



RESEARCH DIGEST

2004 Issue 2

Prepared by

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Research studies and articles based on research

Author	Abbey C and Dallos R
Title	The Experience of the Impact of Divorce on Sibling Relationships: A Qualitative Study
Journal	Clinical Child Psychology and Psychiatry
Date	2004
Volume/issue	9/2
Subject (key words)	Families (siblings), divorce/separation
Summary	<p>This study has been included in the RD because it is the only one so far to explore the effect of parental separation on sibling relationships. It is a qualitative study in which 8 volunteer female university students were interviewed about the effect of their parents' mostly recent divorce on their relationship with their sisters.</p> <p>Because of the small, narrowly focused and self-selected nature of the sample the findings cannot be generalised. However the researchers noted themes from the interviews which suggested that these young women experienced an increase in intimacy and attachment with their sisters. The mutual support they were able to provide may have been due to their parents' reduced emotional availability.</p>
Reviewed by	HB

Author	Beck M and Schofield G
Title	Providing a Secure Base in Long-term Foster Care
Date	2004
Publisher	BAAF
Subject (key words)	Fostering (long-term fostering)
Summary	<p>It is not very often that a book, which positively addresses the quality of care for Looked after children, comes on the market. This book charts the second phase of a longitudinal qualitative study into how attachment theory can be used as a basis for predicting the outcomes for children placed in 'Long-term Foster Placement'. There were 58 children under the age of 12 in placements. The objectives of the project are clearly outlined on page 11, while the reporting style, readability and validity are enhanced by the statistical representations in the form of charts.</p> <p>Attachment Theory was used to gain an understanding and make sense of the "children's histories and behaviours and analyse the Foster Carers approaches to parenting". According to the writers the concept of the secure base can be extended to children in foster placements. These include the benefits arising from the security of belonging to and becoming part of a family; (Beck and Schofield, 2001; Schofield, 2002a, 2003).</p> <p>The section on insecure attachment patterns in foster children</p>

	gives a very detailed explanation and description of children who may have experienced abuse, neglect, separation and loss. According to the authors the major difficulty for children in this group is their profound lack of trust and their high resistance to accepting and learning from new and different experiences of care giving. They were also further divided into the three groups: "on the edge; open book and closed book."
Reviewed by	Vasalee Crawford

Author	Blackwell A and Dawe F
Title	Non-resident parental contact
Date	2003
Publisher	DfES
Subject (key words)	Contact
Summary	<p>This survey carried out by the Office for National Statistics on behalf of the LCD aimed to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assess current levels, frequency and satisfaction with contact arrangements • Provide baseline data for future comparisons <p>Methodology</p> <p>The sample were drawn from the National Statistics Omnibus Survey which is based on a representative sample of the population. 649 resident parents (RP) and 312 non-resident parents (NRP) were interviewed. The disparity in the numbers of RPs and NRPs suggests that many NRPs did not identify themselves as such. This calls into question the extent to which these respondents are representative of all NRPs.</p> <p>Findings</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • RPs and NRPs reported different levels of contact. For example, a quarter of resident parents and 10% of non-resident parents reported no contact. • Over half the children had some form of contact (direct or indirect) with the non-resident parent at least once a week (43% in the RP group and 59% in the NPR group). • Distance between the parents' homes was negatively related to frequency of contact • The level and frequency of contact diminished with length of time from separation • Contact most frequently took place in the NRPs' home and half of all children stayed overnight with the NRP. • Four fifths of those who made informal arrangements were likely to be satisfied. Parents' levels of satisfaction with contact increased with the frequency of contact. • Where contact was not taking place, half the RPs said they were 'very satisfied' but only 6% of NRPs said they were 'very satisfied'. • Those whose contact arrangements had been agreed through the court (one tenth) had a low level of satisfaction. This was particularly so for NRPs where over half were dissatisfied as against a quarter of PRs.

Reviewed by	HB
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Author	Blower A, Addo A, Hodgson J, Lamington L and Towlson K
Title	Mental health of 'Looked after' Children: A Needs Assessment
Journal	Clinical Child Psychology and Psychiatry
Date	2004
Volume/issue	9/1
Subject (key words)	Looked after children, mental illness (child mental illness)
Summary	<p>Aim To explore:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The prevalence of mental health problems amongst looked after children • How these were experienced by the young people • Their access to emotional support <p>Methodology 61 looked after children in a Scottish local authority were invited to take part in a quantitative and qualitative two stage study. 48 entered the first stage and 22 progressed to the second stage.</p> <p>Findings</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 57% of the sample showed significant psychological morbidity • Children thought highly of themselves in the social domain • In most cases the problems in psychological development had been identified at a young age and the majority had been assessed, and some treated, by the local psychiatric service • Children valued emotional support from family, friends, carers and professionals • The most significant gap in service provision was effective interventions for children whose problems had been identified
Reviewed by	HB

