



RESEARCH NEWS 1

Summer
2008

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, Salford, York and The Open University.

All nine 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.

Costs and Outcomes in Children's Social Care Jennifer Beecham and Ian Sinclair

This is an overview of the 'Costs and Outcomes in Children's Social Care' national programme of research, supported by the Department of Health and the Department for Education and Skills. There are fourteen studies included in the overview, including areas ranging from supporting families with young children in their own homes and looking at staff motivations and skills in services for children looked after by local authorities. The overview focuses on the way children's social care services are delivered, the costs of providing those services and the extent to which they improve outcomes for children. The academic co-ordinator for the initiative was Professor Ian Sinclair from the **University of York**.

Both the full report and a summary report are available on the DCSF website:

<http://www.everychildmatters.gov.uk/resources-and-practice/RS00026/>

Analysing Child Deaths and Serious Injury through Abuse and Neglect: What Can We Learn? A Biennial Analysis of Serious Case Reviews 2003-2005

An analysis of 161 serious case reviews notified in the period April 2003-March 2005 in England, 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**. The report was published by the DCSF in January 2008, and includes descriptive statistics of the cases, a discussion of interacting risk factors and key themes, and implications for safer practice.

Both the full report and a summary report are available:

www.dfes.gov.uk/research/data/uploadfiles/DCSF-RB023.pdf

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Using Research to Inform Risk Assessment Steve Myers, **University of Salford**

The aim of this work is to explore the ways in which research is used to inform, construct, and validate risk assessment. Risk assessment has become a key task of social work policy and practice and the overall term can obscure the different approaches that are used. 'Evidence-based' and 'evidence-informed' risk assessment tools can claim to have robust research support, but there are questions about how research is used to create and justify such technologies.

This research was presented as part of our research seminar series and invited colleagues, from our partner agencies within social care practice, to explore ways in which research can be used to inform, construct, and validate assessment. For further information contact:

s.myers@salford.ac.uk Or e.gilhooley@salford.ac.uk

The Impact of Heavy Cannabis Use on Young People: Vulnerability and Youth Transitions Dr Margaret Melrose

Surveys tell us that a fairly large proportion of young people have tried cannabis. But we know relatively little about which young people are regular or 'heavy' users, what constitutes 'heavy' use, or what sorts of cannabis this involves. We also know very little about the personal and social effects heavy cannabis use may have or how young people view such use. This study, commissioned by Joseph Rowntree Foundation and carried out by Dr Margaret Melrose, **University of Bedfordshire**, explores young people's views of what constitutes 'heavy' cannabis use and how their usage affects their lives.

The report is available to download from:

www.jrf.org.uk/bookshop/details.asp?pubID=926

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SCIE Practice guide 11: The Participation of Adult Service Users, Including Older People, in Developing Social Care Jo Moriarty and colleagues

This guide focuses on how practitioners and managers in social care can initiate and sustain the participation of adult service users, including older people, in developing social care. Although it has been designed mainly for practitioners and managers in social care, the guide should be useful to everyone involved in promoting service user participation, including people using services and family carers.

The guide was written by **King's College London** and is based on a review of the literature and interviews with user led organisations, third sector groups and social care professionals. A summary of the guide is available in hard copy from SCIE and the full guide and summary are on SCIE's website:

www.scie.org.uk/publications/practiceguides/practiceguide11

Age Concern Older People and Alcohol Project

The **University of Brighton**, in conjunction with Age Concern and local agencies in the Brighton area, is researching alcohol use among older people, and the capacity of services to be aware of, and respond appropriately to, the needs of older people where alcohol use/misuse is impacting on their health and well being. An initial scoping study identified a reluctance on the part of staff to discuss the issue with older people, tied in with the question of older people's rights and personal choices.

The second stage of the research is focusing on older people's experiences of alcohol, issues and concerns they have, and the kinds of services and interventions they would use.

Further details on the **University of Brighton** Making Research Count bulletin board:

www.brighton.ac.uk/sass/research/mrc/events_bulletin.htm

Early Support: An Evaluation of Phase 3 of Early Support

A national evaluation of the impact, effectiveness and outcomes of Early Support, a government initiative to improve the services of young disabled children and their families, was undertaken by Professor Bogusia Temple at the **University of Central Lancashire** and a team at the University of Manchester led by Professor Alys Young. The evaluation included the views of both families and service providers. The project covered 46 Pathfinders and used both quantitative and qualitative approaches to evaluating a range of impacts, including an economic evaluation, the views of service providers and family experiences.

The Final Report is available from: <http://www.dfes.gov.uk/research/data/uploadfiles/RR798.pdf>

A Research briefing can be found at: <http://www.dfes.gov.uk/research/data/uploadfiles/RB798.pdf>

Mental Capacity Act 2005 (MCA)

In a collaborative venture the **University of Central Lancashire** and **King's College London** produced a set of national training materials for the Department of Health and the Social Care Institute for Excellence to support the implementation of the MCA. These are available on the DH website and can be ordered in hard copy and on CD ROM.

http://www.dh.gov.uk/en/Publicationsandstatistics/Publications/PublicationsPolicyAndGuidance/DH_074491

Following this work, the authors have produced a range of journal articles reflecting on the implications of the MCA for practice. Articles include an analysis of user and carer views of their expectations of the Act, and discussion of the interface of the MCA and new Mental Health legislation.

Contact jill.manthorpe@kcl.ac.uk for further details and information about a new major National Institute for Health Research grant that is focusing on dementia across the trajectory of the syndrome and which is based in North London. This study (EVIDEM) is working with NHS and social care partners exploring decision making, continence, end of life care and behaviour that challenges.