

<b>Institution:</b> University of Stirling
<b>Unit of Assessment:</b> C22 Social Work and Social Policy
<b>Title of case study:</b> Noticing and helping neglected children
<p><b>1. Summary of the impact</b></p> <p>The findings from this research on noticing and helping neglected children are contributing to shaping effective responses by practitioners. In high income countries neglect is the most frequent category of child maltreatment. In the UK as many as one in ten children may experience neglect and yet systems here, and other jurisdictions with similar models, struggle to provide an effective response. The research at Stirling is improving practitioner knowledge and confidence with the development of comprehensive training materials and follow-on knowledge exchange work with multi-disciplinary groups of practitioners in England. It has contributed to policy development in England and Scotland.</p>
<p><b>2. Underpinning research</b></p> <p>'Noticing and helping the neglected child: a systematic literature review', led by Daniel, was part of the UK Government funded <i>Safeguarding Children Research Initiative</i> (SCRI). It addressed three questions:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. What is known about the ways in which children and families directly and indirectly signal their need for help?</li> <li>2. To what extent are practitioners equipped to recognise and respond to the indications that a child's needs are likely to be, or are being neglected, whatever the cause?</li> <li>3. Does the evidence suggest that professional response could be swifter?</li> </ol> <p>Using systematic review guidelines 14 databases were searched for primary research studies published in English from 1995-2005. An initial 20,480 items were systematically filtered down to 63 papers for inclusion. Messages for policy, practice and research were produced and papers written for peer-reviewed journals. The research report was subject to rigorous peer review by the Department for Education independent panel and few amendments were required. The book (Daniel <i>et al.</i> 2011) was written at the request of the funders as part of a SCRI series.</p> <p>Neglect tends to attract less public attention than other maltreatment. All too often children have to endure chronic lack of physical and emotional care over long periods of time before they receive help. The research shed considerable light on what may be going wrong. It led to the conclusion that 'neglect' as defined by the official system has become overly complicated and process-bound. The studies reviewed had gathered evidence about the ways in which neglected children's need for help is spotted by those in a position to help and what happens in the early stages of the involvement of the system – known as 'recognition and response'. The review confirmed that the evidence about the signs of neglect upon children's well-being and development is extensive. The assumption is that practitioners such as health visitors need to be better 'detectives', however, the research indicated that practitioners are better able to spot both the direct and indirect signs of neglect than they are given credit for. Practitioners such as teachers and health visitors find that it is difficult to get a response to their concerns from children's social care and social workers find that they are caught up in a lot of procedural issues. One of the key findings from the research was that the systems developed in the UK can actually get in the way of neglected children getting help promptly. On the basis of the research a more child-focused framework for practitioners was developed.</p> <p>The study led to Action for Children commissioning Daniel to lead a series of annual research studies to review policy and practice with neglect to inform policy on recognition and response.</p>
<p><b>3. References to the research</b></p> <p>Daniel, B., Taylor, J. and Scott, J. (2009) <i>Noticing and Helping the Neglected Child: Literature Review</i> Research Brief, DCSF, London DCSF-RBX-09-03,  <a href="https://www.education.gov.uk/publications/standard/publicationdetail/page1/DCSF-RBX-09-03">https://www.education.gov.uk/publications/standard/publicationdetail/page1/DCSF-RBX-09-03</a></p>

## Impact case study (REF3b)

Daniel, B.; Taylor, J. & Scott, J. (2010) 'Recognition of neglect and early response: overview of A systematic Review of the Literature' *Child and Family Social Work*, 15 (2), 248-257

Daniel, B.; Taylor, J. and Scott, J. (2011) *Recognizing and Helping the Neglected Child: Evidence-Based Practice*. London: Jessica Kingsley Publishers

Davies C. and Ward H. (2011) *Safeguarding Children Across Services: Messages from Research on Identifying and Responding to Child Maltreatment*. London: Jessica Kingsley Publishers. Taylor, J.,

Daniel, B. & Scott, J. (2012) 'Noticing and Helping the Neglected Child: Towards an International Research Agenda' *Child and Family Social Work*, 17, 416–426.

