



Children's wellbeing, safety and relationships: A one day conference

24 May 2018, University of Stirling



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Children's wellbeing, safety and relationships:

A one day conference

The Centre for Child Wellbeing and Protection is committed to the delivery of excellent academic research with children, young people and families. We work to build an integrated and systemic understanding of children and young people's lives, exploring in particular how best to support their wellbeing, and to protect them from factors that might be harmful. Our interests include mental health, resilience, and child protection, as well as children and young people's rights, relationships, play, learning and education, their communities, and the broader social environment in which they are located. We are particularly concerned with the impact of inequalities, and with questions of social justice. We work together with children and young people, families and communities, as well as with organisations to build knowledge that can be applied and used in practice settings, like health, social care, third sector organisations, criminal justice and family courts, and education.

Through a series of presentations and workshops facilitated by staff affiliated to the Centre, this exciting one day interdisciplinary conference will explore a range of topics relating to children's wellbeing, safety and relationships.

We will present a snapshot of some of our work, which includes:

- the pathways to a permanent substitute home taken by accommodated young children in Scotland;
- children's experiences of domestic violence, and interventions to support them;
- issues around contact in families where domestic violence has occurred;
- decision making in the child hearing system;
- eco-social work specifically around working with communities prone to natural disasters and using eco-therapy to support mental health;
- child protection policy and practice;
- children and young people's rights and family support;
- childhood, personal life, families, intimate relationships and belonging, focused on everyday practices and material, sensory and spatial environments;
- professional judgement and decision-making in child protection and safeguarding

We look forward to welcoming you at the conference.



Jane Callaghan,
Director for the Centre for Child Wellbeing and Protection

Conference programme

09.30 **Arrival, registration**

09.45 **Welcome and Keynote**

Why have Generational Orderings been Marginalised in Childhood Studies?

Samantha Punch

10.45 **Papers**

10.45 Trust and uncertainty in institutional encounters between children and social workers

Fiona Morrison

11.10 Towards a Public Health Model of Neglect

Kate Kyriakou

11.35 Permanently Progressing?

Helen Whincup, Maggie Grant

12.00 **Comfort break**

12.15 **Workshops**

Room 1: Child Wellbeing as Policy concept: the case of Getting it Right for Every Child

Katherine Allen, Nikoletta Komvoki

Room 2: Working Creatively in Research with Children and Young People

Jane Callaghan, Tanya Beetham

13.00 **Lunch**

14.00 **Papers**

14.00 The Voice of the Child in the Children's Hearing System

Judy Warburton

14.25 Visual and textual possibilities for representing qualitative research in haunting ways that represent the 'complex personhood' of participants: integrating the arts of knowing with the arts of showing

Sarah Wilson

14.50 Rationalised Hardiness and Protected Normality: A Qualitative Study of Children's Experience of Life in the Military

Roz Phillips, Mollie O'Malley

15.15 **Comfort break**

15.30 **Keynote**

Trauma informed practice and ACES: Critical perspectives on children's mental health and domestic abuse

Jane Callaghan

16.30 **Closing discussion and acknowledgements**

17.00 **Close**



Keynote presentations



Samantha Punch

Samantha Punch is a Professor in the Faculty of Social Sciences, University of Stirling. She has a keen interest in interdisciplinarity and cross-world dialogue, in particular learning across majority world and minority world childhoods. Samantha is currently developing a new field of study: the Sociology of Bridge. This research includes an exploration of the social interactions and power dynamics of the card game; the benefits of bridge; participation and learning bridge across the lifecourse; the potential links between bridge and delayed onset of dementia (in partnership with English Bridge Education and Development) and gender inequalities within the mind sport.



Jane Callaghan

Jane Callaghan is the Director of the Centre for Child Wellbeing and Protection. She is a psychologist and interdisciplinary researcher, with an established record of research in areas related to childhood, violence, family life, relationships, discrimination and exclusion, and mental health and identity. Two clear strands are in evidence in her research – research focused on violence, health, children’s mental health, social vulnerability and family life, and a related strand focused on gender, professional identities, and ethnicity. She has completed projects focused on mental health services for looked after children and young offenders, the transformation of mental health services to increase young people’s participation in the interventions offered to them, creative interventions with young people excluded from education, and young care leavers’ engagement with higher education.



Abstracts

Why have Generational Orderings been Marginalised in Childhood Studies?

Samantha Punch

This paper considers why age and generation tend not to be recognised as social variables in the same way that gender, ethnicity and class are mainstreamed within the Social Sciences. It begins from a starting point that Childhood Studies is generally a multi-disciplinary field rather than inter-disciplinary, and that it could benefit from greater dialogue between its sub-disciplines as well as with those outside academia. The paper reflects on the concept of the generational order questioning why it is not always integral to Childhood Studies. It considers some of the current understandings of the generational order by focusing on three key areas which lack dialogue within childhood studies: the limited inter-disciplinary communication between the sub-fields of Childhood Studies (such as between the sociologists of childhood and children's geographers); the continued gap between the academic discourse of children's agency and arenas of policy and practice; and the lack of dialogue and cross-cultural learning between childhoods in the Majority World and those in the Minority World.

