










RESEARCH DIGEST

2006 Issue 3

Prepared by

Harriet Bretherton, Research Co-ordinator
Steve Huzzard, Service Manager, Sandbach
Peter Little, FCA, Shropshire









Research studies and articles based on research


Author	BARN R
Title	Parenting in multi-racial Britain
Date	2006
Publisher	JRF
Key words	Parents, Diversity (Ethnic minority)
Summary	<p>Aim: To explore the views and experiences of 'ordinary' minority ethnic and white parents on family support, education, discipline and the process of acculturation.</p> <p>Methodology: A survey of 385 parents (272 mothers and 113 fathers) was undertaken in London and Berkshire. The ethnic groups included Asian (156), black (106) and white (123). 61 semi-structured interviews were held with 45 mothers and 16 fathers.</p> <p>Findings (Taken from the JRF findings):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Minority ethnic family life is complex and needs to be understood in the context of migration, ethnicity, socio-economic circumstances, multiculturalism, and racism. <small>related Findings </small> • Contact with family and friends varied across ethnic groupings. Minority ethnic families reported more frequent contacts with the wider family network than white families. White families reported more frequent contact with friends. <small>related Findings </small> • The impact of migration and the fragmentation of families affected the extent to which wider family members were available to support some minority ethnic families. <small>related Findings </small> • The demarcation between public and private concerns seems to be in evidence in different ethnic groups. Some ethnic groups felt able to raise concerns about poor housing and lack of finance; they were less likely to vocalise their children's behaviour as problematic to outsiders. <small>related Findings </small> • The task of ethnic and racial socialisation is a challenging but important one for minority parents and children. In addition to creating a positive, nurturing and supportive environment, minority parents have additional tasks of giving positive messages about difference and diversity and developing a sense of belonging. <small>related Findings </small> • Parents employ a range of discipline strategies. The findings challenge the supposition that physical punishment is more prevalent or harsh in some minority cultures. <small>related Findings </small> • Most parents wished to be involved in their children's education, regardless of ethnic background and socio-economic status. Black and Asian parents placed an enormous importance on the value of education, something less prominent among the white group. <small>related Findings </small>

	Limitations: From a CAF/CASS perspective, the issue of parental separation is not addressed though this is a key experience for all communities in the UK.
Reviewed by	HB

Author	BELSKY Jay; FEARON Pasco
Title	Early attachment security, subsequent maternal sensitivity, and later child development: Does continuity in development depend upon continuity of caregiving?
Date	2002
Journal	Attachment & Human Development
Issue	4/3
Key words	Child psychology (Attachment), Case practice (Assessment)
Summary	<p>Aim: The study tested the hypothesis that children with secure infant-mother attachments at 15 months and subsequent sensitive maternal care would function more competently at 3 yrs than infants with insecure attachments at 15 months and subsequent insensitive care and that children with inconsistent maternal care would function in between.</p> <p>Methodology: 1364 infants were enrolled in NICHD studies in ten cities in the US IN 1991. 1053 children remained in the study at age 3. attachment was measured at 15 months, maternal sensitivity at 24 months and developmental outcomes at 36 months.</p> <p>Findings:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As hypothesised children with secure attachments and subsequent sensitive mothering functioned more competently at 3 years than children with discontinuous histories, who themselves functioned more competently than children with insecure attachments and subsequent insensitive mothering • For children with discontinuous histories, those who experienced attachment insecurity followed by high levels of maternal sensitivity functioned significantly better than those with secure attachment and subsequent low levels of maternal sensitivity. The study appears to suggest that the effects on later functioning of subsequent sensitive care are stronger than those of the initial attachment status. • Where children had discontinuous histories, this was associated with increased or decreased life stresses for the mother (depression, financial problems and support) • When socio-economic factors were controlled for the results remained the same with the exception of problem behaviour which was not predicted by attachment history and maternal sensitivity. <p>Limitations: This is a US study. The children remained in the care of their mothers.</p>
Reviewed by	HB

