



# CENTRE FOR RESEARCH ON FAMILIES AND RELATIONSHIPS

Number 1

Spring 2002

## News

### Gender, Care and Transitions

CRFR's first research fellowship, based at Glasgow Caledonian University, is examining the experiences of women attempting to make a transition into further education or employment. The research considers how women with dependent children move into training and employment and the role of both formal and informal care in supporting them. The research included two focus groups with twelve mothers who were currently or had previously undergone training at Rosemount Lifelong Learning, a project in Glasgow.

#### Key Points

- Opportunities for children's development and for personal development for mothers outside the home motivated women returners as much as the desire to work.
- Women want to manage work, training and care in a way that benefits children in the long term. Problems of transition occur not because women resist role changes, but because they seek change without detrimental consequences for their children.
- Factors affecting transitions to formal education or employment included the availability of childcare, the limited time and energy available after all care responsibilities were fulfilled, the expected effect on family income and the extent of family or partner support.
- Positive outcomes reported included greater self-confidence, greater awareness of choices that could be pursued in the long or short term, a re-engagement with learning, and improved skills.
- Unpaid care work by women is complex, changing and multifaceted and is not easily replaced by formal care.
- It is often difficult to routinise informal care to meet the demands of employment and formal education.
- Policies on 'welfare to work' may aim to meet the needs of low-income women but policies assume an oversimplified model of the relationships, resources and infrastructure that maintains social care.
- There is a need to recognise the value of lifelong learning projects in increasing long-term social capital as well as labour market potential in regeneration areas.
- Many of the lessons learnt in a project such as Rosemount could be incorporated into other sectors of lifelong learning, including further education.

The interim findings of the research are now available in CRFR Research briefing 2 The study will publish its full findings in April 2002.

The Centre for Research on Families and Relationships was set up in January 2001 to produce research and commentary on families and relationships relevant to Scotland and to disseminate such work widely. It is supported by a research development grant from the Scottish Higher Education Funding Council.

CRFR facilitates a network of researchers and those interested in families and relationships research, produces regular research briefings and information bulletins, and holds events. To find out more about the Centre, or to join the directory, please contact CRFR at the address below.

Directors: Sarah Cunningham-Burley, Lynn Jamieson, Kathryn Backett-Milburn, Fran Wasoff, University of Edinburgh

Consortium institutions: Glasgow Caledonian University, University of Aberdeen and University of Glasgow.

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## Professionalisation of the Family: the Second CRFR Research Fellowship

Departments of Sociology And Management Studies with the Arkleton Centre for Rural Development Research, University of Aberdeen

Debates about the balance between the privacy of family life and the necessity for state intervention to ensure children's welfare are common. Policy change, however, has emphasised including parents in discussion on issues that involve them and their children as a way of improving services and outcomes. Parents unable or unwilling to participate or make choices in an appropriate way are often, however, considered deviant by a middle class discourse that privileges rational choice and behaviour. Such trends appear on the surface to give parents more power to intercede in the type and nature of service provision for their children.

At the same time we have a contrary trend, in the continuing 'mission creep' in respect of the behaviour of professional groups towards families. Whilst we might be initially reassured that at last there is recognition that what goes on in families is important, it is evident that - in the eyes of many - it is too important to be left to parents alone.

This one year research fellowship will focus on current understanding about appropriate roles for parents at the point where they come into contact with service and welfare agencies which have an interest in children's issues.

This study aims to explore what is now happening at these boundaries.

- How do parents manage these new participative cultures?
- What mechanisms promote or foster parental advocacy?
- How do professional groups respond to 'empowered' parents and 'disempowered' parents?
- Are partnership notions simply rhetoric? How is power distributed between the different actors?
- What structural or cultural variables are significant in explaining variability?

The fellowship is being taken forward by CRFR Associate Directors Janet Shucksmith and Lorna McKee, and CRFR Associated Researchers Natasha Mauthner and Kate Philip, at the University of Aberdeen. The Research Fellow, Helen Willmot takes up post on 1st March 2002.