Author	Bruck M, Ceci S and Hembrooke H
Title	The nature of children's true and false narratives
Journal	Developmental Review (USA)
Date	2002
Volume/issue	22 p 520-554
Subject (key words)	Child psychology (children's narratives)
Summary	<p>Despite being American, this article has been reviewed because FCAs have a professional interest in findings about the truth or falsity of children's narratives, because it reports on a recent experiment and its relevance to the wider literature and because the article is available on the intranet.</p> <p>The article reports an experiment with 16 pre-school children from NY State (14 African American and 2 non-Hispanic</p>

	<p>Caucasian) in which the children were interviewed on five occasions about four events, a true pleasant, a true unpleasant, a false pleasant and false unpleasant. The interviewing after the first interview was highly suggestive (providing false information/suggesting peer support/asking children to imagine a situation/rewarding assent to interviewer information).</p> <p>Findings:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interviews using highly suggestive techniques resulted in many children reporting events that had not happened. • Assent rates increased with the number of repeat interviews for true negative, false negative and false positive events • False narratives contained more spontaneous details than true narratives • The accuracy of true narrative reminiscences declined with repeated interviews • True narratives were more consistent than false • There were no differences between false and true narratives in terms of contradictions. <p>Limitations of the study</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The sample was small • A question mark over the generalisability of findings from a small experiment with children to interactions between children and adults in formal and informal settings where children are interviewed about past events.
Reviewed by	HB

Author	Buck a, Balmer, N' O'Grady A, Genn H and Smith M
Title	Causes of Action: Civil Law and Social Justice
Date	2004
Publisher	The Stationary Office
Subject (key words)	Family problems
Summary	<p>This book reports on a base-line survey by the Legal Services Commission Research Centre of 'justiciable' problems in the population at large and amongst those living in temporary accommodation. The survey will be repeated to give 'a broad empirical base for civil justice policy development'.</p> <p>Findings</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some groups (eg lone parents, those with a disability or on low income) are more likely to experience 'justiciable' problems and they tend to occur in clusters • Where domestic violence was reported as a problem it substantially increased the likelihood that other problems associated with relationship break down would occur • Lone parents were particularly likely to report multiple problems associated with the family, children and economic difficulties • Formal processes such as the courts are used relatively infrequently to resolve problems. Those who were represented tended to fare better than those who represented themselves • Seeking and obtaining appropriate advice was often a frustrating and damaging experience.
Reviewed by	HB

Author	Callaghan J, Young B, Pace F and Vostanis P
Title	Evaluation of a New Mental Health Service for Looked After Children
Journal	Clinical Child Psychology and Psychiatry
Date	2004
Volume/issue	9/1
Subject (key words)	Mental illness (child mental illness), Looked after children, Case practice (therapy)
Summary	<p>The authors describe a dedicated mental health team for looked after children and the evaluation of the first phase. The team service 800 LAC and consisted of two primary mental health workers, two psychologists and a psychiatrist. Their role was to offer assessment and treatment to the children and consultation to the professionals and carers. The article notes the high prevalence of mental health need amongst looked after children (two thirds).</p> <p>The first 50 referrals to the service were invited to participate in the study (45 joined the study). Referrals were made for a wide range of behavioural and emotional problems. A variety of interventions was used including assessment, therapy, consultation and referral to another agency. A follow up after</p>

	five months showed that psycho-social functioning had improved using the Health of the Nation Outcome Scales for Children and Adolescents. Furthermore most carers (36) felt that the service they had been offered was appropriate and that the young person had shown some improvement during treatment. The study did not have a control group so it is not possible to know if the noted improvements were due to the intervention or to other factors (such as placement stability).
Reviewed by	HB

Author	Goodman M, Bonds D, Sandler I and Braver S
Title	Parent Psychoeducational Programs and Reducing the Negative Effects of Interparental Conflict Following Divorce
Journal	Family Court Review (US)
Date	2004
Volume/issue	42/2
Subject (key words)	Divorce/separation (support services)
Summary	<p>This is a useful review of programmes for parents in the US set up to improve outcomes for children following parental separation. The article:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identifies the factors which research has shown to negatively affect children's well-being in particular interpersonal conflict and poor parenting • Although many post separation programmes are run in the US, very few have been evaluated in terms of their effectiveness in reducing negative parenting behaviour or enhancing child well-being. This article assessed 6 short-term (1-2 meetings) and 4 long-term (up to 12 meetings) universal programmes • Half (total 6) of the short term universal programmes showed some evidence of a reduction in parental conflict • The long term universal programmes (total 4) all showed evidence of promoting high-quality parenting and long-term benefits for children • Although many areas in the US run programmes specifically for high conflict parents, none had been evaluated sufficiently rigorously to be included in the review of programmes • Parents and courts generally reported high levels of satisfaction with the programmes despite there being no hard evidence of effectiveness in enhancing child well-being.
Reviewed by	HB

