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RESEARCH UPDATES

Evaluations of Attachment Aware Schools Programmes

[Bath and NE Somerset Evaluation report](#) (pdf)

[Leicestershire Evaluation report](#) (pdf)

Teachers report being insufficiently prepared in attachment and social learning theories to work effectively with young people who experience trauma and attachment issues. The [Attachment Aware Schools Programme](#) is based on the assumption that all children in school need to be ready to learn and achieve and that children who have experienced trauma or neglect are often not able to do so.

Bath and North East Somerset Council and Leicestershire County Council ran Attachment Aware Schools Programmes in October 2015-July 2016 and October 2016-July 2017 respectively. Both local authorities engaged Kate Cairns Associates

to deliver the Programme and each invited the Rees Centre to provide an evaluation.

In Bath and NE Somerset, 25 school staff participated. Mainly teachers, they were from 16 schools (6 secondary, 7 primary, 1 middle and two special schools). In Leicestershire, staff from 24 schools participated. These included one school offering alternative provision, three secondary schools, fifteen primary schools, one infant school and two junior schools. Kate Cairns Associates delivered whole staff sessions in these schools.

Key Findings

- Most participants commented positively on the impact that the Programme had had on their own attitudes, practice and confidence. The quality of training was reported to be a major factor in this.
- Participants described changes in their practice, in particular recognising emotions while managing behaviours, changing communication styles and language used with pupils and other staff and for nearly all the participants, use of emotion coaching.
- School staff and pupils described the school environment as having become calmer and more nurturing.
- Staff and pupils gave examples of non-teaching staff's positive responses and effective approaches.
- Impact on pupils' well-being was evidenced by staff and pupils. One factor contributing to this seemed to be providing spaces in which children can calm down and self-regulate, another was having a significant adult in school that the pupil trusted.
- Senior leader commitment, support and resource allocation was crucial to effective engagement in the Programme and it having an impact on the school.

Implications

Four areas need to be targeted:

Initial teacher training - Many of those in this evaluation expressed a severe lack of confidence in addressing the needs of pupils who had experienced trauma. Very few teacher training programmes currently address attachment and the effects of trauma despite knowledge and understanding of this now being a requirement in the teaching standards.

Professional development of all school staff is needed as all are involved in responding to behaviour. These evaluations demonstrate the importance and potential changes that can be brought about by the wider school staff receiving development on attachment and trauma.

Governors – the few who participated in the evaluation seemed relatively unaware of the issues and not engaged in these developments in school. This needs to be addressed through governor training.

Adults outside school with whom vulnerable pupils are in contact – parents, foster carers and social workers need to be adopting a consistent approach to that being implemented in the schools. There were examples in which schools engaging parents/carers in the training had been beneficial. [Read more on our website](#)

Ongoing Project Updates

Educational Attainment and Progress of Children in Need and Children in Care (Nuffield Foundation)

We have made good progress in starting the project. Our application for data from the national datasets on education and children's social care has been submitted to the Department for Education and we are currently awaiting a decision. For the qualitative strand of the project, we have identified six local authorities with whom we would like to work in different parts of England. In each authority, we will interview parents of children in need, children and young people, social workers, teachers, carers and Virtual School Heads about pupils' educational experiences and progress. We have had an overall positive response from the Virtual School Heads that we wrote to and initial meetings to discuss the requirements in more detail are underway. Our project advisory group – consisting of policy makers, practitioners and academics – met in January and provided extremely useful feedback and advice on our proposed

procedures and materials. [Read more on our website](#)

Research team: Professor David Berridge, Dr Eleanor Staples (University of Bristol), Dr Nikki Luke, Professor Judy Sebba, Professor Steve Strand and Dr Louise McGrath-Lone (University of Oxford).

The Alex Timpson Attachment and Trauma Programme in Schools

We are starting work with the first schools in February. So far, ten local authorities have signed up with potentially around 100 schools between them covering all regions of England. Most local authorities in the Programme so far are engaging Kate Cairns Associates to provide the training and are including work on attachment awareness for all school staff, sometimes with emotion coaching for some staff. Emotion coaching has been found to improve the quality of staff-child relationships which shape classroom experiences and influence children's development. In particular, staff responses to children's behaviour can affect outcomes by escalating or de-escalating the difficult behaviour.

In the [Attachment Aware Schools Programmes](#) that we have evaluated to date, emotion coaching provides an approach for staff to 'get behind the behaviour', facilitating the child to try and explain their feelings and to calm down. Many schools are creating 'safe spaces' where children can go until they are less agitated and pupils report identifying a member of staff who they feel able to talk to about their feelings. Schools in the Alex Timpson Attachment and Trauma Programme will build upon this learning in the way they develop strategies to support young people's development.