Author	CASHMORE Judy & PAXMAN Marina
Title	Predicting after-care outcomes: the importance of 'felt' security
Journal	Child & Family Social Work
Date	2006
Volume/issue	Volume 11 Issue 3
Subject (key words)	Looked after children (Care leavers), Case practice
Summary	<p>Aim: To examine the links between placement stability, perceived or 'felt' security and later outcomes for young people 4-5 years after they left care.</p> <p>Method: Based on a four-wave longitudinal study of 47 young people leaving care in New South Wales, Australia. 'Four wave' means that the young people were interviewed at four separate points before and after leaving care.</p> <p>Findings: Specific findings were as follows: -</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The young women had much higher rates of living in a partnership and having children, than their age peers in the general population • All, except one of the young people who said that they had felt secure had been stable in care, mostly in long term foster placements • The more secure they said they felt in care, the longer young people had stayed in their in-care placement after leaving care • Only 3 of the 13 young people who had not felt secure at all in care had found even moderate levels of social support • 21 out of 27 who felt some level of security in care had 'moderate to strong' social support after leaving care. • The more problems young people had in care, the lower their later positive outcome score, based on their functioning as adults • 43% of the young women were considered to be faring well, whereas only 15% of the young men were, confirming the findings of other studies. • Young people's sense of security was a better predictor of well-being than their actual placement stability, in particular the development of meaningful and trusting relationships <p>The authors discuss the practice implications including the need to minimise changes of placement through timely decisions when children enter care, and intervening early to address behaviour problems. They also emphasise the need for continuity of relationships with those around them.</p> <p>Limitations: The original sample of 91 young adults were representative of the care population as a whole. However 44 could not be interviewed, of whom 9 declined to take part. The non-interview group had significantly higher numbers of placements and behaviour problems. The findings therefore underestimate the difficulties of young people who 'age out of care'. The authors also acknowledge the overall sample size to be small.</p>
Reviewed by	SH

Author	CATER S; COLEMAN L
Title	'Planned' teenage pregnancy: Views and experiences of young people from poor and disadvantage backgrounds Findings Full Report
Date	2006
Publisher	JRF
Key words	Adolescence (Teenage pregnancy)
Summary	<p>Aim: To understand what influences a young person's decision to plan a pregnancy</p> <p>Methodology: This is a qualitative study in which 41 young women and 10 young men who reported a 'planned' pregnancy were interviewed in depth. All those interviewed were white. They came from areas of high disadvantage and poverty.</p> <p>Findings: (Taken from the JRF Findings)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 'Planning' ranged from open discussion with partners and taking steps to ensure a positive and healthy pregnancy, to those who were more ambivalent and fatalistic about the prospects of pregnancy despite being aware of how to use contraception. <small>related Findings</small>  • Most 'planned' pregnancies were not directly related to the desire for a child, but to young people's background or their current situation. <small>related Findings</small>  • An unsettled background and bad experiences at school provided an impetus to 'change direction' in life. Young people saw parenthood as an opportunity, within their own control, to change their life and to gain independence and a new identity. <small>related Findings</small>  • Neighbourhood characteristics influenced decisions, including limited employment and training opportunities and local acceptance of young parenthood. <small>related Findings</small>  • Mothers saw parenthood as providing an opportunity to create a loving family (often compensating for their own bad experiences of childhood), a new purpose, sense of capability and satisfaction. Motherhood was preferred to having a low-paid, 'dead-end' job. <small>related Findings</small>  • Many mothers spoke of their love of babies, often heightened by experience caring for other children. Several wanted to 'get motherhood out of the way', so as to be young enough to enjoy life once their child had grown up. <small>related Findings</small>  • Many said that their life would have been worse if they had not become a parent - through continued family disruption and unhappiness, a growing sense of worthlessness and lack of direction and, for some, worsening alcohol and drug use. <small>related Findings</small>  • Young fathers gave similar reasons for 'planning', but there were also differences, such as their own lack of a 'father figure' and wanting to be there for their child. They could have notably less input in the 'planning' stage than the mother and were also more likely to regret the decision. <small>related Findings</small>  • The study shows that 'planned' teenage pregnancy has

	<p>different motivations. But, given their disadvantaged backgrounds, teenagers saw young parenthood as a reasonably rational choice and, unlike most alternative ways of changing their life, one within their own control.</p> <p>related <i>Findings</i> </p> <p>Limitations: As with many JRF research studies, the sample is small and not likely to be representative. This limits the generalisability of the findings.</p>
Reviewed by	HB

Author	CHASE Elaine; SIMON Antonia; JACKSON Sonia (Eds)
Title	In Care and After: A Positive Perspective
Date	2006
Publisher	Routledge
Key words	Looked after children (Educational issues), Looked after children (Residential care), Looked after children (Care leavers), Social polity
Summary	<p>Aim: The aim of this book is to bring together a range of research projects undertaken within the Thomas Coram Research Unit all focusing on young people in and leaving care.</p> <p>Methodology: The studies used a range of different social, educational and economic disciplines and take a broadly strengths based perspective.</p> <p>Findings: The book opens with an interesting historical overview of the child care system as it has developed in the UK. The point is made that from 1948, education and social care have been the responsibility of different national and local government departments. The educational and welfare needs of children looked after by the state have not therefore been approached in a holistic way. Structures have only recently changed with the DfES taking responsibility for child welfare and with the establishment of LA Children's Services incorporating education and child care.</p> <p>Subsequent chapters deal with the lack of hard evidence on outcomes for children looked after away from home; the very poor educational outcomes for these children; early parenthood amongst care leavers; private fostering; residential care and the hearing the voices of looked after children through advocacy and research.</p> <p>One of the most thought provoking chapters was on the comparison of residential care in Germany, Denmark and the UK. In Germany and Denmark the discipline of 'pedagogy' plays a key role in the care of children who cannot live at home. "In 'pedagogy' care and education meet." In continental Europe 'pedagogy' implies work with the whole child, "body, mind, feelings, spirit and creativity." Residential establishments in Germany and Denmark employ trained pedagogues who will have higher qualifications than social workers in this country. On a number of outcomes measures the children in residential homes in Germany and Denmark seem to do better than those in the UK; though it is true that the children who are placed in residential homes in the UK are more disadvantaged than those</p>