## Caring and Providing: Experiences of lone and partnered mothers working in Scotland

Seminar on results of a recently completed research project funded by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation

Working mothers in Scotland value work not just for its economic contribution, but also for personal identity, social contact and to provide a positive role model for their children. This, along with other findings from research funded by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation, and carried out by a team from CRFR and Community Health Sciences, including RHUBC, The University of Edinburgh, was the focus for our second seminar on 27<sup>th</sup> September 2001. People from academic institutions, local authorities, Scottish Executive and voluntary organisations gathered at Edinburgh University to discuss the policy implications of the research.

Thirty women were interviewed about their experiences of combining parenting and paid work in nonprofessional/managerial jobs. For many, their choice of job was constrained by family responsibilities. They required flexibility in hours and working practices and, often, this had meant taking low-grade work. However, being seen as a reliable worker who seldom needed time off for family or health reasons was important to them. Negotiating time off for children's sickness was often difficult, and many respondents encouraged their children to keep going when 'off colour' as part of promoting a strong work ethic.

Many women found managing domestic life alongside paid work onerous and tiring. Lone mothers in particular said that sole responsibility for both home management and parenting could be stressful. All of the mothers valued time actively spent together as a family, but found this hard to achieve. Childcare arrangements, whether formal or informal, changed according to parents' perceptions of children's changing needs and preferences, as well as the availability of care and alterations to working hours. Informal arrangements were often described as fragile, but were valued for their quality and flexibility.

Delegates at the seminar discussed how the findings might impact on the development of family friendly practices, how policies might better reflect the needs of working families, and issues of childcare. Notes from these discussions can be found on our website at <http://www.crfr.ac.uk/events.htm>.

The full report **Caring and Providing: Lone and partnered working mothers in Scotland** by Kathryn Backett-Milburn, Sarah Cunningham-Burley and Debbie Kemmer is published for the Joseph Rowntree Foundation by the Family Policy Studies Centre (ISBN 1 901455 61 0 price £12.95).

A summary is available as a **JRF Findings** report at [www.jrf.org.uk/knowledge/findings/socialpolicy/381.asp](http://www.jrf.org.uk/knowledge/findings/socialpolicy/381.asp)

## Keep in touch- get involved

The Centre for Research on Families and Relationships aims to build and maintain an effective and inclusive network of policy makers, practitioners and academics who have a professional interest in social research on families and relationships in Scotland. There are several ways in which you can keep in touch or get involved with the work of the centre.

### Joining the Centre for Research on Families and Relationships: the CRFR Directory

The CRFR Directory is a Scottish-wide infrastructure for dialogue and dissemination across sectors and approaches to families and relationships. Joining is currently free, and members will be able to contact each other via our website. Being a member also means you will be kept informed of events and publications, and you will receive our monthly information bulletin. For more information about joining the directory, and a registration form please contact the Centre or consult our website [www.crfr.ac.uk](http://www.crfr.ac.uk).

### Affiliated and Associated Researchers

Affiliated and Associated Researchers have closer association with CRFR in addition to membership of the CRFR Network. Affiliates can use the CRFR name in applications when CRFR are involved as consultants, whereas Associates are involved in joint research projects.

### We are pleased to announce our first two Associated Researchers:

**Natasha Mauthner** is Deputy Director of the Arkleton Centre for Rural Development Research at the University of Aberdeen. She is a graduate of the University of Cambridge, and Harvard University. Her research interests include work and family life, health and mental health issues, and qualitative research theory and practice. Her doctoral work (MRC funded) explored women's experiences of motherhood and postnatal depression.

Her current research investigates the interface between paid employment and domestic, family and community life, from the perspectives of workers, carers, children and employers. She is conducting collaborative research on these issues within the context of the oil and gas industry (ESRC and EU funded) and within rural communities (Joseph Rowntree Foundation funded). She has published numerous book chapters and journal articles on these topics as well as on methodological and epistemological issues in qualitative research.

