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We welcome your feedback and suggestions on our work.

RESEARCH UPDATES

Evaluation of Step Down Programme Birmingham

The Step Down Programme is a partnership between Birmingham City Council and Core Assets which started in July 2014 to bring young people out of residential homes into foster placements. By April 2018, 33 placements had been made via the Step Down Programme (31 young people as two were placed twice). Twelve young people had graduated (having reached 52 weeks in the placement) and seven were in current Step Down placements.

The Step Down Programme is underpinned by a Social Impact Bond contract, funded by *Bridges Ventures*, a social investor who wants to make a difference for children and young people.

Key Findings

The findings from the evaluation are mixed but on balance, both the increased stability established for many of the young people and the cost savings, suggest that it should be regarded in the main, as a success. An estimate of the cost savings achieved in the Step Down Programme over the first three and a half years is nearly £2m.

On average, across the first four years and assuming current placements of less than 52 weeks are stable, a 64% (20:31) stability rate has been achieved across the 31 young people. There is evidence that most young people achieved greater stability than they experienced prior to the Programme as indicated by their previous trajectories. Other positive outcomes noted were:

- Young people were engaging in much higher level of activities than they were in their prior residential placements
- Attendance at school was generally high, higher than at baseline, with poor attendance recorded for only five young people
- Both foster carers and social workers reported reductions in anger and self-harm.

[Step Down Evaluation Report \(pdf\)](#)

Improving use of data and research evidence in family justice system in England and Wales – Nuffield Family Justice Observatory

Lisa Holmes and colleagues from the Rees Centre are currently part of the team delivering the development phase of the [Nuffield Family Justice Observatory](#). Led by Professor Karen Broadhurst at Lancaster University, the team is building the infrastructure of the Observatory and will then advise the Nuffield Foundation on the best operating model for the Observatory's 4-5 year delivery phase, to begin in spring 2019. Dr Lisa Holmes and Professor Harriet Ward are among the authors of the new report [Newborns in Care Proceedings in England \(pdf\)](#).

The Alex Timpson Attachment and Trauma Programme In Schools

The Alex Timpson Trust is funding the Rees Centre to develop a national evidence base on the effects of attachment and trauma training in schools. With 25 local authorities currently signed up to the programme, we are working with more than 150 schools across the country. If your school is interested in participating, please contact your local Virtual School Head. [More information](#)



REES CENTRE NEWS



Dr Neil Harrison appointed as Deputy Director, Rees Centre

Neil will join the Rees Centre in November as Senior Researcher in Education and Children's Social Care and our new Deputy Director. Neil is currently an Associate Professor in education policy at the University of the West of England. His research has focused mainly on issues of social justice in secondary and higher education, including a series of projects for the Office for Students. He is the author of the 'Moving On Up' report (November 2017) charting care leavers' pathways into and through higher education in England.

Conference Presentations EUSARF 2018 Porto

The Rees Centre was well represented at the international Conference on Child Welfare in Portugal. The programme of the European Scientific Association for Residential and Family Care (EUSARF) 2018 conference included presentations by eight Rees Centre researchers. In addition, Lisa Holmes and Harriet Ward were invited to chair symposiums.

Coram BAAF Research Group Seminar

Lisa Holmes and Vânia Pinto presented on 'The experience of placement change: the views and experiences of children and carers' at this event on 18th October which looked at placement stability.

Upcoming Presentations

Judy Sebba will give a keynote presentation to the ARC (Attachment Research Community) conference on 21st November 'Improving outcomes of vulnerable children and young people through changing school cultures'.

REES CENTRE EVENTS

The Rees Centre organises a range of free [seminars, workshops and webinars](#). Most are open to the public and aim to cover both research findings and implications for policy and practice.

Dates for your diary:

Wednesday 7 November at 4pm. Termly online webinar (The Alex Timpson Attachment and Trauma Programme In Schools). Open to all, title and speaker to be confirmed. Check our website for login details.

Thursday 15 November at 2pm. Public Seminar. Dr Fred Wulczyn, Chapin Hall, University of Chicago. Title tbc.

Dr Fred Wulczyn is a Senior Research Fellow and Director of the Center for State Child Welfare Data, Chapin Hall at the University of Chicago. The Data Center provides support to more than 20 US States; the Multistate Foster Care Data Archive has been an important source of research evidence used by public and private child welfare agencies to manage their programmes for more than 25 years. Dr Wulczyn's own work focuses on how US States respond to children who are unable to live at home. He brings a multidisciplinary perspective to this work, drawing inspiration from disciplines such as mathematics, population biology, human development, sociology, system dynamics, and social work.

Don't forget the [Rees Centre YouTube channel](#). Nigel Fancourt and Judy Sebba recently gave a presentation for children's services and school staff on 'Embedding attachment awareness in classrooms: implications for schools' (25 Sep 2018, Oxford) which will be available shortly. [Evaluation of Attachment Aware Schools Programmes](#)

EXTRAS - CareExpConf

Plans are taking shape for a national conference for care experienced people of all ages on 26 April 2019 at Liverpool Hope University. Titled 'The care experience – past, present...and future?', the aim of the organisers is to bring together people from the care system of all ages and from all backgrounds with leading national policy makers and opinion formers with the emphasis on listening to the views of care experienced delegates. Fundraising remains a key objective so that costs can be covered for everyone with care experience who wishes to attend. Follow @careexpconf on Twitter for further information.

Teachers Who Care – How to help teachers and schools support looked after children

Become and Voices from Care Cymru have published findings from their survey of teachers about their experiences of teaching children in care. The full report and executive summary are available [here](#). The report makes nine recommendations which are reproduced here:

1. All routes into teaching should include information about children in care, including trauma and attachment aware behaviour management, what being in care is like, and key concepts such as the Virtual School, Designated Teacher, and Personal Education Plan. This should apply to university and school-led training and qualifications.
2. All schools should provide whole staff training on supporting children in care, in order to address any gaps in knowledge for new starters as well as refresh and update all staff awareness and improve collaboration between the Designated Teacher and their colleagues.
3. Virtual schools, children's services and schools should have clear, joined-up communication and information services that promote best practice while protecting children's right to privacy. Key professionals in each organisation should keep in touch regularly in order to ensure that children and young people receive consistent support.
4. Each virtual school should have resources available to teachers to inform them of what services are available and how they can get support when needed. This could be as straightforward as promoting the resources created by organisations such as the National Association of Virtual School Heads (NAVSH) or developing something more tailored to local circumstances if appropriate.
5. Schools should invite social workers to meet with staff to explain their work, to create opportunities for closer collaboration and information sharing.
6. School senior leadership should work with the Designated Teacher to identify any stereotypes and prejudice among school staff and deliver training and resources to provide better insight into the care system and the experiences of children in care.
7. Whole school assemblies should be delivered, discussing care in a positive way for the benefit of both staff and students.
8. The care system should be discussed in relevant classes such as PSHE so that all pupils have a better understanding of what some of their peers are experiencing and help to reduce any bullying or isolation that some looked after children experience.
9. Professionals across the sector should consider their use of language and how it influences attitudes and be prepared to constructively challenge colleagues when they come across harmful generalisations.

(Teachers Who Care, Become and Voices from Care Cymru, September 2018)