



RESEARCH DIGEST

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Prepared by

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Research studies and articles based on research

Author	Barratt M
Title	Organisational support for evidence-based practice within child and family social work: a collaborative study
Journal	Child and Family Social Work
Date	May 2003
Volume/issue	Vol 8 No 2
Subject (key words)	Evidence-based practice, SSDs
Summary	<p>A report from Research in Practice on a 2 year collaborative project involving 100 professionals from SSDs in 6 LAs to assess how evidence-based practice (EBP) can be supported or frustrated in social care organisations.</p> <p>They found that there were significant problems in disseminating research evidence. There was also however considerable uncertainty amongst teams about the nature of evidence in social care and its validity in relation to decision-making, policy and planning.</p> <p>Practitioners tended to consider EBP as being more relevant to service design and strategic direction for the agency, rather than for making decisions about individual children and families. They also thought the blame culture prevalent in social care discouraged an experimental approach to decisions. The report concludes, "social care organisations and their professional staff membership have a long way to go before the goal of truly evidence-based services for children and families can be developed and sustained".</p>
Reviewed by	SH

Author	Bellamy C and Lord G
Title	Reflections on Family Proceedings Rule 9.5
Journal	Family Law
Date	April 2003
Volume/issue	33
Subject (key words)	Private law, rule 9.5, guardians
Summary	<p>In an unusually high proportion of cases in Leeds a Guardian is appointed under Rule 9.5. The authors examined 26 court files out of a total of 34 cases in which a Rule 9.5 appointment was made in Leeds County Court from May 01 to April 02. (There were 432 s8 applications.) Cases fell broadly into the following categories:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Intractable case • Significant foreign/ethnic/cultural element • Significant health problems

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Violence and/or sexual abuse • Complex family relationships <p>The authors argue that the appointment of a Guardian under Rule 9.5 in complex cases enables the child's voice to be heard more effectively than through a welfare report.</p>
Reviewed by	HB

Author	Bernardini S and Jenkins J
Title	<u>An Overview of the Risks and Protective Factors for Children of Separation and Divorce</u>
Report	Background paper presented to the Family, Children and Youth Section, Department of Justice Canada
Date	2002
Publisher	Minister of Justice and Attorney General Canada
Subject (key words)	Separation, divorce, risks for children, protective factors for children
Summary	<p>This is an excellent overview of the research on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The association between divorce and children's adjustment • The factors associated with children's adjustment or maladjustment including an extensive review of the effect of conflict on children • Psychological tests to measure conflict in relationships and childhood disturbance. <p>In relation to risk factors, the report considers four central components of divorce; the absence of the non-resident parent; troubled parent-child relationships; economic disadvantage and parental conflict. It concludes that there is "little support for the assertion that children experience maladjustment following divorce because of the absence of their non-resident parent alone." The research suggests that the payment of child support and authoritative parenting are more important for a child's well-being than the frequency of contact. It also concludes that "the association between parental conflict and child maladjustment is unequivocal".</p>
Reviewed by	HB

Author	Davis, G, Finch, S and Barnham, L
Title	Family Solicitors and the LSC
Journal	Family Law
Date	April and May 2003
Volume/issue	33 pp 240-248 and 327 – 335
Subject (key	Legal representation, family proceedings

words)	
Summary	<p>Part 1 (April) reports on a survey of firms of solicitors (representatives from 508 firms were interviewed) on their attitude to accepting publicly funded work. The proportion of firms' work that was publicly funded fell between the time of the interviews and two year previously. Firms for whom publicly funded work represented a small proportion of their income were most likely to withdraw from legal aid work altogether.</p> <p>Part 2 (May) assesses the impact of the introduction of graduated fees for barristers in May 2000, the National Centre for Social research sent questionnaires to family solicitors and received 487 responses. A large proportion, particularly in London and the SE, reported that they found it significantly more difficult to obtain the services of a barrister to represent publicly funded parties, including children, in family proceedings.</p>
Reviews by	HB and PL

Author	Duane Y, Carr A, Cherry J, McGrath K and O'Shea D
Title	Profiles of adolescent child sexual abuse (CSA) perpetrators attending a voluntary outpatient treatment programme in Ireland.
Journal	Child Abuse Review
Date	Jan-Feb 2003
Volume and issue no	Vol12 Issue 1
Subject (key words)	Child sexual abuse, adolescent perpetrators, Ireland
Summary of article or research study	<p>A study of 22 parents using psychological assessments, compared with 19 normal controls. Higher rates were found amongst the former group of being arrested or charged with a criminal offence, personal experience of child abuse, particularly emotional abuse, parental drug or alcohol abuse, and reported difficulties in family functioning.</p> <p>The authors conclude that their findings confirm the importance of involving families in treatment programmes from an early stage.</p>
Reviewed by	SH