**Kate Philip** is Senior Research Fellow, The Rowan Group, Department of Sociology and Anthropology, University of Aberdeen and has extensive experience in issues relating to young people, health and community development. She has studied young people's perceptions of informal mentoring relationships, and mentoring schemes which target groups of vulnerable young people. She completed an ESRC fellowship exploring innovative ways of improving dissemination of new research on children and health inequalities to policy makers and practitioners.

She is an honorary research fellow at the Dugald Baird

Centre for Women's Health and a member of a team undertaking an evaluation of a Scottish Executive project on teenage sexual health. She was also involved in a strategic needs assessment of child and family health for the Health Education Board for Scotland. She has published articles on mentoring, youth work, health, drug misuse and youth work.

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## Research Action Groups

CRFR is committed to establishing Research Action Groups to stimulate social research on families and relationships in specific topic areas, particularly those that are relatively under-researched in Scotland.

The idea of a Research Action Group (RAG) is to bring together people across a number of constituencies who share an interest in deepening our knowledge of a specific topic area or issue within the study of families and relationships in Scotland.

### It is our intention that Research Action Groups should:

- Bring together a group not simply of academics but of practitioners or other research users (e.g. voluntary organisations) with an interest in a specified field.
- Not simply be a talking shop but also lead to action. The talking may include discussion of existing research, sharing views of important issues for research agendas, and identifying ways of taking research on that topic forward.

The action may include producing materials, mapping out existing work and identifying gaps, conducting literature reviews, producing research briefings or other types of publication or producing one or more research proposals.

**To initiate a Research Action Group you should** be a member of the CRFR directory, confirm your commitment to the aims, objectives and working practices of RAGs, consult with a minimum of 6 interested parties, and discuss your idea with a member of CRFR staff. CRFR will provide some administrative and financial support, and oversee the work of the group.

The first Research Action Group, looking at Older People Families and Relationships had its first meeting in January 2002. If you are interested in this group or in discussing ideas for RAGS, please contact Sarah Morton, Research Liaison and Information Officer at CRFR or e-mail [s.morton@ed.ac.uk](mailto:s.morton@ed.ac.uk)

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## Research Round Up

CRFR aims to stimulate growth of a coherent body of research on families and relationships relevant to Scotland. This is a round up of current CRFR initiatives.

### Sure Start Scotland

CRFR were awarded the tender by the Scottish Executive to carry out the first phase of an evaluation of Sure Start Scotland. The focus of Sure Start Scotland is to develop integrated services for children under 4 and their parents. It is distinct from Sure Start south of the border, in that responsibility for implementation lies with local authorities who develop provision as they think best suits their local circumstances and in line with the Scottish Executive guidance, rather than being organised centrally as in England and Wales. This 10-week project was a mapping exercise, describing the services provided for very young children and families, and identifying ways in which Sure Start Scotland has impacted on other provision. This included mapping the number of service users.

Sure Start Scotland's objectives are to improve children's social and emotional development, improve children's health, their ability to learn and to strengthen families and communities. The emphasis is on working with whole families, addressing parent's ability to deal with their children, and bringing together social work, education, community education, health and voluntary organisations to offer services. The research team found a huge range of projects addressing these objectives, and a move towards integrated services in many authorities. Working with parents and children was felt to have a much bigger impact on families' difficulties, and many hard to reach families in different parts of Scotland have been engaged with the process.

A specification for the second phase of the evaluation is currently being developed by the Executive. The information from the mapping exercise will help to inform this process.

### Surviving Parental Drug Misuse

Experiences of Older Children of Drug and Alcohol Using Parents

Children of substance misusers are at risk of various adverse outcomes, both during their childhood and in later life. The risks they face have been evaluated by quantitative studies measuring psychological factors, but qualitative research is needed to look at social processes, attitudes and experiences underlying the association of parental substance use with poor short and long-term outcomes for children. There is little research on the ways in which young people deal with having a substance using parent or parents and how they themselves view their experiences, or what resources they can draw on to manage and survive substance misuse.