	<p>in Germany and Denmark. The authors note the irony that the country which places the most disadvantage in residential homes also employs the least qualified staff in those homes.</p> <p>Limitations: The title of this book encouraged me to expect a more positive view of the experiences of looked after children than is usually encountered. I was disappointed. There was no escaping the dismal social and educational outcomes for the majority of children whose parents cannot look after them and for whom the state takes on a parental role.</p>
Reviewed by	HB

Author	ESRC/SCOTTISH EXECUTIVE
Title	Private arrangements for contact with children
Date	2006
Publisher	ESRC
Key words	Contact
Summary	<p>Aim: To gain insight into the private arrangements families make relating to contact and how they work.</p> <p>Methodology: The publication is based on presentations given at a seminar by Dr Fran Wasoff and Dr Bren Neale</p> <p>Findings: In the absence of research evidence from Scotland, Fran Wasoff summarises findings from England, Sweden, Norway and Australia about how contact arrangements are negotiated and how they work. Bren Neale reported on research she had done with Carol Smart which demonstrated the importance of children being involved in decision making, of flexibility over time and of the quality of relationships. (Neale B, Smart C (2001) <i>Good to Talk: Conversations with Children after Divorce</i> London Young Voice)</p> <p>Limitations: This a sketchy summary of the research on contact arrangements with its origins as two seminar presentations evident</p>
Reviewed by	HB

Author	FARMER, E., MOYERS S., AND LIPSCOMBE J
Title	Fostering adolescents
Date	2004
Publisher	Jessica Kingsley
Key words	Fostering, Adolescence
Summary	<p>“A rich source of recommendations for social workers, policy makers and carers, this book will be invaluable to anyone involved in the fields of child welfare and child protection”. So reads the cover on this book. I am afraid I was disappointed. Given that for about 75% of children there is no choice of foster placement so matching becomes impossible and that adolescents are the hardest group to foster and have high rates of placement breakdown, I accept that there are no easy answers. However some of the key findings of the study could seem patronising to those for whom the book would be “invaluable”. I doubt many in this category would need to know that research shows that practitioners should avoid making placements when the foster carers are reluctant to take a young person or have expressed a general preference for an adolescent of the opposite sex. Similarly it would be no surprise to know that a “very strong finding in the study” was</p>

	<p>that when the fostered young person had a negative impact on the other children in the foster family, the placement was more likely to disrupt.</p> <p>The study is part of the research initiative on Supporting Parenting, which is accompanied by a series of books edited by David Quinton. The idea, supported by an extensive government-funded research programme is an admirable one – how we can best support parents and carers as part of an integrated service for children. Fourteen local authorities and two independent fostering agencies were involved in the research for this study. Elaine Farmer is Professor Child and Family Studies at Bristol university, and her co-authors are research associates in the School for Policy Studies.</p> <p>The book would be an informative read for those carers who are already fostering or are contemplating applying. Training and support for carers seem to be the key to improving services for the children looked after. Contact issues, for example, are sensitive and sometimes difficult for carers. On a more practical level, pay and financial support are crucial to those doing this responsible and draining work. There are findings that the availability of family placement workers and especially social workers is often a problem. It would be helpful to carers who were feeling a lack of support to know that they were not in a unique situation. It may also encourage them to be more assertive in asking for services which are required if outcomes for foster placements are to be improved, especially for adolescents who require the most skilful parenting approaches. In this regard there are interesting chapters on “The young people’s behaviour in the placements” and “The parenting approaches of the foster carers”.</p>
Reviewed by	Janet Sivills

Author	FORTIN Jane, RITCHIE Charlotte, & BUCHANAN Ann
Title	Young adults’ perceptions of court-ordered contact
Journal	Child and Family Law Quarterly
Date	2006
Volume/issue	Volume 18, No 2
Subject (key words)	Contact, children’s views, family proceedings
Summary	<p>Family courts partly operate on the assumption that court-ordered contact will probably be of lasting benefit to the child concerned, as an alternative to no contact between the child and the non-resident parent. Is this so? No specific research has so far addressed the longer term outcomes of court-ordered contact and conflict.</p> <p>Aim: To examine the childhood experiences of a group of young adults whose parents sought court assistance over contact arrangements.</p> <p>Methodology: 103 young adults were recruited, principally through universities. Therefore nearly two thirds were from families with professional, managerial or technical occupations. Of the whole sample, more than a quarter (28) had been involved in court-ordered contact.</p> <p>Telephone interviews were conducted using set questions and standard questionnaires, which assess psychological</p>

functioning and relationship and attachment patterns.

