

# Rees Centre



The Rees Centre Newsletter  
July, 2021

## **Rees Centre to co-lead new £2.8 million research programme to explore mental health outcomes.**

The Rees Centre and the University of Bath have secured funding from the [Medical Research Council](#) to investigate factors linked to the mental health and wellbeing of care-experienced young people during two transition periods: moving from primary to secondary school and moving from adolescence into adulthood.

The research will use data from 14,000 care-experienced young people and also include new longitudinal studies involving young people, carers, adoptive parents and social workers. It has a specific focus on psychological processes and the role of support systems and services to identify targets for future intervention and prevention programmes.

**Dr Lisa Holmes**, who is jointly leading the project with **Dr Rachel Hiller** at the University of Bath, said “We are delighted to be awarded this funding and we firmly believe that the research programme will facilitate the development of an evidence base to move beyond stating the problem. We will focus on mechanisms, and in particular those that are potentially malleable for earlier interventions.”

**Professor Julie Selwyn** and **Professor Iram Siraj** will be co-investigators in the four-year programme which will also involve Cardiff University and the University of Bristol and be supported by three panels of care-experienced young people facilitated by [Adoption UK](#) and [Coram Voice](#).

For more information click [here](#)

## Research Highlights

### **New project exploring access to higher education.**

The Rees Centre has been awarded £122,780 for a new study to better understand pathways into and through higher education for young people who have been allocated a social worker. The study will be led by **Dr Neil Harrison** and is funded by [What Works for Children's Social Care](#) and the [Centre for Transforming Access and Student Outcomes in Higher Education](#). It will draw on large-scale linked datasets including the National Pupil Database and is expected to report in late 2022.

For more information click [here](#)



### **Bright Spots evaluation highlights practice improvements**

In collaboration with [Coram Voice](#), **Professor Julie Selwyn** and **Dr Shirley Lewis** have published their evaluation of the [Bright Spots Programme](#). The evaluation explored how local authorities had used the findings from the Bright Spots surveys to improve the lives of the children they look after. Also launched was the [Bright Spots Practice Bank](#), which showcases examples of how local authorities



### **Showcasing innovative practice on attachment and trauma awareness**

Many local authorities are now supporting their local schools to develop an awareness of issues around attachment and trauma for vulnerable children. The Rees Centre has been awarded funding by the Hadley Trust to explore innovative practice in three local authorities – Derbyshire, Islington and Kirklees. The findings will be used to devise materials to support other local

have improved their practices, with several of the innovations being featured in a [recent webinar](#).

[Read more](#)

authorities embarking on a similar journey. The project is being undertaken by **Helen Trivedi** and will report in Spring 2022.

[Read more](#)

## Policy Engagement

**Professor Leon Feinstein** gave evidence to the House of Lords Public Services Committee, which is reviewing the role of public services in addressing child vulnerability. Leon's evidence can be seen [here](#), emphasising big gaps in current knowledge on levels of need amongst children in England and a lack of a clear set of definitions.

The **Rees Centre team** responded to the [draft revised NICE guidance on looked after children](#), arguing that it should be informed by more British research. Guidance should also cover a wide range of mental health issues, address structural issues such as authority-led placement changes and recommended therapeutic work during contact sessions should be undertaken by trained psychologists.

**Professor Julie Selwyn** spoke on the findings from the seminal study 'Beyond the Adoption Order: Challenges, Interventions and Disruptions' at the Transatlantic Adoption and Fostering virtual learning exchange on 21<sup>st</sup> June, with senior US and UK politicians attending.

**Dr Neil Harrison** was invited to participate in two roundtables organised by the Department for Education to feed into the ministerial Action Group on Mental Health in Education. He talked about the emerging findings of the [Timpson Programme](#) with respect to attachment and trauma awareness in schools.

**Professor Leon Feinstein** has written a [blog post](#) about his role as chair of the evidence group for the Independent Care Review. This describes the nature of the evidence supporting the Review's Case for Change published on 17<sup>th</sup> June.

June saw the launch of the new [NNECL Quality Mark](#) awarded to universities and colleges for excellence in supporting care-experienced students in higher and further education. **Dr Neil Harrison** provided significant input into the working group that developed the underpinning framework and guidance.

## Recent Events

The [Timpson Programme](#) held two webinars in March and June, the recordings of which are now available online. The first featured **Paul Nicholson and Alison Grey** and focused on [Developing School Relationship Policies: Experiences from Primary and Secondary Schools](#). The second was led by Andrew Brown and was entitled [Reviewing the Evidence for Effectiveness of School-Based Attachment and Trauma Informed Interventions](#).

The Rees Centre was well-represented at the [International Conference on Adoption Research](#), held online between 6<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> July. **Professor Julie Selwyn** gave a presentation on special needs adoption, **Professor Harriet Ward** spoke on 'Adult Outcomes of Young People placed in Open Adoption in Australia' and **Dr Shirley Lewis** delivered a poster presentation on 'Evaluating the Regionalisation of Adoption Agencies'.

**Professor Julie Selwyn** was one of the speakers on 'Adoption in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century' at the [Family Justice Council Conference](#) on 1<sup>st</sup> March.