Author	Gorin S
Title	Understandings what children say: Children's experiences of domestic violence, parental substance misuse and parental health problems Findings
Date	2004
Publisher	NCB for the JRF
Subject (key	Children's views/participation, alcohol dependence, drug

words)	dependence, mental illness
Summary	<p>Aim To improve understanding of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How children experience living in families where there is domestic violence, parental substance abuse or parental health problems • How they cope • What support they need <p>Methodology This is a literature review of research studies which describe children's experiences. The focus is on UK research and on studies completed between 1990 and 2003. Research undertaken directly with children is supplemented by retrospective accounts by young adults and by parents' accounts of their children's experiences. 40 studies including child or young adult accounts were included supplemented by 6 ongoing studies interviewing children and 50 related books and articles.</p> <p>Findings</p> <p><i>Understanding children's experiences</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children usually know about the problems their parents are facing although their parents may have tried to conceal them • Children are most distressed by violence and relationship conflict many having witnessed very serious incidents • Children themselves can be at risk of physical violence, emotional abuse and neglect • Some children take on extra caring responsibilities. Feelings about this will vary from child to child and will depend on the scope for negotiation. Children may give extra emotional support to their parent. Many described positive relationships with their parents and some saw benefits in taking on extra responsibilities <p><i>Understanding children's feelings</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children worry about their parents more than may be recognised especially if they fear for their parent's safety • Children reported significant feelings of loss, sadness and isolation frequently compounded by the secrecy surrounding these parental problems <p><i>Understanding children coping strategies</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children use different strategies to cope. Avoidance and distraction are common making it harder to identify children who may need help • Children want to be involved in discussions about how problems should be managed and to play an active role but they do not want to be responsible for making decisions <p><i>Understanding children's support needs</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Boys in particular find it difficult to talk about their problems • Children say they do not talk to outsiders because they fear the consequences such as being separated from their parents or not being able to get help or because of shame and stigma • Children rarely seek help from professionals and their experiences are mixed if they do

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Children said they wanted age-appropriate information, confidential support and the opportunity to get away from home and get to know other children experiencing the same problems <p>Limitations of the study All research with children is problematic because of the difficulty of achieving a representative sample. This is particularly the case when problems are hidden. Most studies drew samples from agencies in touch with the families, excluding children in families not known to an outside agency. Furthermore samples may often be small not allowing for analysis by gender, race, age or diagnostic category. Finally the studies are almost invariably snapshots not allowing changes in experience to be tracked.</p>
Reviewed by	HB

Author	Hadley Centre for Adoption and Foster Care Studies
Title	Private Fostering
Date	2004
Publisher	University of Bristol
Subject (key words)	Fostering (private fostering)
Summary	<p>This briefing paper summarises the research findings on private fostering. It emphasises the limited nature of research in this area in part because of the 'elusiveness of private fostering arrangements'. Indeed only 7 research studies are reviewed. The findings have therefore to be treated very cautiously.</p> <p>Findings</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> An estimated 10,000 children may be privately fostered though no national statistics are collected Children of West African origin are the largest group of known privately fostered children Little is known about the parental motivation or views on private fostering Private foster carers are predominantly middle aged, white, on low income and in public housing in rural communities. Social Workers are generally satisfied with the standard of care given The attachment needs of some privately fostered children may not be adequately met. Arrangements, including moves, are often unplanned. The children's cultural and identity needs often receive little attention Children may be unclear about their relationships with their parents and may have little contact with them Social Services involvement is limited although SSDs have a duty to satisfy themselves as to the welfare of privately fostered children. Many carers and parents do not notify SSDs that a child is being privately fostered. <p>The Briefing suggests that unless the registration of private fostering becomes mandatory, it will 'remain a largely hidden activity' and some children will remain at risk.</p>
Reviewed by	HB

Author	Humphreys C and Mullender A
Title	Children and Domestic Violence 35p (Having clicked on the hyperlink, you may then need to click on the button at the bottom of your screen <i>http://www.rip...</i>)
Date	2000
Publisher	Research in Practice
Subject (key words)	Domestic violence, children's views/participation
Summary	<p>This is one of the first research reviews undertaken by Research in Practice. It covers the following topics:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Definition of domestic violence and incidence • The experiences of children living with domestic violence including the links with physical abuse • The impact on children of living with domestic violence (outcomes) • The overlap with post-separation violence and child contact • Children's views about living with domestic violence • Children as social actors • What helps (effective interventions) <p>The Review adopts a refreshing perspective on children who have experienced domestic violence in their families. While not minimising the negative effects, it sees these children not just as victims but as actively coping, keeping themselves and siblings safe, summoning help and offering their mothers safe. The long-term outcomes for children will be different depending on the safety strategies of mothers and children and on the support networks available to the family.</p>
Reviewed by	HB