Findings: Key findings were as follows: -

- More than half the respondents felt that the court's decision was the right one
- More than half felt that the court decision helped
- Nearly two thirds thought it had been worth getting a contact order
- Where the court order had helped, it was not just the outcome but also the resolving of conflict and tension that helped
- Where contact orders had, in the participants' eyes, got things wrong, the difficulties were exacerbated. Orders were simply disobeyed. Nearly half of these cases involved domestic violence or violence that was linked to the mental illness of a partner.
- Court involvement was associated with more negative outcomes of separation/divorce, but the link may be through the established harm created by continuing parental conflict.
- Nearly two thirds of those whose parents went to court said that it had taken more than ten years to get over the divorce, compared with well over a third of those not involved with the court over contact.
- Further confirmation is provided that the court process is an extremely stressful one for parents and children, not necessarily ameliorated by contact with professionals including CWOs
- Where violence was cited as the main reason for the divorce, half still reported a good relationship with the parent who had been violent
- Overall, fathers gain improved relationships with their children from the court process where mothers are mentally ill or where the mothers had had affairs. Mothers gain improved relationships where fathers have been violent, or there is a mixture of violence/affair/alcoholism on the father's side
- Of participants aged five and over at the time of the court hearing, half felt that the court had not understood them
- Where a court report had been written, one third felt that they had been able to say everything they wanted to say
- 3 of the 28 volunteered the information that their views as children may have been influenced by a particular parent, usually the resident one
- Problems cited in child – CWO communication include: -
 - Children could not say what they wished to say in front of a parent or sibling
 - They sometimes felt patronised by the CWO and therefore did not cooperate with him/her
 - The CWO did not always spend enough time with them in exploring what was, for many, the first significant decision in their lives
 - CWOs sometimes did not write down accurately what the children had said or convey their meaning to the court
 - Some respondents had deliberately disguised the

	<p>existence of domestic violence [although they probably would not know what was stated in court papers]</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The majority of the respondents expressed the need for some form of neutral support or supporter • A quarter would have welcomed more information and explanation • They thought that should have been interviewed in familiar surroundings, by someone familiar to them, who had real knowledge and expertise, in the absence of parents and siblings, in the presence of a neutral supporter, and not have their views represented in a way that suggested that they had 'betrayed' a parent <p>The discussion of the findings addresses the strengths and limitations of the study, the problem of domestic violence, the use of mediation and current court and CAFCASS practice. They conclude that it may be unrealistic to expect the court and CAFCASS officers alone to resolve extreme family difficulties without additional therapeutic help for the parents. Their central conclusion is that the research confirms that the two main tenets of family court practice – the assumption of the benefits of contact with the non-resident parent, and that the benefits of court-enforced contact outweigh the obvious costs of court conflict – remain unsupported by evidence.</p> <p>Limitations: The authors acknowledge the bias in the sample population, but say this may reduce the possible effect of economic factors. There was also a gender bias of 3: 2 (women: men), and no information about ethnicity. The authors recognise the limits of retrospective self-reporting, and the potential for perceptions to be changed by later events.</p>
Reviewed by	SH

Author	FOWLER E; BERRY W
Title	The Need for Legal Advice, Information and Support when Parental Relationships Breakdown: Children and Young People Talking
Journal	Representing Children
Date	June 2006
Volume/issue	18(3); pp 154 - 65
Subject (key words)	Children's views/participation,
Summary	<p>Aim: To hear the views of children on their need for legal advice, information and support when parental relationships breakdown</p> <p>Methodology: Describes a study in which 55 children and young people volunteered to take part in focus groups to discuss the above. The researchers worked in Merseyside recruiting children from 3 primary schools and 3 secondary schools. The focus groups were managed by 2 moderators. The groups were asked to work on 10 topics and the transcripts were broken down into text segments for analysis.</p> <p>Findings: There were responses that reflected:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the strong sense of uncertainty and loss for children when parental relationships broke down;

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the pain of parents ‘not loving each other’; • the difficulty of ‘speaking out’ for fear of hurting one or other parent; • the lack of information and advice; • the difficulty of negotiating their own needs when parents have their own agenda; • the need to be heard and to contribute to decisions making about them ‘without upsetting anyone’; • coping with the practical and emotional implications of living in reconstituted families and having two homes. <p>Limitations: This is a small scale, non-random sample; responses would have been influenced by group dynamics and the adult moderators. It is therefore of limited value even though the responses are relevant and interesting.</p>
Reviewed by	PL