Author	Farmer E and Pollock S
Title	Managing sexually abused and/or abusing children in substitute care
Journal	Child and Family Social Work
Date	May 2003

Volume and issue no	Vol 8 No 2
Subject (key words)	Sexual abuse, adolescence, managing behaviour
Summary of article or research study	A report of a DoH supported research programme involving 40 children over 10 in foster or residential care. It is notable that both victims and perpetrators are grouped together for consideration because of the similarity of presenting behaviours. The strategies recommended combined careful preparation, and an upfront but low key approach to sexual behaviour, whilst also consciously avoiding denial or minimisation of any acts of abuse. Finally the need for counselling is emphasised to address the deeper needs of the children.
Reviewed by	SH

Author	Harker R, Dobel-Ober D, Lawrence J, Berridge D and Sinclair R
Title	Who takes care of education? Looked after children's perceptions of support for educational progress
Journal	Child and Family Social Work
Date	May 2003
Volume and issue no	Vol 8 No 2
Subject (key words)	Looked after children, education
Summary of article or research study	This paper documents the views of 80 children aged 10-18 living in foster and residential care. Teaching staff were frequently mentioned as providers of support, whilst social workers were often associated with hindering educational progress. A wider range of educational support was likely to be available in residential care rather than foster care. The children suggested things that might improve their education; the second most frequently mentioned was encouragement.
Reviewed by	SH

Author	Humphreys C and Harrison C
Title	Squaring the Circle – Contact and Domestic Violence
Journal	Family Law
Date	June 2003
Volume/issue	33; pp 419 – 423
Subject (key words)	Contact, domestic violence, policy
Summary	Questions the wisdom of the Government's PSA target to 'increase contact between children and the non-resident parent, where this is in the best interests of the child'.

	Draws together much research from the 90s that indicates the difficulty of determining a baseline against which to measure this 'improvement' and of determining which contact is 'in the best interests of the child'. Comments on the dangers of attempting to use a simplistic measure in such a complex area.
Reviewed by	PL

Author	Masson J
Title	Paternalism, Participation and Placation: Young People's Experiences of Representation in Child Protection Proceedings in England and Wales
In Book	Dewar J and Partker S (eds) <i>Family Law Practices, processes and Pressures</i>
Date	2003
Publisher	Oxford: Hart
Subject (key words)	Child protection, child participation, UN Convention of right of the Child
Summary	Based on her own and other studies of children in public law proceedings, Judith Masson argues that the predominant attitude to children in the family justice system is paternalistic. The adults tended to distance children from the proceedings in the belief that they were best protected in this way. She advances the case for children being given the opportunity to participate in the proceedings in the way that they choose to (or not). This involves giving children better information and being more open to child being separately represented by their own solicitor. They could also be allowed to go to court and given some knowledge of the content of the report. Children find it difficult to challenge the views of their Guardians or solicitors who will often take the same view. Children frequently view the court proceedings as peripheral "I can't go (to court); it is not about me."
Reviewed by	HB

Author	Minnis H, Kelly D, Bradby H, Oglethorpe r, Raine W and Cockburn D
Title	Cultural and Language Mismatch: Clinical Complications
Journal	Clinical Child Psychology and Psychiatry
Date	2003
Volume/issue	8 (2)
Subject (key words)	Asian families, barriers to service delivery, transcultural
Summary	Children from ethnic minorities were over-using GP services in Glasgow but underusing child psychiatric

	<p>services suggesting poor quality of health care. The child psychiatric professionals were all white and female. The case notes of 17 south Asian families were analysed by researchers and fed back to the clinical team.</p> <p>Findings:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communication difficulties were experienced at the level of language • Assumptions about family life, gender roles and parenting styles were not necessarily shared • The highly structured method of making psychiatric assessments did not make room for cultural, religious or language issues • Success in the use of interpreters was rare • Clinicians were unable to assess the significance of the extended family • Treatment was affected by difficulties in making the assessment. Some families were not offered services which would have been offered to indigenous families.
Reviewed by	HB

