

RESEARCH NEWS 3

Spring
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, 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.

Achieving permanence in foster care Gillian Schofield and Mary Beek (UEA)

Achieving permanence in foster care is about providing a child with a secure base – offering security, stability and family membership through childhood and into adult life. This Good Practice Guide by Gillian Schofield and Mary Beek (UEA) was published by BAAF in late 2008, and systematically explores each aspect of achieving permanence in foster care, from the initial care plan through to leaving care. It includes:

- Planning for permanence in foster care; definitions and factors in decision making
- The legal and research context
- Attachment and family relationships
- Assessing the needs of children; implications for the plan and the match
- Social work with children in permanent foster placements
- Recruiting, assessing, preparing and supporting foster families to provide permanence
- Contact and relationships with birth families
- Leaving care and the transition to adulthood

www.baaf.org.uk/res/pubs/books/book_permfostercare.shtml

Workload management: Why What How? Martin Stevens (King's College London)

Martin recently completed a scoping literature review of workload management in social work - a topic that is under the spotlight at the moment. The review identifies key issues and suggests future areas of research.

He found that workload is defined as the work represented by cases allocated to a social worker plus non case related activity such as training or supervision. The review found much evidence that workload is increasing and has negative effects on practice; on social workers' levels of stress and burnout; and on turnover rates.

Good workload measurement is essential, which can support bids for increased funding as well as inform the development of workload management systems. Such systems need to take account of the variable work required by each case and how this changes over time. Involving staff in development and implementation is seen to be essential.

Stevens, M. (2008) 'Workload Management in Social Work Services: What, Why and How?' *Practice*, 20:4, 207 -222

Older People and Well-being (University of Brighton)

The **University of Brighton** are working in partnership with Age Concern Brighton, Hove and Portslade to develop a research programme focusing on older people and well-being. It builds on previous partnership work to develop research projects which place older people's experiences at the centre as 'active subjects'. Age Concern older volunteers have been recruited to our research team as co-researchers who will design and carry out the research over the next two years. The project aims to understand:

- The meaning of well-being for older people
- The circumstances in which well-being is produced
- How service providers can enhance older people's well-being

For further information
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Educating Difficult Adolescents: Effective Education for Children in Public Care or with Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties

**David Berridge, Cheryl Dance,
Jennifer Beecham and Sarah Field**

Educational achievements for children in care are significantly poorer than for the general school population. This book evaluates the educational experience and performance of a sample of 'difficult' adolescents living in foster families, residential children's homes and residential special schools for pupils with behavioural, emotional and social difficulties (BESD). The book discusses the failure to prioritise education for children in care, placement instability and disrupted schooling. It investigates policy changes, care environments and young people's background experiences - as well as the costs of services - in order to gauge the effectiveness of targeted initiatives, and how to enable children in care to succeed in the classroom.

Cheryl Dance and Sarah Field are at the **University of Bedfordshire**.

www.jkp.com/catalogue/book.php/isbn/9781843106814

Practitioner Research – A review Ian Shaw and Neil Lunt (University of York)

Ian Shaw has been working with Fiona Mitchell and Neil Lunt in an extended review of practitioner research, and an evaluation of two funded cohorts of practitioner research projects that have taken place under the auspices of Childen 1st in Scotland. The work is funded by the Institute for Research and Innovation in Social Services [IRISS], with funding from the Scottish Government's Changing Lives Fund. IRISS has published a summary of the Literature Review. The objective of the review, undertaken by Ian Shaw and Neil Lunt of York University, was to establish the context for practitioner research and its impact on practice. This can be downloaded from <http://www.iriss.ac.uk/files/iriss-practitioner-research-lit-review-2009-01.pdf>

For further information contact Neil Lunt or Ian Shaw (nl517@york.ac.uk or ifs2@york.ac.uk). The report from the fieldwork will be completed by late Spring. Linked to this are podcasts by Ian and Neil at the IRISS site <<http://www.iriss.ac.uk>>, on issues regarding practitioner research and the relationship of research and practice.

Practitioner-Led Research 2009 – 2010 Children's Workforce Development Council (CWDC)

Following our successful support of the 2008-2009 programme of projects, **Making Research Count** has been commissioned by the CWDC to continue providing mentoring and research support for their 2009-2010 programme of practitioner-led research projects. The CWDC has invited applications:

"CWDC would like to commission up to 60 Practitioner-Led Research (PLR) projects across England to find out more about existing and developing practice. We want to hear from people who work with children and young people on a paid or voluntary basis or from groups of children and young people who use these services and are being supported by a paid worker or volunteer.

CWDC will offer £4000 for applications from practitioners and £4500 for applications from children and young people, supported by a paid worker or volunteer. All the PLR projects will receive ongoing support from a dedicated research mentor throughout the project. The programme will start in September 2009 and conclude in April 2010 with a series of celebration events.

Closing date for applications: 1pm, 10 July 2009 **Reference:** RE0801/009/CT

How to apply: If you are interested in finding out more about this opportunity please visit: www.cwdcouncil.org.uk/tenders/show/85. If you have any questions regarding the PLR programme e-mail: tenders@cwdcouncil.org.uk with the appropriate reference code in the email subject line.

Applications should be returned to: Tenders, Children's Workforce Development Council, 2nd Floor City Exchange, 11 Albion Street, LEEDS, LS1 5ES.