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# Michaelmas Term Newsletter

December 2023

## A MESSAGE FROM OUR DIRECTOR PROFESSOR LEON FEINSTEIN



We've now come to the end of the year, and with the Christmas holiday and New Year fast approaching, we can reflect on a very full programme of work at the Rees Centre. It has both been challenging and inspiring to work on so many projects, to provide research to improve the education, wellbeing and life outcomes of those who are, or have been supported by children's social care services. This spans projects to evaluate major initiatives such as the Mockingbird programme to support foster families, the role of Virtual School Heads on the post 16 education of children with a social worker, and trauma informed practice in schools, as well as projects to address substantial gaps in knowledge or build new sources of data and evidence such as to support analysis of the pan-London data created by the Association of London Directors of Children's Services. I'm very proud to be the director at the Rees Centre working with such a great team and group of associates and research partners. I would like to take this opportunity to thank all Rees Centre staff for your tireless work and dedication in improving the lives of those in social care. I hope everyone will have a good, well-deserved break and holiday, and I look forward to welcoming everyone back next year.

## STAFF HIGHLIGHTS

**Madeleine Buil:**

"I'm going back to France this Christmas and I'm really looking forward to hanging out in all the local independent shops, be it a bookshop, a soap shop, a cafe... and of course the chocolaterie in the village where my parents live!"

**Heather Browning-Lee:**

"After a busy year the Rees Team enjoyed an end of term get-together this week with lots of fruits, crackers, lovely cakes (thanks to the bakers amongst us) and a quiz to test our knowledge of all things festive!"

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## CENTRE NEWS



### [New documentary reveals lives of children growing up in care](#)

A new documentary has uncovered the lives of 27,000 pupils who grew up at a children's home, revealing some fascinating details that happened over a span of 200 years.

Emeritus Professor [Harriet Ward CBE](#), was commissioned to provide information for the [timeline](#) of the hospital and gave a historical perspective on issues such as the health of children in care, their education and employment, relationships, identity and sense of stability.

"Coram's film about the history of the Foundling Hospital-No Place Like Home – has the power both to shock and to inspire. It is inspiring to hear about the development of the Foundling Hospital and the opportunities it offered to children who might otherwise have died," Professor Ward said.



## [Volunteers needed to design a new health survey](#)

Are you a care experienced young adult aged 18-25, foster carer, residential caregiver or health or social care professional? We're looking for volunteers to help design a new health survey to monitor and meet the health needs of young people in care and to give advice on how we might test this new survey in the future.

Those who fit the criteria will participate in online workshops over the next 3 months, lasting from 1.5 hours to 3 hours each session.

The survey will hopefully benefit other young people in care in the future. In return, those who participate will have the opportunity to learn research skills and to become a co-author on an academic article.

For more information, contact Aine Kelly at [Aine.Kelly@education.ox.ac.uk](mailto:Aine.Kelly@education.ox.ac.uk)

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## [Webinar: Care Leavers' Transitions Into The Labour Market](#)

[Watch this free webinar](#), outlining the findings from a national study funded by the Nuffield Foundation and published by the Rees Centre, focusing on the educational and occupational pathways of care-experienced young people between 18 and 21. It brings together quantitative analysis of national administrative data (including the LEO dataset) for the 1995/96 birth cohort with qualitative data from interviews with young people and professionals.

The key findings of the study focus on the importance of school and social care experiences in influencing the outcomes in early adulthood, as well as the role played by mental health, housing and social capital.

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# Analysis of Costs in Traditional and Early Permanence Adoption Routes

Helen Trivedi, Julie Selwyn, Lisa Holmes

November 2023



## [Adoption Report](#)

A newly completed project report exploring the costs of adoption in early permanence and traditional adoption routes is now available. This project created an opportunity to re-examine costs, collect current time-use data from the social care personnel involved in adoption and update the costs involved in the social care processes and activity involved in placing a child for adoption. This project builds on work that was begun in 2005-2015. In 2017 legislation was introduced requiring all local authorities to become part of a regional adoption agency. The new regional agencies brought major changes to the structure and organisation of adoption services. One of the main innovations has been the development of early permanence. [Download the report here.](#)

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## [Department Report](#)

[Download the Department of Education's Annual Report](#) to read more about exciting research and initiatives that support the development and implementation of impact from our work throughout 2022-2023.

