People

Welcome

Caralyn Blaisdell who will be working on the ‘West Lothian Early Intervention Programme Evaluation’ project.

Stefanie Schmachtel-Maxfield is undertaking postdoctoral research with ‘What Works Scotland’.

Adele Lebano is visiting from Cornell University and will be with CRFR until May 2015.

Congratulations

CRFR PhD students Christina McMellon and Catherine-Rose Stocks-Rankin (formerly of the PROP project) on gaining their PhDs.

Caralyn Blaisdell who has won the Ethics & Social Welfare, Jo Campling Memorial Prize 2014. Prizes are awarded each year for the best student essays on a theme relevant to ‘ethics and social welfare’.

Publications

Childhoods


Research methods


Health, caring and well-being


Parenting


Rurality


Evidence for success - new guide

CRFR has been working with other members of the Knowledge Translation Network (KTN), established in 2002 and chaired by Evaluation Support Scotland, to facilitate and share learning about effective knowledge translation and dissemination activities.

The KTN recently published its first resource, ‘Evidence for Success: The guide to getting evidence and using it’, which offers easy to follow, step-by-step guidance and resources to support third sector organisations to use evidence to influence policy and practice.

The guide is for anyone who wants to use evidence to improve policy and practice, regardless of the level of experience they have in doing so. This guide will also be of value to a wide range of stakeholders, including: practitioners, service managers, funders and commissioners, and policy makers and planners.

What’s new...

Evidence for success — feedback was extremely positive.

“The guide looks really good, nice short and simple tips.” Pamela Barnes, Includem

“Overall, I found the guide engaging – a good read, language, tone, etc. throughout is appropriate and excellent in my view. I genuinely enjoyed reading it.”

Carolyn Sawers, Big Lottery Fund

“The course and working examples went a long way to my understanding of putting into practice.”

Workshop attendee

Evaluation Support Scotland, supported by members of the KTN, ran two ‘Evidence for Success’ workshops to help 23 third sector organisations make the best of the advice and learning in the guide — feedback was extremely positive.

To find out more about the Knowledge Translation Network and to download a copy of the Evidence for Success guide visit www.evaluationsupportscotland.org.uk. Leave your feedback on Twitter using #evidence4success.

What is CRFR?

CRFR produces research and commentary on families and relationships. It facilitates a network of researchers, and those interested in families and relationships, to promote the use of research in policy and practice.

To find out more about all CRFR research projects go to www.crfr.ac.uk/projects/current-projects/
Family engagement in education

A child’s achievement and progress at school is significantly influenced by how involved their parents are in their learning, regardless of the family background.

Earlier this year CRFR carried out a literature review, commissioned by the Scottish Government, in partnership with Children in Scotland. The findings form the basis of a website, to provide support to teachers and schools on how they can engage with families to improve the attainment and achievement of disadvantaged pupils.

The website and an infographic are available at:

http://engagingwithfamilies.co.uk

New publication

CRFR PhD student Carine Leborgne has authored a report for World Vision — ‘What next? Ways forward for children’s and young people’s participation’.

The purpose of this study is to review key theoretical perspectives and practice in relation to children’s and young people’s participation. This review is being undertaken in order to enhance World Vision’s understanding and practice in the field of participation.

The report can be downloaded from the World Vision website: www.wvi.org
Research associate Sarah Nelson, a specialist in sexual abuse issues, has been much in demand this year as revelations about sexual abuse continue to come to the fore in the media. She writes:

The upsurge in revelations about historic institutional child sexual abuse, abuse by celebrities, and large-scale child sexual exploitation of vulnerable young teenage girls, has raised great public and professional debate. It has produced a much-increased demand for presentations and seminars in 2014 and it’s especially encouraging that professionals – social workers, children’s panel members, voluntary sector support agencies, mental health practitioners – want to learn more from research on the subject, and to feed in their own experience to researchers!

The Centre for the Vulnerable Child in Fife, Rape Crisis England & Wales, Glasgow Children’s Panel, BASPCAN, Child Protection Research Centre Four Nations Seminar, The Scottish Government, The Abuse Seminars series here at The University of Edinburgh and Say Women in Glasgow are just some of those agencies requesting presentations this year.

Principles in practice: Financial provision on divorce under the Family Law (Scotland) Act 1985

Scots law has a legal framework for financial provision on divorce which sets out five very clear and detailed statutory principles. It has been in place now for almost 30 years and during that time it has been praised and admired for its clarity, certainty and coherence, although there has been very little research into how it works in practice. In a collaborative research project involving the School of Law, University of Glasgow and CRFR, and funded by the Nuffield Foundation, 200 published court decisions were analysed covering the period since the Act came into force.