[Read more on our website](#)

For further information, please contact [Professor Judy Sebba](#)

Recent Journal Publications

Sebba, J. C., Luke, N., & Berridge, D. (2017) The educational progress of young people in out-of-home care. *Developing Practice*, 47, 18-35

Nicholas G. Tessier; **Aoife O'Higgins**; Robert J. Flynn. (2018) Neglect, educational success, and young people in out-of-home care: Cross-sectional and longitudinal analyses, *Child Abuse & Neglect*, Volume 75, 2018, 115-129
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chab.2017.06.005>

EVENTS

University of Oxford Department of Education Public Seminar Series

The Rees Centre has organised two speakers next term in our Department's public seminar series:

Monday 23 April 2018, Professor Robbie Gilligan, Trinity College Dublin

Monday 14 May 2018, Dr Lisa Holmes, Director of the Rees Centre

All are welcome to join us at these free events, starting at 5pm. Titles of talks to be confirmed.

Previous seminar: (Monday 12 February) Professor Claire Cameron from UCL

[Podcast- Social Pedagogy in the UK today: where are we up to and where are we going?](#)

REES CENTRE NEWS

Professor Judy Sebba awarded OBE

Congratulations to Judy who was awarded an OBE for Services to Higher Education and Disadvantaged Young People in the New Year's Honours List 2018.

She said: 'I am delighted to be receiving this honour which reflects the impact of the Rees Research Centre, University of Oxford locally, nationally and internationally on improvements to the educational achievements and lives of children in care. Our findings repeatedly show that young people in care need others to believe in them if they are to believe in themselves.'

Mariela Neagu recommended for award of DPhil

Congratulations to Mariela who has been recommended for the award of DPhil at the University of Oxford for her doctoral research '*Young Adults' Perspectives on Their Experiences of Different Types of Placement in Romania*'.

New appointments

Welcome to our new Research Assistants Aoife O'Higgins and Helen Trivedi. Aoife will be working on an ESRC funded randomized control trial with Queens, Belfast looking at the Letterbox and paired reading scheme. Helen will be joining the project team working on [The Alex Timpson Attachment and Trauma Programme in Schools](#).

Vânia Pinto Research Paper Competition

Congratulations to Vânia Pinto who has won an international collaborative paper competition organised by the EUSARF Academy (European and Scientific Association on Residential and Family Care for Children and Adolescents). Open to PhD candidates in the field of child and family welfare, Vânia's winning proposal with Anne Steenbakkers, University of Groningen and Ida Bruheim Jensen, University of Stavanger, is titled "Permanency legislations for children placed in family foster care in England, Norway, Portugal, and The Netherlands: A comparative study". The paper will be presented at EUSARF 2018 in Porto and later prepared for journal publication.

Upcoming Presentations

Lisa Holmes will be giving a presentation on No Wrong Door with Martin Kelly at the 62nd annual conference of the [Association of Children's Residential Centers](#) in March 2018 in Boston. As part of the ACRC International pre-conference event titled 'Small World, Big Impact Reaching Across Borders to Identify Best Practices in Residential Treatment' Lisa will be presenting the findings from the evaluation of the No Wrong Door innovation developed by North Yorkshire Council. Lisa and Martin will also focus on the applicability of the learning from No Wrong Door for the international child welfare context.

FOSTERCARE IN THE NEWS

[Education Select Committee report on Fostering](#), 20 December 2017

[Foster Care in England, A Review for the Department for Education](#) by Sir Martin Narey and Mark Owers, 6 February 2018.

BOOK REVIEW

Books reviewed in 2017 included

Taking Action for Looked After Children in School. A knowledge exchange programme.

Reviewed by Virtual School Head Felicity Evans and Education Advisor Julie Dallas, Hertfordshire Virtual School

Welcome to Fostering.

Reviewed by foster carer Hilary Shearer.

The simple guide to child trauma. What it is and how to help.

Reviewed by foster carer Alison Donnelly-Shorrock.

Supporting the mental health of children in care.

Reviewed by Kate Cairns.

To see all the reviews: <http://reescentre.education.ox.ac.uk/resources/book-reviews/>

YOUNG VOICES

Extracts from interviews with young people in two local authorities, Leicestershire and Bath and North East Somerset, running Attachment Aware Schools Programmes:

Interviewer: Joe, anything in particular that stops you working?

Joe: I always think of my Mum when she's not there...I start scribbling on my book...

Interviewer: Right. Is that when you go and see ... who did you say you went to see? – Miss?

Joe: Smith [the teaching assistant] She takes me out of class for a bit... She is a nice woman. I stay outside for a bit

(Primary school pupil, fostered by grandparents)

... "I still don't really trust anyone in this school to be honest other than Miss ... and a few other people so it's kind of hard for me"

(Secondary school pupil)

"And the problem is, is that we need some, we need something, we need some teachers that are more of a friend, like the school nurse I used to speak to ..., she kind of gets me because she's a school nurse and she's been trained to know what kids are about, she kind of gets what I'm going through with my family and like other teachers will say just like kind of like, I kind of feel deflated sometimes when the teachers don't understand you"

(Secondary school pupil)