Author	Kroll, Brynna
Title	Living with an elephant: Growing up with parental substance misuse See also Gorin
Journal	Child & Family Social Work
Date	May 2004
Volume/issue	Vol. 9 Issue 2

Subject (key words)	Drug dependence, alcohol dependence, parents
Summary	<p>What is it like to grow up in a family where adult drug and/or alcohol use is an issue? The metaphorical elephant referred to in the title is described as ‘a huge, significant but secret presence which takes up a lot of space, uses considerable resources and attention, and requires the adjustment of all those in the vicinity’. Unofficial surveys have indicated that such issues are present in a large majority of public law cases. It is estimated that in the UK about a million children live in the care of problem drinkers, and 250,000 and 350,000 in the care of problem drug users. Substance misuse has been linked to a wide range of negative effects on parental care, but only a small minority of these families become involved in care proceedings. The emphasis in this paper is on the actual experience of the children involved.</p> <p>This article is a review of available research material - 7 published studies, 5 UK and 2 US in origin. Methodological problems abound – definitions, illegality of some of the behaviour, the wariness of children, the validity of adult recollections etc – that should cause some caution.</p> <p>Six themes were identified to reflect some of the emotions, adjustments and behaviour that such children may have to manage :-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Denial, distortion and secrecy as family life becomes centred around the demands of a drug or alcohol habit, distorting children’s’ perceptions of what is or is not real, penalising honesty, emphasising the ability to hide or suppress things. • Attachment, separation and loss: children learn they are not number one in the adult’s life. Loss becomes a predominant concern – of parental care, even of the parent themselves, and of their own childhood. • Family functioning, conflict and breakdown: Adult needs dominate, with arguing and fighting a common aspect of family life. By contrast, if the family functioned well substance abuse had much less impact. • Violence, abuse and living with fear: Actual violence was particularly associated with alcohol abuse. The children’s feelings were often mixed about the non-substance using parent with understanding and sympathy for how they were trying to hold the family together, but also resentment about being left in the user’s care, or vulnerable to the user’s aggression. • Role reversal, role confusion and the child as carer: The parental child who cares for an intoxicated parent, or who criticises the behaviour of a parent for whom they have lost respect. <p>Strong loyalty to their parents was noted amongst many of the children. Whilst the central desire of most children and the focus of much agency attention is removing or shrinking the elephant, the research indicates that the position and experience of children can be overlooked. Workers are encouraged to find ways to help children tell their story in a safe way, that does not lead to family breakdown.</p>

Implications for CAFCASS	The article provides guidance on areas of the child's life on which to focus assessment and analysis, and background to the difficult task of establishing the child's wishes and feeling in an atmosphere of secrecy and fear.
Reviewed by	SH

Author	Maclean M
Title	Children and parents experiencing separation and divorce
Date	2004
Publisher	JFR
Subject (key words)	Divorce/separation (outcomes, support services)
Summary	<p>This is an 8 page summary of the findings from 12 research projects funded by the JRF examining a wide range of issues associated with children's and parents' experiences of separation and divorce.</p> <p>Key points</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parental separation is a process and not an event which affects children before, at the point of and after separation • Children need to be told what is happening and listened to • Separation is particularly difficult for children if followed by other changes • Financial hardship and parental distress are associated with continuing problems for children • The transition involved in parental separation is not essentially different from other transitions experienced by children. As with other transitions, children may find them difficult and may require support • A poor relationship between parents is one of the barriers to establishing contact between a child and the NRP.
Reviewed by	HB

Author	Murray, C
Title	Same-Sex Families: Outcomes for Children and Parents
Journal	Family Law
Date	February 2004
Volume/issue	34 pp 136- 139
Subject (key words)	Families (same sex relationships)
Summary	With reference to a range of studies made in the last 15 years, including a large-scale comparative study of 7-year-olds (the Avon Longitudinal Study of Pregnancy and Childhood), the author concludes that there are no significant differences in outcome for children brought up in Lesbian as compared to heterosexual households. Comments it would seem to be a positive family environment rather than a particular family structure that matters most for children's healthy psychological development.
Reviewed by	PL

