Research Update from the Institute of Child Protection Studies

March 2014

This quarterly update provides an overview of research projects currently being implemented by the Institute of Child Protection Studies (ICPS), Australian Catholic University. ICPS aims to enhance the well-being of children, young people and families through quality research, evaluation, training and community education. ICPS links research, policy and practice through collaborative partnerships with government, non-government and community organisations; and has a particular emphasis on participatory research methods. Current research projects at ICPS include:

- The kContact Study: Keeping Contact between parents and children in care;
- Developing an understanding of how children understand and experience safety in institutions;
- Outcomes of identifying AOD use during pregnancy on women, their partners and their children;
- Refugee Communities Intercultural Dialogue: Building relationships, building communities; and,
- Evaluation of Intergenerational Trauma Initiatives

See also New Publications and Staff Profile at the end of the Update. For more information about ICPS Research Updates, contact taryn.morrison@acu.edu.au.

The kContact Study: Keeping Contact between parents and children in care

This research aims to develop guidelines and trial a new model of delivering contact between children in care and their birth parents.

The project has now commenced and the project team established with the appointment of Dr Tracey Bullen as project manager of the study and PhD candidate Rhys Thorpe at ICPS and Dr Margaret Kertesz at the University of Melbourne. Stakeholder advisory groups for the project have been established in the ACT and Victoria to provide advice on the methodology and recruitment strategies for the engagement of service providers and staff.
The project will be conducted in two phases. Phase 1 (to be completed in 2014) will involve a number of steps to develop evidence based guidelines and a new model of contact between children in out of home care and their birth parents. Interviews with stakeholders in this area including magistrates, policy-makers, caseworkers responsible for making recommendations and decisions about contact will be conducted. Birth parents, foster and kinship carers, young people and contact service providers will also be interviewed. These interviews will commence in June 2014. Phase 2 will involve testing the model for contact which we develop in Phase 1. Phase 2 is planned to commence in January 2015.

This project has been funded by the Australian Research Council, with significant partner contributions, and will be implemented by Prof Morag McArthur and Dr Stephanie Taplin, ICPS and Prof Cathy Humphreys, University of Melbourne. For more information, contact tracey.bullen@acu.edu.au.

**Developing an understanding of how children understand and experience safety in institutions.**

This research project will explore what children and young people experience and think about safety in institutional contexts. Specifically, the study will explore how children conceptualise and perceive the extent to which they are safe in institutions; their views on what gives rise to these perceptions; what they consider is already being done to respond to unsafe situations in institutions; and what else they think might lead to children being and feeling more safe. This study is designed to inform the Royal Commission's work in assessing the effectiveness of current prevention programs by directly hearing children and young people’s views and knowledge of safety issues, as well as how they think these issues can and should be addressed.

This project will be conducted by ICPS, in partnership with Griffith University and the Queensland University of Technology. For more information, contact tim.moore@acu.edu.au

**Outcomes of identifying AOD use during pregnancy on women, their partners and their children**

This project aims to describe policies and practices across Australia, review the literature on the identification of maternal alcohol and other drug use, and identify "best practice" in the management of substance-using pregnant women. Policy makers, practitioners and other key stakeholders are being contacted in each jurisdiction and interviews conducted with them over the next few months.

It is hoped that the outcomes of this project will provide valuable findings that will inform policy and practice with respect to responses to maternal alcohol and other drug use, nationally.
The project has been funded by the Australian National Council on Drugs. For more information, contact stephanie.taplin@acu.edu.au.

Refugee Communities Intercultural Dialogue: Building relationships, building communities

This research aims to provide in-depth and contextualised data about how services may better support refugee parents to care for their children, and understand the social resources and connections required by refugee parents and their children to support positive parenting skills and family relationships. A reference group has been established for this project and members have been contacted within the ACT and South Australia to discuss sampling and possible recruitment strategies, for interviews to begin in early 2014.

This project has been funded by the Department of Social Services, and is being implemented by Vicky Saunders and Prof Morag McArthur, in partnership with the Australian Centre for Child Protection. For more information, contact vicky.saunders@acu.edu.au.

Evaluation of Intergenerational Trauma Initiatives

The Healing Foundation, an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander-led organisation established to enable healing in the community, has funded programs in Kununurra, Darwin and Brisbane that help children, young people and families to deal with intergenerational trauma using cultural and community-driven projects. In partnership with the Australian Centre for Child Protection (ACCP), University of South Australia, ICPS has worked in these communities to track their progress, evaluate their outcomes and provide advice on future development. With a strong focus on child-centred practice and community development, the ACCP and ICPS have engaged with workers, schools, children, young people and families in a range of evaluation activities.

This project has been funded by the Healing Foundation, and is being implemented by ACCP and ICPS. For more information, contact tim.moore@acu.edu.au.
New Publications


Researcher Profile: Debbie Noble Carr

Research Fellow
BSW RMIT, PhD Candidate, ACU
Phone: (02) 6209 1209
Email: debbie.noble-carr@acu.edu.au

Biography

Since completing a Bachelor of Social Work degree in 1997, Debbie has worked in a wide range of direct service provisions such as financial counselling and housing support work. Over the last 10 years, Debbie has worked as a researcher at various organisations including Carers Australia, Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW) and ACU. In that time, Debbie has completed projects on issues such as young carers, adoption, children experiencing homelessness, children affected by parental alcohol or other drug use, younger mothers and breastfeeding and identity and meaning in the lives of vulnerable young people.

Debbie also has extensive experience in providing professional development in the areas of child centred practice and family aware youth work practice. In 2010, Debbie worked with Tim Moore and Megan Layton to produce the Kids Central toolkit and training package for services working with children in the homelessness sector.

Debbie is currently in her second year of a PhD which is examining ‘how children, from families facing complex challenges and change, perceive and experience loss’.

Selected Publications

Peer-reviewed journal articles


**Research monographs and reports**


**Non-refereed articles and practice-based publications**