Author	FREEMAN Marilyn
Title	International Child Abduction: The Effects
Date	2006
Publisher	reunite
Key words	Family law (Abduction), (Family law (International), Contact,
Summary	<p>Aim: To understand the child’s experience of abduction</p> <p>Methodology: The study used a sample from the earlier <i>Outcomes for Children Returned Following an Abduction</i>. 25 adults from that sample were interviewed plus 5 adults with experience of abduction who contacted reunite. Ten children from 7 families were interviewed.</p> <p>Findings:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The children were well cared for during the abduction • Where the children were abducted by their primary carers they did not see it as an abduction. Where the abductor was not the primary carer, they did • Few children were afraid during their time away and indeed some viewed this time as a holiday • It was when the child was returned that profound and disturbing effects became evident. Parents and children found it difficult to trust family members and other people. This was particularly evident when legal proceedings continued • Children suffered where contact was not facilitated after the abduction • The effects of the abduction were intensified where conflict between the parents continued. <p>Limitations: The small sample makes it difficult to generalise the findings</p>
Reviewed by	HB

Author	FROST S; MOSELY F; TIERNEY S; HUTTON A; ELLIS A; DUFFY M; NEWMAN T WITH SCOTT S; PETTITT B
Title	The evidence guide: using research and evaluation in social care and allied professions
Date	2006
Publisher	Barnardo's/ What Works for Children?/ Centre for Evidence-Based Social Services
Key words	Evidence informed practice, Training
Summary	<p>Aim: This is a learning resource “aimed at increasing the use of research evidence in practice in social care.”</p> <p>Resources: There are five Learner Packs and five corresponding Trainer Packs both covering:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Using Research Evidence in Practice: An introduction • Locating Research Evidence • Appraising and Reviewing Research Evidence • Adapting and Applying Evidence: Issues for individual practitioners and organisations • Outcome focused evaluation. <p>The Learner Packs are for individual learning and the Trainer Packs provide material for training sessions.</p> <p>Comment: These packs are well produced, easy to use and an invaluable addition to the resources of any social care organisation committed to developing evidence based practice and services. The statistically and IT challenged will gain confidence and essential skills. At the same time, those with some experience of accessing and using research will find the step by step approach builds on existing skills and clarifies the “whys” and “hows” of evidence informed practice.</p> <p>Module 2, on locating research evidence covers formulating the research question and using a comprehensive of sources (search engines, websites, databases, gateways and printed material) to find evidence.</p> <p>Module 3, on appraising and reviewing research evidence examines the different questions which can be answered by quantitative and qualitative methods. It summarises the strengths and weaknesses of different types of quantitative study and explains the statistical tools that have to be applied to assess the validity of the findings.</p> <p>Module 4 is about adapting and applying evidence. This is a key issue for any organisation or practitioner wishing to deliver services that are informed by evidence. In my view this is the trickiest stage in the evidence informed process. Where services are being developed, research evidence has to be weighed against other cultural, resource and practice issues. How should this be done? Where decisions are being made on individual cases, research evidence, which necessarily relates to aggregated groups, can only provide a context for decision making. How do the findings which relate to groups of children relate to the individual child? It would have been helpful if this module had grasped the nettle of the practical application of research evidence in the “clinical” setting.</p> <p>Module 5 provides a clear and reassuring step by step guide to evaluating services. The stress is rightly on the evaluation of measurable outcomes.</p> <p>Limitations: As already indicated, the <i>Evidence Guide</i> does</p>

	<p>not help the individual practitioner weigh up evidence in individual cases. Perhaps this should be Barnardo's next project. To my mind, the <i>Guide</i> does not sufficiently highlight the need for those who are developing new services to evidence the outcomes they are seeking to achieve and the process for achieving them. Where existing services are concerned, insufficient attention is paid to the messiness of most social care provision, often provided without an evidence base. Guidance is needed on the appraisal of existing services from an evidence perspective.</p> <p>On a resource note, what a pity that funding was not found to allow this excellent guide to be posted on the internet which would have extended its influence further than the current printed version.</p> <p>For information on prices and ordering click here. Each module can be bought separately and used independently.</p>
Reviewed by	HB








Author	JANE HELD CONSULTING LTD
Title	The Use by Local Authorities of Secure Children's Homes
Date	2006
Publisher	DfES
Key words	Local authorities, Secure accommodation
Summary	<p>Aim: To study the use made by LAs of Secure Children's Homes (SCH) under s25 of the Children Act 1989, and in particular to understand why there has been a fall in demand of SCHs.</p> <p>Methodology: This is a small qualitative study. 13 senior or middles LA managers were interviewed over the phone.</p> <p>Findings: (A selection of the key findings from the study follow)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The use of SCH's was dropping as the result of conscious changes in approach, practice and expectation by Local Authorities. • All the Local Authorities interviewed (including those who provided SCH's) accepted that there would always be a need for some use of secure settings but felt it should be very small. • Two thirds of Local Authorities saw them as a placement of last resort and only to be used when every other possible alternative has been tried. The outcomes for these Local Authorities were less effective than for those who saw it as a potential positive intervention. • There is a different approach taken in the process of assessment, decision making and placement with girls and with boys, with different thresholds of concern and intervention. Judgements about risk also tend to be different depending on gender • Contract and highly specialised foster care is seen as a more effective response to many very troubled and troublesome young people. The majority of Local Authorities were acting responsibly in the exercise of their approach to those alternatives. • The quality of the non secure types of provision now being used and developed as alternatives to using a welfare