Author	Mullender A, Hague G, Imam U, Kelly L, Malos E and Regan L
Title	Children's perspectives on Domestic Violence
Date	2002
Publisher	Sage
Subject (key words)	Domestic violence, children's perspectives, children as subjects of research
Summary	<p>The book reports on an ESRC study in the Children 5-16 Programme which ran from 96-99. ESRC Summary of study.</p> <p>Aims To discover what a general population of children knew about domestic violence and to find out from children who had lived with domestic violence how they made sense of their experiences, their coping strategies and how help is and should be made available.</p> <p>Methodology Phase I 1395 children (8-16) completed questionnaires in a school setting; 54 children known to have experienced violence against their mothers were interviewed. The researchers paid particular attention to issues of diversity using purposive sampling to ensure that disabled children and children from minority backgrounds were included in both samples.</p> <p>Chapter headings give an indication of the scope of the book:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What children know and understand about

	<p>domestic violence</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children's experiences of living with domestic violence • Children's coping strategies • Barriers of racism, ethnicity and culture • The influence of domestic violence on relationships between children and their mothers • Life with a violent father • Listening to children: the way ahead • Children's advice to other children about coping with domestic violence
Reviewed by	HB

Author	Neil E
Title	Accepting the reality of adoption: Birth relatives experiences of face-to-face contact
Journal	Adoption & Fostering
Date	Summer 2003
Volume/issue	Vol 27 no 2
Subject (key words)	Adoption, contact, birth relatives
Summary	19 birth relatives were interviewed about their experiences of having a child adopted and about having face-to-face contact with their child after adoption. In most cases birth relatives related how it had helped them to accept their child's adoption, largely because contact reassured them of the child's welfare, and emphasised the position of the adopters as the psychological parents. For contact to be useful therefore the author considers that birth parents need to be able to adjust to the changing reality.
Reviewed by	SH

Author	Pleasance P, Balmer N, Buck A, O'Grady A, MacLean M & Genn H
Title	Family Problems – What Happens to Whom
Journal	Family Law
Date	July 2003
Volume/issue	33; pp 497 – 501
Subject (key words)	Family problems, courts, domestic violence
Summary	Using structured interviews the Legal Services Research Centre surveyed 5,611 adults in 3,348 households. They asked about their experience over a 3 year period of problems that raised civil legal issues ('justiciable problems'). The authors looked at the incidence of family justiciable problems and found that they tended to occur in

	combination and that respondents who reported domestic violence were much more likely to experience multiple family problems.
Review by	PL

Author	Powell C
Title	Early indicators of child abuse and neglect: A multi-professional Delphi study
Journal	Child Abuse Review
Date	2003
Volume and issue no	Vol12 Issue 1
Subject (key words)	Child abuse, neglect, early indicators
Summary of article or research study	<p>A study that attempts to establish what is the consensus of professional opinion in this area. 46 indicators reached the required definition of a consensus of professional opinion – agreement by 75% and over of the 121 professionals returning survey forms.</p> <p>Eight indicators reached 98% concurrence:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Child has unexplained pattern of minor injuries • Child self-harms • Child displays inappropriate sexualised behaviour • A clustering of signs • Failure to ensure child receives medical treatment for injury or illness • Domestic violence in pregnancy • Use of excessive punishment • Child has frequent admissions to hospital with all tests negative <p>The full list is worth studying, but some professionals counselled against the mechanical use of the indicators, pointing out that other traumas, such as maternal separation, could create some of the symptoms identified as indicators.</p>
Reviewed by	SH

Author	Rushton A and Dance C
Title	Preferential rejection: research findings and practice implications
Journal	Adoption & Fostering
Date	Spring 2003
Volume/issue	Vol 27 no 1
Subject (key words)	Rejection, adoption, long term fostering, single placements
Summary	Why do children placed on their own appear to have poorer outcomes?

