Improving Educational Outcomes for Looked After Children and Young People

Dr Isabelle Brodie, Senior Research Fellow in the **Institute of Applied Social Research, University of Bedfordshire**, is currently reviewing research relating to 'improving educational outcomes for looked after children and young people'. The review will address three questions concerning the accessibility, acceptability and effectiveness of services and interventions; the views of looked after children and young people; and the contribution made by the attitudes, skills and abilities of carers, birth parents and others.

A scoping review on the same topic, published in May 2009, concluded that the research base had grown considerably, but that gaps remained in relation to the types of methodology used to investigate the educational experience of looked after children, and in the information available concerning the schooling experiences of looked after children generally and the contribution of carers and birth parents in particular. The review is one of 3 knowledge reviews being undertaken as part of C4EO's 'Vulnerable Children' theme, and the programme also includes reviews on safe and settled accommodation for care leavers and the emotional and behavioural health of looked after young people, being undertaken by the University of York and London University's EPPI Centre respectively. The full knowledge reviews will be published in 2010.

http://www.c4eo.org.uk/themes/vulnerablechildren/files/c4eo_improving_educational_outcomes.pdf
<http://www.c4eo.org.uk/themes/vulnerablechildren/>