	<p>secure placement is steadily improving and is being carefully managed.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is a lack of confidence in the ability of SCH providers to provide high quality, purposeful, outcome focused services with the right individual therapeutic input and there was a view that other providers can provide better services. • There was a unanimous view that when a secure placement or equivalent alternative is identified as needed, finance is not a constraint, not are the procedures to obtain an order. The current requirement for gaining the Secretary of State's • permission for placements of under 13 year olds was seen as appropriate. • Availability can be a real constraint, (even with an increasing number of unused placements) both in terms of relatively local provision, and in terms of the availability of a placement that can meet the specific need when required. • There is still significant use of SCH's as the only way to achieve a safe setting for a young person with severe mental health problems when there is no available tier 4 CAMHS service or when there is disagreement (legal as well as professional) about the ability to appropriately use tier 4 NHS provision. <p>Limitations: The sample is small and not supported by quantitative data on use of SCHs or outcomes.</p>
Reviewed by	HB

Author	KAY Sue
Title	Where do very young children and their parents derive support during parental separation?
Date	2006
Journal	Family Court Journal
Issue	4/1
Key words	Support services, Divorce/separation
Summary	<p>Aim: The article reports on a study designed to explore the issues for practitioners working in early years settings when young children experience parental separation</p> <p>Methodology: The article discusses the literature and reports on questionnaires received from three mothers of young children in early years settings.</p> <p>Findings:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The mothers had sought informal support from staff where their children were at nursery or school • They had found this support helpful • One mother would have liked more formal and specific support • They did not distinguish between support for themselves and their children <p>Limitations: The sample is far too small to draw even qualitative inferences and relates only to mothers. What the mothers say is not out of line with other research findings</p>
Reviewed by	HB

Author	KEMP Vicky; PLEASENCE Pascoe; BALMER Nigel J
Title	Incentivising disputes: The Role of Public Funding in Private Law Children Cases
Date	2005
Journal	Journal of Social Welfare and Family Law
Issue	27/2
Key words	Family law (Family proceedings), Legal representation (Lawyers)
Summary	<p>Aim: To explore the impact of legal aid on private law proceedings.</p> <p>Methodology: Data relating to 280 legal aid cases in 2004 was analysed. Interviews were held with 18 family lawyers and 6 LSC caseworkers. Data from the current study was compared with an earlier study, Mclean S (1998) <i>Report of the case profiling study: Legal aid and the family justice system</i> Legal Aid Board Research Unit.</p> <p>Findings:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The average cost of a case was £3,654 and the median £2,455 • Costs and delay increased markedly between 1998 and 2004 • Variability in costs related to the number of hearings (34% of variability), case duration (11%) and use of counsel (9%) • The discussions with solicitors suggested that activity and therefore legal aid costs could be driven by other solicitors' desire to maximise profits. Delay and repeat applications were more evident in legally aided than privately funded cases. <p>Limitations: The data did not compare legally aided with privately funded cases. It was not therefore possible to establish to what extent legally aided cases take longer and involve more applications. The argument that publicly funded cases are "supplier driven" is plausible but not demonstrated through this research.</p>
Reviewed by	HB

Author	PIKE Alison; COLDWELL Joanne; DUNN Judy
Title	Family relationships in middle childhood Findings Full report
Date	2006
Publisher	JRF
Key words	Families (Siblings), Child psychology (Child development)
Summary	<p>Aim: To explore parent-child relationships in families with at least two children aged 4-8.</p> <p>Methodology: Interviews were conducted with parents and children in 55 lone-mother families and 118 two-parents families. Standardised tests were used and parents and children had to complete a structured task together.</p> <p>Findings: (Taken from the JRF findings)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • While mothers and fathers described similar relationships with their children, differences apparent to observers were not 'seen' by the family. Rather, family

	<p>members saw 'through' differences in behaviour to similar feelings underlying it. <small>related Findings</small> </p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The 'climate' of the home, such as whether the home felt organised and whether parents got on together, helped explain how well siblings got on together and how fathers got on with their children better than 'structural' variables such as children's age, gender or intelligence. <small>related Findings</small>  • Family climate was less important to mothers. Rather, factors such as the mother's mental health, temperament, and education were important to how they got on with their children. <small>related Findings</small>  • Issues such as crowding and social class were not related to the quality of relationships in the home. <small>related Findings</small>  • The sibling relationship played an important part in explaining differences in children's adjustment, even when controlling for the impact of the parenting they experienced. <small>related Findings</small>  • Within families, differences in siblings' adjustment were due, in part, to different treatment by their parents and, in part, to temperamental differences between the siblings. <small>related Findings</small>  • Although lone-mother households experienced different circumstances and backgrounds, they were no different from two-parent homes in the quality of relationships between mothers and their children. <small>related Findings</small>  <p>Limitations: As is often the case, the fathers of the "lone parent families" were not involved in the research and not mentioned in the findings. The result is that an important dimension of systemic analysis of these families is left out.</p>
Reviewed by	HB