In addition, this paper acknowledges that we have a new generation of researchers in Childhood Studies, but that we also seem to be in a position where we are stuck from moving forward conceptually. The politics of Childhood Studies leads us to be stuck in sub-disciplines rather than working in a more interdisciplinary way. The politics of childhood in society have moved forward in terms of children's rights and participation yet the theoretical development of children's agency also appears to be stuck. The paper discusses the limited empirical investigation and lack of engagement with the generational order in Childhood Studies. It suggests that 'generational orderings' may be a more dynamic way to engage with processes of generationing.

Trust and uncertainty in institutional encounters between children and social workers

Fiona Morrison

Trust is deemed as a core condition for relationship-based social work. However, children and families social work practice is replete with uncertainty - for children, their families and indeed for social workers. This paper explores these concepts, the complexities and the contradictions that emanate from them. We draw from a large qualitative study of children and families' social workers' meetings with children in a variety of settings. The study, which took place across the UK, involved ethnography, interviews and video-stimulated recall methods. Using case analysis, we examine the ways in which trust and uncertainty manifests in relationships and encounters between children and social workers and the implications these have.

Towards a Public Health Model of Neglect

Kate Kyriakou

Neglect is one of the most prevalent forms of maltreatment in the UK and the effects of neglect can be severe, affecting not only children's lives at the time but also their development. Despite considerable efforts neglect remains an intractable issue. A public health approach could be an alternative approach to tackling neglect and has often been discussed by professionals within the child protection field and in relevant literature; however, it is not clear what this approach would mean in practice. Public health interventions aim to prevent problems from arising by implementing policies and interventions that target the known risk factors for the problem, quickly identifying and responding to problems if they do occur, and minimising the long-term effects of the problems.

The current project focuses on exploring in depth how a model based on a public health approach could be developed in order to contribute to tackling child neglect in Scotland. It will explore with practitioners, managers, policy makers and academics working in the field of child care and protection, their perspectives and understanding of public health approaches to and the prevention of child neglect. In addition to this, it will explore with parents and care experienced young people their experiences of and perspectives on the prevention of child neglect.

In the longer term, it is expected that the study will lead to the development of a programme of interventions, based on a feasible model for tackling neglect that follows the principles of a public health approach. This will add significantly to prevention of neglect in Scotland and beyond.

Permanently Progressing?

Helen Whincup, Maggie Grant

Every year, several thousand children in Scotland become 'looked after' at home or 'looked after and accommodated' due to concerns about their welfare. While many remain with/return to their parents, for some the decision is taken to permanently place them with adoptive parents, foster carers or kinship carers. As the recent BASW (2018) report in to decision making around adoption illustrates, decisions about permanence are rightly complex, and evoke strong

emotions. In that context, it is vital that the discourse around permanence is informed by robust research which places the child at the centre.

Since 2014, Phase One of Permanently Progressing? – Building Secure Futures for Children in Scotland has been following a large cohort (1836) of young children in Scotland who became 'looked after' or 'looked after and accommodated' in 2012-13, when they were aged five or under. The study is run jointly by the Universities of Stirling and York, in collaboration with the Adoption and Fostering Alliance (AFA) Scotland. It draws on quantitative and qualitative data from Children Looked After Statistics (CLAS) from all 32 Local Authorities across 4 years, interviews with 160 decision makers across Scotland, questionnaires completed by adoptive parents/carers and professionals on a sub sample of 643 children, and interviews with 20 adoptive parents/carers and 10 children. It considers:

- How are decisions made?
- What promotes feelings of belonging?
- How do children fare in relation to their relationships, health, and educational progress?

It is intended that the study is Phase One of a longitudinal study following the children into adolescence and beyond.

In this presentation, Helen Whincup will highlight some of the key themes emerging from the study and explore how these can contribute to the current debate and inform practice.





Child Wellbeing as Policy concept: the case of *Getting it Right for Every Child*

Katherine Allen, Nikoletta Komvoki

Child wellbeing has become a central concept in public policy over past decades as governments internationally have sought to find more inclusive and common policy languages. Wellbeing has also been a central organising principle for the Scottish government, to further the aspiration to make Scotland the best place to grow up. The *Getting it Right for Every Child* (GIRFEC) policy approach (Scottish Government, 2006) and the SHANARRI wellbeing indicators (Scottish Government, 2016) were enshrined in law in the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014 (Scottish Government, 2014) to enhance children and young people's wellbeing via "bringing together" professionals from different backgrounds.

However, both conceptual and practical problems have arisen with wellbeing's use as an organising principle for policy and practice. Issues around the definition of "wellbeing", its various "measurement scales" and the ways in which it has been put to use in policy frameworks, both internationally and in Scotland, have been the subject of considerable debate.