Now moving into a second phase, 30 legal practitioners will be interviewed about their experiences of using the legislation. The findings from this research will contribute to our understanding of how law is used and operates in practice.

For further information email: Jane.Mair@glasgow.ac.uk

Visual resources for young people's self-care and transformation

In November, associate director Sarah Wilson was invited to speak at a seminar series held by the University of Sussex. She explored the use of visual digital resources by 'looked after' young people to blank out – but also to engage with and re-think – difficult histories and current circumstances.

http://www.sussex.ac.uk/esw/circy/newsandevents/current

Gender equality and violence

Nancy Lombard, Reader in Sociology and Social Policy, has written a blog post entitled ‘Gender equality and violence: the role of schools for the British Educational Research Association. She will also present a seminar on this subject at Brunel University, London, in April 2015 as part of the ‘Violence and Young People: Methods of Study and Intervention’ seminar series.

You can read Nancy’s blog on the BERA website: https://berarespectingchildren.wordpress.com/

New projects

Alcohol stories

Men aged 35 to 54 are at higher risk of alcohol related harm and suicide compared to other groups. This pilot study will explore narratives of men in mid-life who have experienced suicidal distress and will look in particular at the role of alcohol, both positive and negative, in their experiences.

Contact: a.chandler@ed.ac.uk

Integrating children’s services: exploring practice through comparison

A new project affiliated with What Works Scotland is exploring and reflecting on what it takes to provide integrated local children's services. The research will also help to develop new perspectives to the challenges and dilemmas that local partnership working poses to local authority professionals.

For more information read Stefanie Schmachtel-Maxfield’s blog at: http://whatworksscotland.blogspot.co.uk

Risks and realities of neonatal abstinence syndrome

Neonatal abstinence syndrome (NAS), is where babies, whose mothers used drugs of dependence during pregnancy, show symptoms of drug-withdrawal after they are born. This study is exploring the views of parents, health and social care providers in Edinburgh and the Lothians, on what Neonatal Abstinence Syndrome is and how best to prepare parents and other carers for looking after a baby who has been diagnosed with NAS.

Contact: s.morton@ed.ac.uk

Asking the tough questions in a special issue of the International Journal of Child, Youth & Family Studies

A team of researchers, led by CRFR Co-Directors Kay Tisdall and Jeni Harden and CRFR PhD student Cara Blaisdell have recently published a special issue in the International Journal of Child, Youth & Family Studies on the involvement of children and young people in research.

Arising from the CRFR 2013 International Conference, the issue aims to advance the way that childhood studies is researched and practiced, by asking authors to reflect on the last 20 years of involving children and young people in research and critically examine topics such as the role of new technologies, the challenges of existing practice, and how ethical and practical approaches to working with children and young people can be developed.

CRFR associates Susan Elsley, Michael Gallagher, Marlies Kustatscher and Alice Maclean also contributed.

Children's views on contact with non-resident fathers when there is domestic abuse

Fiona Morrison's ESRC studentship explored children’s views and experiences of contact with non-resident fathers in the context of domestic abuse.

Changes in children’s lives

Alcohol
Several children were concerned about how their fathers’ drinking affected their behaviour during contact. Children described being wary of their fathers, wondering whether they would be drunk during contact and what the repercussions of this might be.

Siblings living apart
In several cases parental separation led to siblings living apart, causing distress and upset for the children concerned. Contact was seen not only as an opportunity to spend time with their father but also an opportunity to spend time with a sibling.

Wider family
Contact with the father was identified by children as a way to continue relationships with their wider family (grandparents, aunts etc.). However, there were several cases where children's relationships with their extended family were jeopardised because of children's views about contact and their contact arrangements.

Leaving the family home
The majority of children and their mothers had to flee the family home at the point of separation. Children’s resulting homelessness, because of domestic abuse, meant that they often moved to unfamiliar areas, had to change schools, leave friends, pets and possessions behind. This meant that contact with a father was also a means for children to reconnect with important aspects of their lives that had existed pre-separation.

Parents re-partnering
Difficulties that can arise for children as a result of parents re-partnering were often interwoven with children’s views about contact.

Domestic abuse

The continuing impact of domestic abuse, on children and mothers, was a core concern for many of the children.

• Children drew direct connections between not wanting contact and their father's historic and on-going abuse towards them and their mother. This reinforces how enmeshed the interests of children and women can become in contact disputes when there is domestic abuse.

• The notion of wanting contact if their father's abusive behaviour could be controlled was raised in interviews with some children.

This was a collaborative study between CRFR and Scottish Women's Aid to examine children’s views and experiences of contact with fathers in a context of domestic abuse.