Author	SELWYN Julie, FRAZER Lesley & WRIGHTON Peter
Title	More than just a letter: Service user perspectives on one local authority's adoption postbox service
Journal	Adoption & Fostering
Date	Summer 2006
Volume/issue	Volume 30, No 2
Subject (key words)	Adoption (Birth relatives)
Summary	<p>Using postbox services has become the prevalent method of enabling limited communication to continue between adoptive and birth families, but little is known about their effectiveness.</p> <p>Aim: To evaluate experience with one local authority's postbox service</p> <p>Methodology: A combination of retrospective examination of arrangements made between 2001-3, a focus group of current social work practitioners, and interviews with birth relatives and adopters.</p>

	<p>85 adults were contacted in 35 postbox arrangements; 48 declined to be involved, 38 birth relatives and 10 adopters. At least one party was interviewed in 66% of the arrangements. Notably the interviewees were almost exclusively female and white.</p> <p>Findings: The researchers' overall impression was that adopters and extended birth families showed immense goodwill and perseverance with the postbox in the belief that children would benefit in the long run. The social workers were more sceptical about whether adopters would stop using the postbox as soon as they were able.</p> <p>Birth parents were, perhaps unsurprisingly, the least likely to sustain active involvement, often feeling 'daunted at many levels by the prospect of writing'. Where birth parents had continued with the postbox, this was linked to the availability of help from another relative in writing letters.</p> <p>Recommendations include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The inclusion of extended birth family members in arrangements who can provide support in writing • More guidance to parties in what to write • The need for social work support in clarifying and reviewing arrangements, and help untangle misunderstandings between parties • Clearer guidelines on what it is appropriate to forward <p>Limitations: The authors acknowledge that the sample of those people willing to be involved under-represented arrangements which had been less successful, which possibly explains the social workers' apparent greater scepticism. The limitations of research based on one unnamed local authority are obvious, in terms of typicality and the generalisability of results.</p>
Reviewed by	SH

Author	SMITH Leanne
Title	Is three a crowd? Lesbian mothers' perspectives on parental status in law
Journal	Child and Family Law Quarterly
Date	2006
Volume/issue	Volume 18, No 2
Subject (key words)	Families (lesbian parents), family law
Summary	<p>Aim: To examine the experience of lesbian parents of the law's approach to the social and genetic aspects of parenting.</p> <p>Methodology: Interviewed 16 lesbian mothers and co-parents, all now in long term lesbian relationships. Five had conceived during earlier heterosexual relationships, two conceived by donor insemination whilst single, and the remaining nine had planned pregnancies with lesbian partners.</p> <p>Findings: Relationships were essentially to be negotiated between those involved. Whilst the main co-parents tended towards strongly equal parenting, the position of biological fathers remained fluid, indeed the use of the term father was avoided at times.</p> <p>The author concludes that the law does not accommodate easily the complexities of social and genetic parenting, and</p>

	presents a major problem for lesbian parents in spite of Baroness Hale's landmark support. Limitations: The voice of the children concerned remains silent.
Reviewed by	SH

Author	STANTON Andy
Title	In Defence of Common Sense Or what is meant by Evidence Based Practice?
Date	2006
Journal	Family Court Journal
Issue	4/1
Key words	Evidence informed practice, Case practice CAFCASS
Summary	<p>Stanton asks how far research evidence can be used and relied on in CAFCASS' work with children. He justifiably points out that research findings can contradict each other, that some research is poorly conducted and that some research sets out to prove rather than test a hypothesis. Though Stanton is rightly sceptical of some research and the claims arising from it, the growing body of research knowledge about children in public care and following parental separation does not support a radically agnostic position. We do know quite a bit but we need to keep asking questions about research assumptions, beliefs, methods and conclusions.</p> <p>This article examines the genuine problems associated with the application of research evidence to individual practice, problems of selection, critical appraisal and the weight to be given to research findings as against other knowledge derived from 'clinical' and lived experience. Research is about the characteristics of groups whereas practice is about understanding and making decisions with individuals.</p>
Reviewed by	HB

Author	STOBART Eleanor
Title	Child Abuse Linked to Accusations of "Possession" and "Witchcraft"
Date	2006
Publisher	DfES
Key words	Child protection, Safeguarding, Diversity (Ethnic minority)
Summary	<p>Aim:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To establish the scale and extent of child abuse related to accusations of "possession" or "witchcraft" To produce an analysis of the key features of known cases To identify good practice in child protection and community involvement across the public sector, non-governmental organisations, voluntary organisations and faith-based organisations To place the issue in an international context. <p>Methodology: Desk research, discussions with professionals with knowledge of the subject and an examination of cases occurring since January 2000. 74 cases of child abuse linked to accusations of "possession" and "witchcraft" were identified but only 38 had identifying features allowing the cases to be analysed.</p>