Two current PhD projects looking in to wellbeing in the Scottish context in the health and education sectors have begun to explore this topic. An in-depth exploration of what various stakeholders and experts think of the Scottish wellbeing policy framework could provide an evidence base upon which recommendations for policymakers and researchers could be made. Our studies will explore the views of professionals and parents on child wellbeing, against the backdrop of the Scottish legislation regarding children's services in Scotland. This session will focus upon the current literature in the field and conclude with a discussion on the Scottish context.



Working Creatively in Research with Children and Young People

Jane Callaghan, Tanya Beetham

Much of our work with children and young people focuses on experiences that may be challenging articulate: complex emotions, embodied experiences, relational interactions, use of space and place, experiences embedded in political and social matrices. In this workshop, we explore a range of methods that can help children and young people to articulate the inarticulable. These will include visual methods like drawing and photography, spatial mapping, genograms and ecomaps, ethnographic observations, and performative practices. Workshop participants will do, as well as reflect on, some of these approaches.

The Voice of the Child in the Children's Hearing System

Judy Warburton

The Children's Hearings System is Scotland's unique care and justice system for children and young people. It aims to ensure the safety and wellbeing of vulnerable children and young people through a decision making process based on the needs of the child not their deeds. Positioning the system in the wider context of the global debate around children's rights and child welfare and justice my research seeks to explore how Children's Hearings make decisions through semi-structured discussions with the professionals and volunteers who regularly attend Children's Hearings.

One of the fundamental principles of the Children's Hearings System is that the panel must seek, listen to and take account of the views of the child or young person in reaching decisions about their lives. A major theme emerging from on-going data collection highlights the difficulties that Hearings face in obtaining views from vulnerable children, many of whom have suffered trauma or neglect on the way into the system and may struggle both with the Hearing setting and their ability to communicate with unknown adults, and the inherent tension between the need to listen to, and take account of, the views of the child and the need to make a decision in their best interest.

I will present some of these findings in order to consider the ability of the Hearings to really hear and take into account the voice of the child and also to explore ways to ensure that the child's views are heard in a meaningful way and that these views are conveyed to the hearing in a way that the child is comfortable with.

Visual and textual possibilities for representing qualitative research in haunting ways that represent the 'complex personhood' of participants: integrating the arts of knowing with the arts of showing

Sarah Wilson

This presentation focuses on the representation of qualitative sociological research to academic and non-academic audiences. It argues that a broader, ethically-informed consideration of the communication of findings is required, rather than the current, audit-shaped approach, to do justice to complex (affective) data and to research participants. An important catalyst for this presentation is the concern that the current predominance of peer-reviewed articles may contribute, however unintentionally, to the maintenance of stigmatizing social imaginaries of groups including marginalized young people. This article draws on interdisciplinary sources to extend Avery Gordon's work on haunting to the representation of research. It contends that research 'outputs' can 'haunt', or stay with and produce empathy in their audience, by communicating the 'seething absences' that

trace the everyday effects of power affectively and by highlighting the 'complex personhood' of those affected. The possibilities of such an approach are illustrated through consideration of textual and visual representations of findings from a project that explored understandings of 'belonging' among young people in state care, and particularly a short film, co-produced with, and featuring, a participant. While 'representation' is employed here primarily in an everyday sense, this presentation discusses 'non' or 'more than' representational approaches, while advocating a strategic negotiation with representation in relation to social justice.

Rationalised Hardiness and Protected Normality: A Qualitative Study of Children's Experience of Life in the Military

Rosalyn Collings, Mollie O'Malley

Previous research into military families is predominantly based in America and does not ask for, or utilise, the voice of the children to understand how they are affected by their parent's military career. The current study explores the experiences of military children's using focus group methodology and class observation over 6 months to enhance understanding around coping and flourishing during high levels of change. Twelve children, in two groups of six, aged from 7 to 9 and attending a military primary school engaged in the study. Data was analysed using Thematic Analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006) which revealed two major themes. "Rationalised Hardiness" relates to the somewhat detached emotions that ultimately help a child to cope and be resilient under extreme conditions. "Protected Normality" discusses the creation of a cocoon of safety that is a blinkered view of reality. Findings indicate that military children talk positively about various aspects of their lifestyle, including travelling and making new friends, even though these aspects can be equally challenging in relation to gaps in education and losing friendships. Observations revealed that the children are refreshingly open to new students and supportive of one another during deployments highlighting a level of camaraderie and empathy for one another's experiences. Further to this, military children show resiliency in the face of challenges presented to them such as parental deployment.

Trauma informed practice and ACEs: Critical perspectives on children's mental health and domestic abuse

Jane Callaghan

This paper explores the evidence around the impact of domestic abuse as Adverse Childhood Event, with a particular focus on evidence of neural impact and emotional development. I argue that domestic abuse is an important and often overlooked issue for mental health practitioners, but consider critically the implications of the popularisation of the ACEs model, and of neurodevelopmental accounts of trauma. In particular, I consider the relative value of this approach in supporting recovery for children and for their mothers, and whether it can be a useful account in enabling resilience, agency and resistance for children in the aftermath of violence.







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