CRFR are delighted to have been awarded a grant for an 18 month study of these issues within the JRF programme. The research will focus on older teenage (16-19 years) children's accounts of their childhoods, pathways to independence, and the daily practices that might constitute survival, coping, or resilience. The research will document their experiences and consider how they create ways of coping for themselves and their families, and the part played by family members and peers. The impact of different forms of substance abuse, different circumstances, including gender and socio-economic factors will be considered, and the study will consider the implications for prevention and harm minimisation services.

The research team is Angus Bancroft, Sarah Cunningham-Burley and Kathryn Backett-Milburn from CRFR, and Hugh Masters from Napier University. A Research Fellow will be recruited early in 2002.

### Young People in Regrouped Family Households: Family Change, Social Networks & Support

CRFR have been working on a proposal with Family Mediation Scotland, Couple Counselling Scotland, One Parent Families Scotland and Stepfamilies Scotland for research to inform support systems about the views of young people following family household change. Families may be regrouped following death of a parent, the breakdown of the couple relationship of parents or the re-partnering of a parent.

The proposed research would ask young people about formal and informal support systems strategically focusing on young people who have recently experienced transition in their family household. This will include gathering information about the informal support young people received from and give to kin and friends and how this is affected by family household transition. Young people's knowledge and use of formal support systems such as the guidance system, local youth organisations and support organisations, such as Childline, or those with which they have contact through their parents, such as social services or voluntary organisations would also be examined.

CRFR hope to have news on this proposal in the summer 2002.

## Young people and health in Scotland

### New research study at CRFR

The Health Education Board for Scotland (HEBS) has recently commissioned an investigation of the research base, information needs and consultation processes relevant to health and young people aged 11-25 in Scotland. In collaboration with the Research Unit in Health, Behaviour and Change, CRFR will undertake some of this work, which includes a literature review and a scoping study of current services working with young people.

The scoping study, which began in December, will review sources of information on health that are available to young people themselves and those agencies that work with them. The study will seek to identify, in particular, how agencies consult with young people about their health needs and also how these agencies can access the information that can help them. Interviews will be conducted with a small sample of representatives from agencies and with young people themselves.

An important element in the overall research project will be maintaining a focus on the need to identify what are the young people's own views on their health needs and on the type of information they require.

A report based on the findings of the study will be presented to a consultation seminar, involving academics, policy makers and practitioners working with young people, which is planned for early summer 2002.

The study is under the overall direction of Kathryn Backett-Milburn and Sarah Cunningham-Burley. The study will be taken forward by Jean Smith Research Fellow, anyone interested in further details please contact her at CRFR.

**CRFR are committed to developing a body of high quality research on families and relationships. If you would like to discuss research ideas, or would like to be involved in research, please contact us.**

## Solo Living in Europe: Early, middle and late adulthood: a life-course perspective

A number of social and demographic changes combine to make periods of living alone across the lifecourse much more likely and one-person households commonplace. Despite the greater frequency of living alone in adult life, it is commonly regarded as a deviation from the norm of family life and living with a partner and children.

In a European context of concerns about the funding of welfare, solo-living raises a variety of policy issues. Community and social care policies often assume that the family will provide care. As more people live alone, and remain childless, will these networks continue to provide support, or will new ties and obligations emerge? There may be increased demands for health services if families don't provide care. There will be issues for the provision of pensions, and there will be a need for more dwellings, and an impact on planning.

CRFR have been awarded a grant from the ESRC to carry forward some research on this topic with 4 European partners (the grant is conditional on the partners getting their own funding). The research will provide evidence to consider public concern that a trend to solo-living might reflect a turning away from family life. The research aims to help inform policies through increasing understanding of what living alone means, in terms of behavior, life styles, values, social and family networks and obligations, and how these vary.