	<p>The study, involving 63 children placed on their own between the ages of 5 and 11, identified early settling in problems as a significant factor with single placed children. In turn, these difficulties seem to be related to the presence of a group of children defined as preferentially rejected, who had been blamed for their family and sibling's difficulties and rejected by their parents. New carers frequently identified this group of children as showing 'false affection', holding adults at a distance. This group of children also tended to present more behavioural and emotional difficulties over time.</p> <p>The authors discuss the implications for the selection of carers and long term support to the family.</p>
Reviewed by	SH

Author	Smith M
Title	New stepfamilies – a descriptive study of a largely unseen group
Journal	Children and Family Law Quarterly
Date	2003
Volume and issue no	Vol. 15 No 2
Subject (key words)	Families (Stepfamilies), Contact
Summary of article or research study	<p>An attempt to find out how 'ordinary' stepfamilies function, with some significant findings about the value of contact. A study by the Thomas Coram Research Unit of 200 stepfamilies, from 3 London boroughs, in existence for between one and four years, derived from an initial sample of 10,000 7-11 year old children.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 7% of the children in the overall sample were living currently with a stepfather • less than 1% of the overall sample were living currently with a stepmother • 54% of the children in stepfamilies denied living in a stepfamily • 48% of stepfathers did not consider themselves as stepfathers • 73% of children had some contact (including phone contact) with their non-resident parent within the previous 12 months. • 46% were in regular and frequent contact with their non-resident parent • Children of parents who cited violence as a factor in the separation were no less likely to have contact than those where it was not cited • 66% of contact took place at the non-resident parent's home

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 82% of parents had agreed contact arrangements, but only 58% of arrangements were always kept • More formal arrangements were not more likely to be kept. • Parents reported 40% of children having some negative response to contact, but only 14% of children indicated any difficulties • There was no statistical association between the children's health, behaviour and functioning and whether contact took place • However the children who said their relationship with their father was the same as before, and those who reported enjoying contact, had higher levels of well-being • Evidence suggested that the impact of contact on an unwilling child, or a child whose relationship with their non-resident parent had deteriorated, would be negative in terms of their current health and behaviour • The main determinant of child well-being was the quality of current relationships in the household, rather than the history of the family
Reviewed by	SH

Author	Stalker K and Connors C
Title	Communicating with disabled children
Journal	Adoption & Fostering
Date	Spring 2003
Volume/issue	Vol 27 no 1
Subject (key words)	Disability, communication
Summary	<p>The research was based on 26 disabled children, 13 with learning difficulties, 5 with sensory impairments, 6 physical impairments, and 2 with very high support needs. The authors reach the unsurprising conclusion that communicating with children with disabilities is little different from communicating with any child. They found it was important to establish and use the child's accustomed method of communication rather than use new ones. This may involve the use of communication aids such as Bliss and Alphatalkers, which do not require special skills from the adult. Other methods such as Makaton might require the help of an experienced interpreter, although a few basic signs can be picked up easily to help the child feel at ease.</p> <p>The authors noted how the views of children often varied from those of their parents. This included the strong positive image which the researchers found most of the children had of themselves.</p>
Reviewed by	SH

Author	Talbot C and Williams M
Title	Kinship Care
Journal	Family Law
Date	July 2003
Volume/issue	33; pp 502 – 507
Publisher	
Subject (key words)	Childcare, relatives, kinship placements
Summary	Drawing together a number of references from the UK, USA and New Zealand (where kinship is a very strong principle in child care law), the authors suggest that kinship placements often meet the needs of even the most challenging children and show more positive outcomes than for 'stranger' placements. Current UK estimates suggest that between 17 – 30% of children who cannot live with birth parents are placed with relatives. The article asserts that the 'family dysfunction' paradigm informing contemporary childcare practice impedes greater use of kinship placements to the detriment of children and the inefficient deployment of scarce LA resources. Studies show that young people feel a sense of permanence irrespective of their legal status and, in these circumstances, adoption is often inappropriate and unhelpful. Conflict between family members is often described as a long-term problem but not one that affects the stability of the placement or interferes with the child's ability to maintain a range of contacts with other family members.
Reviewed by	PL

Author	Wrobel G, Grotevant H, Berge J, Mendenhall T and McRoy R
Title	Contact in adoption: the experience of adoptive families in the USA
Journal	Adoption & Fostering
Date	Spring 2003
Volume/issue	Vol 27 no 1
Subject (key words)	Contact, adoption, USA
Summary	In this study, based on long term research at the Minnesota/Texas Adoption Project, the authors found that decisions about contact are not taken once only at the point of placement, but remain open to the adopted person throughout their life, ultimately through searching for a birth parent. The decisions made set differing paths on which the adopted person's growth and character

	development takes place. Successful contact requires the cooperation of all the main actors in the adoption process. Contact may need to be renegotiated over time as needs and circumstances change. Post adoption services should assist everyone involved in that process. Contact does not eliminate the need to incorporate adoption into one's identity.
Reviewed by	SH