Author	Payne H and Butler I
Title	Promoting the mental health of children in need (8 p)
Date	2003
Publisher	DfES, rip and Making Research Count
Subject (key words)	Mental illness (Child mental illness)
Summary	<p>This is the most recent in Research in Practice the Quality Protects Research Briefings (click on <i>Our publications</i> and then <i>Quality Protects Research Briefing</i>). It starts with an examination of the 'medical' and 'social' models of mental health and their use in providing appropriate packages of care. It summarises the indicators for good mental health and then distinguishes between mental health problems (which can affect 30-40% of children during their childhood), mental disorders (problems meeting the criteria of internationally recognised classification systems such as ADHD and Conduct Disorder and affecting a far higher proportion of Looked After Children than the general population) and mental illness (severe conditions such as anorexia nervosa affecting up to 2.5% of children).</p> <p>The Briefing identifies risk factors and protective factors for mental health. The risk factors (family disruption, the experience of more stressful life events and abuse) will be more prevalent for Looked after Children and Children in Need than for other children. Resilience is strengthened by fostering a child's sense of self worth and self-esteem. This is enhanced by including children in the process of decision making. Four levels of intervention are described. Findings from research suggest that effective interventions will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Start early • Be long term rather than short term • Be disorder, context and objective specific • Focus on networks surrounding the child (school, family and neighbourhood) rather than on the child alone
Reviewed by	HB

Author	Perz-del-Aguila R, Holland S, Faulkner A, Connell D and Hayes S
Title	Overview and survey of effectiveness of interventions to promote stability and continuity of care for looked after children
Date	2004
Publisher	University of Cardiff
Subject (key words)	Looked after children, case practice
Summary	<p>Aims The objectives of this project was to survey local authority practice designed to promote stability of placement and to review research findings on this subject.</p> <p>Methodology 52 local authorities and voluntary agencies in the UK were interviewed about their practice. 17 primary research reports and 3 research reviews were critically appraised in relation to findings on placement stability.</p> <p>Findings</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Most agencies were able to identify practices designed to promote stability including support to foster carers and to young people. However, formal evaluations of the interventions was rare. • Most agencies identified gaps in their interventions in particular the provisions of therapeutic and other direct services to looked after children. • There was little evidence from the research studies for the effectiveness of practices which the agencies had identified as desirable. This was because in most cases the interventions had not be rigorously evaluated. Some elements of effective practice suggested by the research studies were not identified as desirable by the agencies. • The research studies gave support to the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Relative foster care ○ Professional foster care (limited evidence from a strongly designed study) ○ Placing siblings together (weak evidence) ○ Individualised, multi-dimensional packages of care (fairly strong evidence) <p>Limitations Few of the studies reviewed included controlled comparisons and none evaluated the direct association between interventions by care staff and stability for children.</p>
Reviewed by	HB

Author	Pevalin d
Title	Teenage births: consequences and implication of delaying birth
Journal	ChildRight
Date	2004
Volume/issue	204
Subject (key words)	Parents, adolescence
Summary	<p>The article reviews the findings from three studies funded by the DOH which sought to identify the additional negative effects of early birth on later life circumstances given the disadvantaged socio-economic situation of many teenage mothers. One study (British 1970 Cohort Study) compared outcomes for women who gave birth as teenagers with those who had a spontaneous miscarriage. The findings showed that teenage birth:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Had no effect on a woman’s qualifications, employment or pay aged 30 • Meant they were more likely to be with a partner who was poorly qualified or unemployed • Reduced the likelihood of them being homeowners by 30 • Resulted in poorer outcomes for their children. <p>The Labour Force Survey suggested that the penalties for young motherhood (in terms of likelihood of being in employment) varied for ethnic groups with young white mothers being most disadvantaged in relation to other white mothers and Bangladeshi and Pakistani young mothers being least disadvantaged.</p>
Reviewed by	HB

Author	Prevatt-Goldstein B
Title	Listening to and safeguarding children from mixed heritage backgrounds
Book	From <i>Hearing the children</i> ed Thorpe and Cadbury
Date	2004
Publisher	Jordan Publishing Limited
Subject (key words)	Diversity (mixed heritage)
Summary	<p>The term 'mixed heritage' is ambiguous. Sometimes it refers to mixed ethnicities including different white or black ethnicities or religious backgrounds. It can also be a euphemism for 'mixed racial'. The article argues that there are issues for all children of 'mixed heritage' in the broader sense and particular ones for the 1.2% of the population of 'mixed heritage' in the narrower sense of mixed racial heritage.</p> <p>The paper addresses four main issues:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Experiencing mixed heritage – many children who are of mixed racial heritage may not have access to the lived experience and valuing of both backgrounds. Children have a right to access all their heritages. Professionals in listening to children of mixed racial heritage need to be sensitive to gaps in their experiences and the importance of supporting children's links in practical everyday ways. • Valuing mixed heritage – some children may not value some of their own diverse heritage. It is important not to pathologize the child who undervalues one of their heritages. In making space for a child's neglected heritage, it is important not to detract from the other. • Accepting identity as a process – the development of identity is a process which changes over time. Focus on identity in the context of court proceedings can make the issue of identity and heritage a problem for children unless the conversations are open-ended and directed by the child. Interventions need to give space for ambiguity and development and for positive and lived experiences of all aspects of a child's heritage. • Understanding identity outcomes – professionals may seek to fix identities for children because of their own political and personal beliefs. There is a polarisation in views about desired identity outcomes for children of mixed racial heritage, one favouring a black public identity and the other a mixed public identity. Children may wish to choose a more diverse and fluid formulation of identity. It is important to accept diversity in the choice of identity while recognising the political significance of identity in a racist society.
Reviewed by	HB