The study will be over two years in five European countries, Scotland, Hungary, Italy, Denmark and Norway, strategically selected to represent contrasting demographic, social and cultural environments and welfare systems. 300 respondents will be interviewed in-depth; 60 in each country, consisting of equal numbers of men and women who have lived alone for at least a year, and divided equally between three age cohorts. Some will be parents and some may have partners, but none will have co-resident children or partners. Evidence will be collected about respondents' living arrangements, previous partnerships, family and friendship networks. The quality and nature of social activities, obligations and support given and received from others will be explored. The extent to which 'solo living' involves positive and negative choices, identities and meanings is a key research theme.

Lynn Jamieson and Fran Wasoff are leading the research for CRFR.

Copies of our first Research Briefing on Solo Living are available from CRFR



# People

## New Staff

### **John McKendrick, Senior Research Fellow**

joined CRFR at the start of January, on secondment from Glasgow Caledonian University. Coming from a background in Geography his research interests and experience includes the study of children's geographies, parenting/family life, and poverty/social justice.

### **Sarah Morton Research Liaison and Information Officer**

took up post in September 2001. She has previously worked for ACOSVO, Learning Link Scotland and Children in Scotland, as well as Tutoring and carrying out research for the Open University.

### **Kathryn Dunne Clerical Assistant**

officially joined the Centre in September having worked here since May 2001. Previously she was working with the long term unemployed for Scottish Enterprise.

### **Jean Smith Research Fellow**

joined CRFR at the beginning of December 2001 to work on the HEBS funded research study (see inside). She previously worked as a social worker with children and their families who have severe illness or disabilities including a study on how parents of children with cancer cope with their child's illness and treatment and a study on how cancer affects young people.

## Honorary Research Fellow

**Elizabeth Seddon** is attached to CRFR as an Honorary Research Fellow. She has a background in Social Policy and Social Administration at a senior level. Her major research interests are domestic violence, marriage, and parenting after separation. Currently she is involved in a project looking at men's understanding of their violence towards women and is also writing a book on 'Cooperative Parenting after Separation'.

## Co-directors

Lynn Jamieson has come to the end of her year as Executive Co-Director, which is a rotating post. For 2002, Kathryn Backett-Milburn will be joining Sarah Cunningham-Burley as half-time Executive Co-Director at the Centre. Fran Wasoff will replace Kathryn in 2003.

## Centre Staff

Thanks very much to **Vivienne McFarlane**, Centre Manager, for all of her work in getting the Centre up and running over this first year.

# Forthcoming Events

## Making Research Effective:

Exploring research issues in collaborative family and relationship research.

5<sup>th</sup> March 2002. 1pm-5pm Britannia Buildings, City Campus, Glasgow Caledonian University.

This seminar provides an opportunity for voluntary organisations and academics to consider issues in developing collaborative research. The seminar will explore:

- Issues of involving client groups in research
- Consideration of stages of collaboration
- Who benefits from research
- How research can inform policy and practice
- Models of developing collaborative research agendas
- How research might be disseminated and used more widely.

Participants: Researchers and those interested in research from academic and voluntary organisations.

For further information and a booking form please contact CRFR at the address on the front page.

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# Research Briefing Series

Forthcoming briefings:

## Research Briefing 2 **Gender Care and Transitions:**

January 2002

Interim report of CRFR's first Research Fellowship in association with The Scottish Poverty Information Unit.

## Research Briefing 3 **Family Policy in Scotland** February 2002

## Research Briefing 4 **Children's Perspectives on Social and Health Inequalities**

March 2002

## Research Briefing 5 **Child Sexual Abuse and Family Relationships: Damaging long term effects**

Research Briefing 1 **Solo-Living in Scotland** is still available.

Research Briefings are currently free of charge from CRFR and will automatically be sent to members of our Directory.

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