	<p>Findings:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The proportion of identified abuse cases linked to “possession” and “witchcraft” is a very small proportion compared with the number of children on the CPRs (30,700) and child protection enquiries (72,100) • The abuse relates to “exorcism” and will take the form of severe beating, starving , burning and isolation. • The perpetrators are usually carers – often not the parents – and usually takes place in the home • Some common features of these cases include lack of clarity about the child’s relationship with the carer, the child being scapegoated or disabled and significant stresses on the family • In the judgement of professionals, children abused following accusations of possession suffered lasting damage in many areas of their lives • 18 of the children were taken into care. Most carers did not object to this happening. In 10 cases the child was taken abroad and their whereabouts were unknown • One case involved a white English family. The rest were first or second generation immigrants who faced major economic and social stresses • The children and the adults they lived with moved frequently, often changing school and moving between countries, increasing their vulnerability • Cases went unrecognised by professionals and were often inappropriately handled, failing to provide protection to the child <p>The Report ends with recommendations for improving practice</p> <p>Limitations: The number of cases is very small and it is impossible to know the full scale of the problem</p>
Reviewed by	HB

Author	TURNEY Lyn
Title	Paternity Testing and the Biological Determination of Fatherhood
Date	2006
Journal	Journal of Family Studies
Issue	12/1
Key words	Human Embryology and Fertilisation Act (Paternity)
Summary	<p>Aim: To gain an understanding of the personal and subjective experience of paternity testing</p> <p>Methodology: This article reports on the experiences of 21 men who had had a paternity test. They were a subset of a wider sample which included mothers where a partner had taken a paternity test. The sample was recruited by advertising and through community groups. Interviews were conducted over the phone.</p> <p>Findings:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The experiences of the men were very diverse in terms of their situations and their reactions to the results of the tests. Some were contesting paternity often in relation to child support and others discovered after establishing a relationship with the child that they were not the bio-father.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bio-fathers who were tested for child support purposes rarely established a relationship with the child • Bio-fathers who had not known about a relationship sometimes regretted the loss of a relationship with their child • Non bio-fathers who had established a relationship with the child in the belief that they were the bio-father were often devastated by the test result. Most then withdrew from the family, ceased paying maintenance and ended the relationship with the child. This was experienced as a severe loss as they had bonded with the child and taken on the role of father. A few men in this situation were able to continue the relationship with their child prioritising their established social relationship over the lack of biological link • Turney argues that biology is both “everything and nothing”. It is everything for bio-fathers who are sentenced to pay child maintenance but nothing for them in that they have and feel no relationship with their biological child. Conversely biology meant nothing to non bio-fathers who had an established relationship with a child. It did not change their feelings for the child or diminish their sense of loss. However, it meant everything in that they were permanently separated from the child they loved • Turney argues that technological developments have given pre-eminence to biological ties and devalued the emotional and social bonds established between men and children with whom they have established a fathering relationship <p>Limitations: This is a small and self-selected sample.</p>
Reviewed by	HB

Author	WESTCOTT, Helen
Title	Child witness testimony: what do we know and where are we going?
Journal	Child and Family Law Quarterly
Date	2006
Volume/issue	Volume 18 No 2
Subject (key words)	Children’s views/participation (Advocacy for Children), Family law
Summary	<p>Aim: The author, a senior lecturer in psychology, considers research in relation to children's testimony as witnesses, focussing on children's ability as witnesses, the adult's interviewing practice, and the questioning environment.</p> <p>Methodology: Research review, with discussion and comments.</p> <p>Findings: The research indicates that children can achieve scores of 80-90 percent recall when questioned fairly soon after an event in a supportive and appropriate manner. Factors which promote accuracy include: -</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Using open questions e.g. "what happened today" • Avoiding closed questions, which limit the child's options • Avoiding leading questions, which suggest an answer • Avoiding formal, complex or jargon-laden language • Using a friendly (but neutral) questioning manner • Using positive body posture

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintaining eye contact • Establishing good rapport • Clarifying expectations, such as wanting detailed responses, no guessing etc • Avoiding an overly formal physical environment e.g. a courtroom • Avoiding repeatedly asking misleading questions • Avoiding questioning in an over-authoritative manner <p>It is therefore clearly apparent why legal cross-examination is difficult for children.</p> <p>The author highlights gaps in research knowledge including the effect of learning difficulties, being bilingual, or having been abused. She criticises the legal emphasis on children providing consistent accounts, when they may simply select different aspects of an event to report at different interviews.</p> <p>She notes that in spite of several government initiatives no improvement has been made as yet to relevant conviction rates.</p>
Reviewed by	SH