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## BLOGS



## [SCiP Alliance Annual Conference 'Identity Matters' by Lucy Robinson, DPhil student](#)

On 29<sup>th</sup> November 2023, I had the pleasure of attending and delivering a workshop at the [SCiP Alliance's Annual Conference](#), on the theme 'Identity Matters'. The conference sought to gather "practitioners, researchers, policymakers and funders to focus our collective attention, expertise and effort on the question

of Service child identity, on Service children's identities" and explore "why identity matters, broaden our understanding of the diverse expressions of what it means to be a Service child, and how, by considering identity matters in our work, we can help Service children to thrive" ([SCiP Alliance, 2023](#)).

## CONGRATULATIONS STUDENTS!



### Yousef Khalifa Aleghfeli

Yousef passed his Viva and officially became 'Dr. Yousef Khalifa Aleghfeli' on 14 November. The title of his dissertation is 'Investigating the educational resilience of unaccompanied and separated children: A mixed methods study'. His supervisors were Professor Leon Feinstein alongside Professor Sonali Nag. His examiners were Professor Lars-Erik Malmberg and Professor Ricardo Sabates Aysa.

The dissertation explored the educational resilience of unaccompanied and separated children (UASCs), a highly vulnerable child population exposed to a variety of pre- and post-migration adversities that disrupted their educational trajectories. Despite facing adversities, limited research exists on their educational resilience. Using a mixed methods approach, the dissertation identified socio-ecological factors influencing UASCs' educational resilience. The dissertation is made-up of three studies: a systematic mixed-methods review, a quantitative secondary data analysis study in Jordan, and a qualitatively driven mixed methods study in Greece. Findings reveal micro and mesosystemic factors (i.e., supportive home and school environments) as crucial for influencing UASCs' educational resilience and show how these factors interact through processes of promotion, protection, navigation, and negotiation to shape educational resilience. A critical realist approach is used in the discussion to integrate insights from the three studies, leading to a new conceptualization of educational resilience for UASCs and providing valuable methodological considerations for the overall study of educational resilience. This dissertation fills a critical gap in knowledge about UASCs' educational development, generating implications for research, policy, and practice to better address their needs and circumstances.



### Ellen Froustis

Ellen passed her Confirmation of Status on November 15, 2023. Her examiners were Dr Velda Elliot and Dr Mariela Neagu. Her supervisor was Dr Ian Thompson.

The topic of her dissertation is 'A Trauma-Informed Approach to Service-Learning with Vulnerable Young People: A Youth Participatory Action Research Project.' Ellen said: "This DPhil research project engaged young people in social care, ages 14-17, in a 9-week, youth-led summer research project. The methodology blended service-learning within a youth participatory action research framework to identify the mechanisms that strengthen: voice and choice, connectedness and belonging, and adolescent purpose for future educational or work goals. Identifying trauma-responsive teacher facilitation skills that can create a positive learning environment was another aim.

Participants addressed the research question, "*What is the most pressing issue affecting young people today?*" They proceeded to investigate the impact of social media on young people and developed a service project in the form of a

video to be shared with schools, that identified the risks and benefits of using social media.

Outcomes of this qualitative reflective thematic analysis (Braun and Clark, 2022) viewed from the scope of Theory of Possible Selves (Markus and Nurius, 1986) and Empowerment Theory (Zimmerman, 1995) can inform the work of educators, and youth development program leaders to enhance best practices for social-emotional and psychological empowerment, as well as education and career exploration when working with vulnerable young people who lack access to opportunities to discover and develop their view of “possible future selves.



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