Daniel, B.; Burgess, C.; Scott, J.; Mulley, K. and Dobbin, H. (2013) *The State of Child Neglect in the UK: An Annual Review by Action for Children in Partnership with the University of Stirling*. Watford, Action for Children.

### Details of research projects

The research was one of 11 studies in the SCRI commissioned by the then DH and DCSF as part of the Government's response to the enquiry following the death of Victoria Climbié. Daniel (PI) and colleagues were successful in the competitive bidding for £77,933 to undertake the project. The study commenced in Feb 2007 and the first draft of the report was completed by Stirling University in February 2008. The research report was subject to rigorous peer review by an independent research liaison group and few amendments were required. After a gap to allow the other projects to be completed the final report was ratified in early 2009. The findings have been summarised by Davies and Ward (2012) for SCRI as part of a series of appendices on the studies and also incorporated into the narrative of the SCRI overview publication: *The Stirling studies funded by Action for Children run from 2011-14* <sup>1st</sup> *Annual Review of Child Neglect 2011*, Action for Children £30,868, <sup>2nd</sup> *Review 2012* £36,444, <sup>3rd</sup> *Review 2013* £48,215; *Scottish Review 2012*, Scottish Government, £9,917.80.

### 4. Details of the impact

The most tangible impact has come from two strands that reach across the UK. The first has been significant improvement in practitioner knowledge and confidence from training and knowledge exchange. With Action for Children, Daniel won a bid to the DfE for £182,951.20 to develop training materials building on the SCRI research for use by all Local Safeguarding Children Boards in England (completed 10/7/12)<sup>1</sup>. The Scottish Government commissioned a version not tied to English policy, (completed May 2013). The materials are embedded in a DfE funded training initiative in England led by 'Child and Family Training'<sup>2</sup>.

Over 100 participating agencies have access to an e-learning module on neglect developed by Research in Practice (RiP) which includes the findings and a podcast by Daniel<sup>3</sup>. It is RiP's most popular module and between Mar '12 - Oct '13 had already been used by 439 people. Of 107 who provided feedback 64% reported increased knowledge and 83% said they would use the information with comments such as '*Enable me to make more informed decisions whilst working with children in care.*'; '*i will draw upon the research when dealing with possible neglect in families*'; '*Yes all future work and earlier identifi[c]ation of neglect.*' All clinical staff in NHSScotland have access to the NHS Education for Scotland Child Protection on-line Learning Resource which includes the findings and a podcast by Daniel<sup>4</sup>.

A follow-on ESRC knowledge exchange award was obtained in 2012 for £88,493.52. *Action on Neglect* used co-production to work over a year with multi-disciplinary groups of 37 practitioners in three participating authorities, 9 parents and 4 young people who developed specific ways to improve 'pathways to help' for neglected children at a local level that were developed into national

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guidance for policy and practice. 84 representatives from the UK attended the national launch. 161 practitioners attended final practice development events held in each participating authority in Spring 2013, examples of feedback are 'What I will take away with me from this experience is to always remain child focus[ed]' (Stockport); 'I am planning to roll out your pack to our college teaching team' (Barnet); 'I have had so many people compliment the event and how much the content had and will inform their practice'; 'the resource packs are beautiful and I love the positive images of children' (BathNES). Several authorities are drawing on the work for service development.

The second and most significant impact strand has been policy influence. The findings of the first review were reported to the Chair of the House of Commons Education Committee inquiry on child protection that subsequently moved to a new focus on responses to neglected children. The report cites the research and makes specific recommendations on training, early intervention and timely responses (2012)<sup>5</sup>. At the UK launch of the 1<sup>st</sup> review on 24/1/12 at the House of Commons the Children's Minister and Shadow Minister emphasised the importance of early intervention and commitment to implement some of the recommendations. There was an audience reach of 97,470,367 for the coverage and by March 2012 over 1,000 people had accessed information from the Action for Children website<sup>6</sup>. A Senior Policy Advisor said '...more MPs wrote to Ministers here on that issue than anything else.' The Minister's responses to two Westminster Parliamentary Questions mentioning the reviews (30.1.12, 19.3.12) note a consultation on children's safeguarding performance information 'this includes additional information on neglect'; changes to social work training and changes to statutory guidance: 'Our aim is to free social workers and other professionals from unnecessary bureaucracy...'<sup>7</sup>. The revised *Working Together* guidance on multi-professional working includes attention to the provision of 'early help'<sup>8</sup>. The second review was launched at the all-party Child Protection Group in Westminster 6.2.13 where the Children's minister announced that Ofsted would undertake a thematic review of neglect as recommended (to report in Autumn 2013).