Author	Quinton D
Title	Supporting Parents: Messages from Research
Date	2004
Publisher	DfES/DOH Jessica Kingsley Publishers Ltd
Subject (key words)	Case practice (support services)
Summary	<p>This is the latest in the series Messages from Research which has reviewed studies funded by the DOH to assess the impact of the Children Act.</p> <p>The report reviews the findings from 14 studies on services designed to support parenting. These include services for families in particular circumstances (eg step-parent families), services for parents who find their children's behaviour difficult (including supporting foster placements), services in the context of disability and services for parents who may be hard to help (eg looked after teenagers who are parents).</p> <p>Key messages</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support is based on a relationship which requires respect and partnership • Parents wanted to feel in control in dealing with parenting problems • Parents should be seen as experts in their own parenting problems • Family and friends can be a source of support but also of stress • Parents wanted services to be practical, professional, to take their views seriously, to provide emotional support and listening and to treat them as partners • The objectives of support are often poorly defined and effectiveness untested. Services in future need to be designed so that their effectiveness can be evaluated.
Reviewed by	HB

Author	Rhoades, Helen
Title	Contact enforcement and parenting programmes – policy aims in confusion
Journal	Child and Family Law Quarterly
Date	2004
Volume/issue	Vol.16 No. 1
Subject (key words)	Contact, family law
Summary	<p>There was much interest when Australian courts introduced, in December 2000, the option of requiring parents to attend parenting support programmes as an alternative mechanism for enforcing contact orders. This article reports on research into their experience during the first 18 months. The orders were made when a parent breached a contact order for no 'reasonable excuse'. 1200 people who were party to family court proceedings were sent questionnaires, of which 208 were completed. The actual number of respondents who had experienced programmes was only 16. The author notes that respondents for whom contact remained a live issue were probably more likely to respond. No claim is made for the</p>

generalisability of responses to all separated parents involved in contact disputes. Programme providers and court officials were also surveyed.

Problems described include: -

- The implication that this was a 'robust punitive approach to intransigent mothers'
- No extra funding from the government
- The requirement that parents fund the programme through fees, on a means tested basis
- Child care agencies being expected by the government to produce programmes if they wanted to continue to receive government funding for their other work
- Courses being built by agencies around the assumption of the reasonable parent
- Concern from child care agencies not to be associated with a compliance regime in an adversarial court system
- Confusion as to who was the client – the parents or the court?
- The inexperience of agencies in family court issues
- Resistance and hostility from parents, usually resident parents, who regard the programmes as punishment
- The conflicting message from courts - using orders to direct parents to cooperate better with each other
- Increasing the anger level of parents who first need help dealing with the unresolved anger left over from the relationship breakdown
- The late stage at which programmes were offered when conflict had become well entrenched
- Concerns about promoting contact where there is domestic violence

Views differed on the best way forward. Programme providers thought that parents' relationship issues should first be addressed, and that contact arrangements should promote flexibility, rather than be about establishing entitlements. Court officials' views tended to reflect their individual perspectives on the function of the family court as a whole. Non-resident parents seemed to judge the scheme based on whether the punishment of the resident parent, that they assumed the orders to be about, had been thought to be effective in restoring contact. Resident parents criticised the family court for being, in their opinion, pro-contact whatever the record of relationships and behaviour.

The scheme has now been amended to allow referral to programmes to be made at any stage in proceedings, not just after the breach of orders. There is some optimism that over time courses will become more attuned to the needs of parents. One course that had seemed more adapted to their circumstances had difficulty maintaining the service because it was costly both in terms of resources and the high degree of staff burnout.

The author draws a number of lessons for further legal reform:-

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The need for widespread information gathering and consultation with all the groups concerned before reform is formulated • Awareness of differing professional and agency perspectives on what parents need • The difficulty of trying to provide a more supportive response on the back of meeting political demands for a more punitive response to 'errant mothers'. • The need for a government sponsored community education campaign and genuine therapeutic services for separating parents at an early stage
Reviewed by	SH