**Professor Harriet Ward** convened an expert seminar and discussion on 20<sup>th</sup> May entitled 'Child Protection during the Perinatal Period: Innovation in Assessment and Practice' on behalf of the International Network on Infants, Toddlers and Child Protection.

**Dr Nikki Luke** presented on 'Data and Availability in Children's Social Care' at the [What Works for Children's Social Care](#) Evaluators Panel Conference on 30<sup>th</sup> June.

On 7<sup>th</sup> July, **Dr Neil Harrison** convened and chaired one of the inaugural meetings of the [INTRAC Higher Education thematic interest group](#) – a global network of over 50 researchers focused on care-experienced students. A second meeting on 15<sup>th</sup> July was chaired by **Professor Andrew Harvey** of La Trobe University in Australia.

## Latest Academic Publications

Berridge, D., J. Sebba, M. Cartwright and E. Staples (2021) [School experiences of Children in Need: learning and support](#). Awaiting publication in *British Educational Research Journal*.

Harrison, N. and G. Atherton (eds.) (2021) [Marginalised Communities in Higher Education: Disadvantage, Mobility and Indigeneity](#). Abingdon: Routledge.

Lee, J. and L. Holmes (2021) [Longitudinal trajectories of behavioral problems among children in out-of-home care: A systematic review](#), *Children and Youth Services Review* 127: 106086.

O'Higgins, A., N. Luke and S. Strand (2021) [Children in care in education: Who is entered for exams and who reaches critical thresholds of success at age 16?](#) Awaiting publication in *British Educational Research Journal*.

Ward, H. and M. Stein (2021) [Young people's transitions from care to adulthood: exploring historical narratives](#) (special issue), *Child and Family Social Work* 26(2).

## Doctoral Student News

We are delighted to report recent successes for some of the Rees Centre's doctoral students:

**Áine Kelly** has successfully completed the viva voce examination for her thesis entitled '*Factors associated with the ability of the care system to meet the physical and mental health needs of young people looked after in England: a mixed-methods study*'.

**Jane Lee** has passed her 'confirmation of status' examination with no corrections and moves on to the final phase of her studies.

**Lucy Robinson** has been appointed a trustee of the [Armed Forces Education Trust](#).

**Lisa Cherry's** latest book was published by Routledge in June: [Conversations that Make a Difference for Children and Young People](#).

**Jenny Ginger** has joined the research team for a project entitled '*Sharing*

*learning about multiagency working to protect vulnerable children in the COVID era'* led by Dr Sharon Dixon from the [Health Experiences Research Group](#).

## Future Events

The next [Timpson Programme](#) webinar will be held from 4pm to 5pm on Thursday 16<sup>th</sup> September and will feature **Rebecca Brooks** from Adoption UK talking about 'Transitions and change for care-experienced young people in school'. For more information click [here](#).

**Professor Harriet Ward** will chair the national Looked After Children and Care Leavers Forum (21<sup>st</sup> and 22<sup>nd</sup> September), bringing together professionals and care leavers to share best practice on issues including early intervention and multi-agency working, attachment awareness and kinship care.

The **Rees Centre team** is making numerous contributions to the EUSARF conference in September 2021, including:

- **Dr Lisa Holmes:** 'Innovative Residential Care for Adolescents in England: Learning from No Wrong Door'
- **Dr Neil Harrison:** 'Exploring Support for Care-Experienced Students in UK Higher Education Using the Capabilities Approach'
- **Helen Trivedi and Dr Priya Tah:** 'Improving Educational Outcomes for Children in Care through Attachment and Trauma Awareness Training in Schools'
- **Professor Harriet Ward:** 'Infants, Toddlers and Child Protection: International Perspectives' (symposium)
- **Vânia Pinto:** 'Foster Carers as Parents or Professionals: The Fostering Role in England and Portugal'
- **Dr Lisa Holmes:** 'Development of an Investment Case for Sustainable Community Based Foster Care in Jordan'
- **Yousef Khalifa Aleghfeli:** 'Education of Unaccompanied Refugee Minors in High-Income Countries: A Systematic Mixed-Methods Review of Risk and Resilience Factors'
- **Professor Harriet Ward and Helen Trivedi:** 'Outcomes of Open Adoption: How Australian Adoptees from Care Compare with their Peers in the General Population'
- **Professor Julie Selwyn:** 'The Subjective Well-Being of Care Leavers'

- **Dr Lisa Holmes:** 'Continuity and Discontinuity for Children in Out of Home Care'

Members of the team are also presenting at other conferences in the summer and autumn, including:

- **Caitlin Prentice:** 'Educators' interactions with refugee pupils: knowledge, attitudes, and practices' at the British Education Research Association Conference
- **Jane Lee:** 'Effects of student-teacher relationships on the problem behavior trajectories of children' and 'What do the longitudinal trajectories of behavioral and emotional problems among children in out-of-home care look like? A systematic review' at the European Early Childhood Education Research Association Conference
- **Vânia Pinto:** 'Foster care in Portugal and England: Between parenting and professionalisation' at Simpósio Luso-Brasileiro em Estudos da Criança