All the research has impacted on Scotland and the impending *Children and Young People (Scotland) Bill*. Of the Scottish report, one child protection lead officer commented: 'I have circulated it widely within [LA] asking everyone to study the work, as I feel it should become one of those seminal documents that very clearly and directly informs policy in Scotland.' (25.7.12). Children in Scotland (the national agency for those working with children and their families in Scotland) hosted seminar attended by Scottish Government policy makers to explore ways in which the body of research can continue to shape developments. Daniel gave evidence to, and is quoted in the report of the Parliamentary Inquiry into *Children Taken into Care*<sup>10</sup>.

## 5. Sources to corroborate the impact

1. University of Stirling and Action for Children *Childhood neglect: Improving Outcomes for Children* English Training Pack available at <http://www.education.gov.uk/childrenandyoungpeople/safeguardingchildren/childhoodneglect>; Scottish pack from [www.withscotland.org](http://www.withscotland.org).
2. Information on Child and Family Training Initiative available on request or from: [www.childandfamilytraining.org.uk](http://www.childandfamilytraining.org.uk)
3. Research in Practice elearning module available at <http://www.rip.org.uk/putting-it-into-practice/e-learning> had been accessed 439 times by 14.10.13 since it went live in March 2012 (evidence from Geoff Owen, Research and Development Officer RiP). Spreadsheet of analysis of hits and feedback comments compiled by RiP available on request.
4. NHS Education for Scotland *Child Protection* at <http://www.knowledge.scot.nhs.uk/home/learning-and-cpd/learning-spaces/child-online-protection.aspx>.

5. House of Commons (2012) *Children First: The Child Protection System in England*. Volume I, available at :  
<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201213/cmselect/cmeduc/137/13702.htm#evidence> specific reference to the research findings in s53; copy of written evidence available on request or at  
<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201213/cmselect/cmeduc/137/137vw80.htm>
6. *Annual Reviews of Neglect* – Action for Children have compiled a breakdown of media coverage very detailed accounts of the policy impact of the reviews and evidence of significance and reach (available on request). Extract from the Action for Children analysis sent to DANIEL on 5.3.12:  
Number of unique visits to neglect review policy pages from 24<sup>th</sup> January - today:  
Short URL: <http://www.actionforchildren.org.uk/neglectreview> = 774  
Long URL: <http://www.actionforchildren.org.uk/policy-research/policy-priorities/child-neglect-in-2011> = 516  
Parliamentary toolkit: 51. Neglect review on Google Scholar: 60
7. Note of Parliamentary Questions available on request or at:  
<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201212/cmhansrd/cm120319/text/120319w0005.htm>  
<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201212/cmhansrd/cm120130/text/120130w0002.htm>
8. Department for Education (2013) *Working Together to Safeguard Children*. London:DfE available on request or at  
<http://www.education.gov.uk/aboutdfe/statutory/g00213160/working-together-to-safeguard-children> . See sections 7-23 for references to Early Help and Appendix C for link to the Training Materials.
9. Note on thematic review of neglect available on request or from  
<http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/inspection-reports/surveys/forthcoming-surveys>
10. Report on *Scottish Inquiry into decision making on whether children should be taken in to care*, (2012), evidence from Daniel cited on pages 7 and 20 – available at:  
<http://www.scottish.parliament.uk/parliamentarybusiness/CurrentCommittees/46956.aspx>. Full transcript of evidence session available on request.