Author	Schofield G
Title	The voice of the child in public law proceedings: A development model
Book	In <i>Hearing the children</i> ed Thorpe and Cadbury
Date	2004
Publisher	Jordan Publishing Limited
Subject (key words)	Children's views/participation (child competence), Child psychology
Summary	<p>This paper explores the contribution of different developmental perspectives to the understanding of children's wishes and feelings in the context of family proceedings.</p> <p>Affect Children's feelings will often be mixed, confused and may change over time. It is important to help children to express and accept mixed feelings.</p> <p>Autonomy A major developmental task is to learn to balance dependency and autonomy. Involving a child in making decisions about their future supports the child's move to greater autonomy (process). However they should not feel responsible for the decision (outcome).</p> <p>Cognition In order to be involved in decision-making, children need the capacity to think flexibly, hypothetically and reflectively. This capacity is less likely to have developed in children who have been abused or neglected. These children will therefore need greater help in thinking about their situation and the options available but for all children (and adults) complex, uncertain and fluid situations are difficult to think about.</p> <p>Belonging Children need a sense of belonging within a family and community but may need help in expressing this when several families and communities may be involved.</p> <p>The developing self The very process of involving and listening to children who are the subject of family proceedings will support their emotional, social and cognitive development and enhance their resilience.</p>
Reviewed by	HB

Author	Shaw C
Title	NIFTY Evaluation: An introductory handbook for social care staff
Date	2003
Publisher	Research in Practice
Subject (key words)	Evidence based practice
Summary	<p>This Handbook provides a guide to in-house service evaluation.</p> <p>It is based on work with RIP partner organisations evaluating aspects of their own services.</p> <p>It describes an approach to evaluation using a step by step approach:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Commitment to evaluate • Deciding on the appropriate style of evaluation • Framing the evaluation questions • Designing the evaluation • Selecting the methods of data collection • Detailed planning • Collecting the data • Analysis • Communication of the findings • Reflection on the findings and the process
Reviewed by	HB

Author	Sinclair R
Title	Participation in Practice: Making it Meaningful, Effective and Sustainable
Journal	Children and Society
Date	2004
Volume/issue	18/2
Subject (key words)	Children's views/participation
Summary	<p>The April 2004 edition of <i>Children and Society</i> is devoted to papers on children's participation in policy making prepared for an ESRC seminar on the subject. The most relevant paper from a CAF/CASS perspective is the one reviewed.</p> <p>The key issues identified are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The increasing move by organisations to seek to involve children in decision-making • The need to ensure that the participation process is appropriate for the children in each set of circumstances • The need for children to have a demonstrable influence on the decisions. <p>The paper examines:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The reasons for an increased move towards children's participation • The importance of participation • What is meant by participation • Participation in practice – clarity of purpose, which children are included, understanding what children are saying, openness about the weight to be given to children's views, assessing the impact of participation and ethical standards.

Reviewed by	HB
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Author	Spon-Smith, R
Title	Relocation Revisited
Journal	Family Law
Date	March 2004
Volume/issue	34 pp 191 – 198
Subject (key words)	Residence (shared parenting)
Summary	<p>Residence orders settle with whom and not where the child shall live. S13(1)(b) of the Children Act 1989 prohibits permanent removal from the UK when there is a residence order. A prohibited steps order can prevent relocation within the UK (see e.g. ReH Residence Order: condition[2001]. However, over the last 30 years the courts have generally supported the relocation of the residence parent away from the child's home area. Only exceptionally have the resident parent's proposals been found ill informed, motivated primarily by a selfish desire to exclude the non-resident parent or detrimental to the child's interests for some other reason and dismissed. The advent of the Human Rights Act did not change this general tendency.</p> <p>The author describes two recent articles published in the American Journal of Family Psychology which question this approach:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A research survey of 602 college students identified a range of negative factors associated with a relocation of 'more than one hours' drive' away from the other separated parent; • A psychological perspective stresses the importance, particularly for young children, of promoting and sustaining the healthy child-parent relationship through frequent contact distributed over both school and non-school days.
Reviewed by	PL

Author	Stallard P, Norman P, Huline-Dickens S, Salter E and Cribb J
Title	The Effects of Parental Mental Illness Upon Children: A Descriptive Study of the Views of Parents and Children
Journal	Clinical Child Psychology and Psychiatry
Date	2004
Volume/issue	9/1
Subject (key words)	Mental illness (Adult mental illness), Children's views/participation
Summary	<p>This is one of the studies reviewed in Understanding what children say (page 13). 24 adults attending a community mental health team and 26 of their dependent children were interviewed.</p> <p>Findings</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children were concerned about their parents, had little understanding of their parent's illness and most wanted more information • Parents were aware of the negative impact of their illness on their children but perceived their relationship with them

	<p>positively</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Significant levels of possible emotional and behavioural problems were identified amongst the children. Parents were also worried by their children's mental health. • However the psychological needs of the children were not recognised by outside agencies • Barriers to the provision of appropriate support to children were found in the mental health team (pressure of time, adult focussed approach, lack of child/family focussed skills and the protection of the needs of adults), in the attitudes of the parents (adult needs dominating, parental denial, parental fears about outside intervention and the desire to protect their children) and from the children themselves (unwillingness to discuss their problems). <p>Limitations The small sample size and the refusal by half the eligible cohort to participate raise questions about the generalisability of the findings.</p>
Reviewed by	HB

Author	Steele M
Title	Attachment theory and research: Recent advances and implication for adoption and foster care
Book	In <i>Hearing the children</i> ed Thorpe and Cadbury
Date	2004
Publisher	Jordan Publishing Limited
Subject (key words)	Child psychology (attachment), case practice (assessment), adoption, fostering
Summary	<p>The paper covers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An explanation of attachment theory and its implications for understanding the development of parent child relationships • The assessment of children's attachment using story stem narrative • The assessment of parenting using an attachment perspective (the Adult Attachment Interview) <p>A study is described which aimed to track the development of new attachment relationships between adults adopting children deemed 'hard to place'. The 65 children in the study were between 4 and 8 when first placed. A comparison group of 48 at the time of the study between 4 and 8 but children placed for adoption before they were one year old was recruited. Parents and children in the 'hard to place' sample were interviewed at the time of the placement, a year later and year after that using the story stem narrative for the children and the AAI for the adults.</p> <p>Findings</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Early adoption children showed more positive themes than the late placed children though, over time, the difference was reduced but still remained significant • The parenting of late-adopted children is greatly influenced by the child's characteristics, the mother's attachment status, her view of the child and her parenting experience

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children’s difficulties may be exacerbated by being placed with a parent with attachment insecurities, particularly unresolved grief • The adoption of ‘late placed’ child in the sample was a success in that only one placement was disrupted and over the two year period of the study, children’s perceptions of their caregivers improved, as did their relationships with peers and siblings and their perception of themselves.
Reviewed by	HB

Author	Tunnard J
Title	Parental drug misuse – a review of impact and intervention studies See also Gorin
Date	2002
Publisher	Research in Practice
Subject (key words)	Drug dependence, parents
Summary	<p>As the title suggests, this is an overview of 22 different studies over the past ten years. It focuses mainly on UK and Ireland research but does make reference to some American studies.</p> <p>It is very readable and makes good links with the Children Act and the Assessment Framework. The review is set out in sections, all clearly indicated and linking with each other. Each section is set out for UK and International studies and covers</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. What drugs do to you – the effect of commonly used drugs. b. The impact on the lives of children and families c. Messages for practice <p>It also contains a very useful referencing system and identification of the reviewed studies, enabling the reader to further research should they want to do so.</p> <p>The review looks at both quality and size of the studies undertaken but does not comment on their findings. However, it does outline the difficulties that the various studies had such as problems in establishing accurate data and numbers of drug users, linking this to terminology used and case recording definition.</p> <p>It also looks at the way alcohol and drug use are frequently viewed alongside each other when planning service provision, the difficulties that can arise from this and studies that have identified alternatives.</p>
Reviewed by	Sylvie Reeve

Author	Walker J, McCarthy, Stark C and Laing K
Title	Picking up the Pieces: Marriage and Divorce Two Years after Information Provision
Date	2004
Publisher	DCA
Subject (key words)	Divorce/separation (Support services)
Summary	<p>Aim To follow up those people who were interviewed as part of the evaluation of the FLA 96 information pilots to explore how they lived their lives after they recognised severe difficulties in their marital relationship and to suggest ways in which they might be helped to cope with the transition.</p> <p>Methodology Quantitative and qualitative methods were used. 1491 people returned a questionnaire from 3909 who had attended information meetings or received postal packs two years previously. 131 in depth interviews were conducted 55 focussing on marriage support and 76 on post-separation parenting.</p> <p>Findings The study provides rich detail on the divorce process and the role of counselling and mediation within this process. From a CAFCASS perspective the most important findings are those relating to post-separation parenting.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parents were ill prepared for the changes involved in their relationships with their children post divorce • Two thirds reported they were satisfied with the current parenting arrangements. This was particularly so for parents who were able to communicate with the other parent • Satisfaction with parenting arrangements depended on the quality of the child's relationship with both parents rather than the quantity of contact • Parenting arrangements (including contact) varied over time for the same families and between families, 62% of whom reported their child seeing the NRP at least once a week. • Contact arrangements were varied, some with fixed patterns, some allowing for flexibility, some ad hoc and some child determined • The 'pro-contact culture' in family law can present huge challenges for some families. Court orders did not appear to help parents achieve co-operative parenting • Over half the parents said that the information about the needs of children following separation had not helped improve communication between them. 43% of parents said they found the parenting plan 'very useful' • Parents primarily wanted information and advice about the realities of post-divorce parenting and how to manage the inevitable difficulties. They also wanted to know where they

	can seek help • The researchers concluded that support to parents post separation should be targeted on developing relationship skills and in particular communications skills.
Reviewed by	HB