ANNUAL REPORT 2021-22

CIRCY

CENTRE FOR INNOVATION AND RESEARCH
IN CHILDHOOD AND YOUTH

us

UNIVERSITY
OF SUSSEX

Contents

Welcome

The Centre for Innovation and Research in Childhood and Youth (CIRCY) is a pan-university research centre at the University of Sussex, with a membership that spans social sciences, arts, humanities, psychology, and professional fields including social work, law, education and health. CIRCY's research is innovative, interdisciplinary and international in scope, and aims to reflect and address real world concerns whilst developing new academic understandings.

Our diverse research and scholarship are united by a critical engagement with children and young people's lives in time and place, and a focus on the rights, voice and welfare of the child or young person at the centre of inquiry. Considered together, the critical and multidisciplinary perspectives offered by CIRCY projects and outputs enrich understandings of childhood and youth within the fields of research, policy and practice.

Over this academic year, 2021-2022, the Centre has continued to grow, increasing our membership across disciplines, establishing new projects, and building academic and public engagement locally, nationally and internationally. The restrictions that the Covid-19 pandemic placed on face-to-face activities have gradually abated, but we have continued to offer hybrid and online activities, including with seminars, reading groups, networking events, as many of our members welcomed the flexibility and safety that these forms of communion can provide. The support of research bidding and academic writing has continued apace, and we have continued to be successful in grant capture, the delivery of projects, and in publications, some of which we spotlight in this report.

CIRCY was established in September 2012, and as we are moving through our 10th anniversary year - and the University's 60th anniversary year - in 2022 it seemed a good time to reflect on achievements and future possibilities for the centre. So, through this year, we have established a programme of engagement with key stakeholders from the university and beyond, including academics, practitioners and policy makers, both from the UK and internationally, to explore CIRCY's aims and vision, celebrate what we have achieved so far, and consider how we might enhance the relevance and impact of our work.

As part of this 'Looking back, looking forwards' retrospective, our theme for this 2021-22 academic year has been 'Childhoods: Then, Now, and Future' – beautifully exemplified by young people from the lowland forested Chocó region of Ecuador's model of their future sustainability village. We have designed our seminar series and community arts activity around this theme.

Looking forward, we plan a 'blended' celebratory event next summer, with participants from near and far joining face-to-face and online.

A model of their future sustainable village created by the young people from the lowland forested Choco region of Eduador

Our research and knowledge exchange

In this report, we do not seek to document the whole of CIRCY's work, but rather highlight examples that help to convey the richness and variety of our activity in seeking to understand – and make a difference to – the lives of children, young people and families.

A central feature are our 'Spotlights' – narrative discussions of some of our activities, including research projects, knowledge exchange activities, and doctoral research. We have ordered these around a combination of our research themes (the first three bullet points) and areas around which our work is coalescing:

- **Childhood publics/Public childhoods**
- **'Good childhoods', Ordinary lives and (extra)Ordinary children**
- **Emotional lives**
- **Young people and safeguarding risk**
- **Digital childhoods**
- **Imaginative methodologies**

The centre themes were established to inform and inspire our work and build synergies, not to categorise or set boundaries between studies or thematic areas. We conceive of our themes as underpinning concerns that intersect to inform the conceptualisation of childhood and youth across space and time, and to enhance the wellbeing and participation of children and young people in family, social and public lives.

CIRCY leadership

CIRCY is led by **Michelle Lefevre** (Social Work) with **Liam Berriman** (Education and Social Work) newly joining us as Co-Director. Liam replaces the wonderful **Rebecca Webb** (Education and Social Work), who has provided invaluable support to CIRCY over the past three years - and fortunately will remain on our Steering Group.

We also welcomed this year **Brontë McDonald** (Psychology), who took over from **Loreto Rodriquez** (Education and Social Work) as CIRCY's new Postgraduate Research Assistant. Thank you to Loreto for all your brilliant support.

Michelle Lefevre

Liam Berriman

Brontë McDonald

We are lucky to have the advice and guidance of two important sources of support.

Firstly, our Steering Group from across the University: **Robin Banerjee** and **Kathryn Lester** (Psychology); **Janet Boddy** and

Rebecca Webb (Education); **Dorte Thoreson** (Institute of Development Studies); **Nuno Ferreira** (Law); **Pam Thurschwell** and **Hannah Field** (English); **Jo Moran-Ellis** (Sociology); **Liam Berriman** and **Fiona Courage** (Mass Observation Archive). The Steering Group meets termly to guide CIRCY's work intellectually and practically. Members also contribute regularly to CIRCY activities.

Secondly, CIRCY has an International Advisory Committee – academic and professional stakeholders with particular knowledges and expertise in the field of childhood and youth. This group meets annually to reflect on CIRCY's activities and outputs and consider how to develop our public engagement and reach.

Current members include:

- Susannah Bowyer: Research and Development Manager, Research in Practice
- Sara Bragg : Centre for Sociology of Education and Equity, UCL Institute of Education
- Ros Edwards: Professor of Sociology, University of Southampton
- Ann Phoenix: Professor of Psychosocial Studies, UCL Institute of Education
- Heinz Sünker: Professor of Social Pedagogy, Begische Universität, Wuppertal, Germany
- Saul Becker: Emeritus Professor from Sussex now at Manchester Metropolitan University
- Louise Sims: Professional Officer at the British Association of Social Workers
- Helen Stalford: Director, European Children's Rights Unit, School of Law & Social Justice, University of Liverpool
- Julia Brannen: Professor of Sociology, UCL Institute for Education & CIRCY Visiting Professor
- Helen Beckett: Director, Safer Young Lives Research Centre, University of Bedfordshire
- Elsie Whittington : Youth Co-Creation Lead for the BeeWell project, Manchester

"Where I belong": An image of a sunset by a young person from Crew Club

CIRCY's involvement with teaching and learning

CIRCY continues in its mission to provide a supportive and creative 'space to think with' for the academic community – building methodological capacity, opening up new interdisciplinary possibilities, and supporting the work of colleagues at all career stages.

We have an active social media presence with a Twitter feed and blog. Students continue to register for our Childhood and Youth PhD and you will see spotlight contributions from doctoral researchers later in this report.

Our taught undergraduate and postgraduate courses continue to flourish, and we are delighted to see our graduates thriving across a range of academic and professional roles with children, young people and families:

Childhood and Youth: Theory and Practice BA

For a second year running, this undergraduate degree course retained its position as third out of 49 university providers offering similar courses.

News from some students from the 2021/22 cohort:

- Second year student, Abby Pounce, ran 40.3 miles over a month to raise money for the charity 'It's a penalty,' which works to disrupt the criminal industry to reduce child abuse and exploitation.
- Second year student, Ciara Hinson, has done great work as an 'Inclusivity Connector' exploring best practices and identifying areas for improvement with regards to the inclusivity of race in our curriculum and pedagogies in the Foundation year at Sussex.
- This report contains 'Spotlight' features on the findings of the studies of third year graduating students Emma Beeden and Eden Franklin-Lester who were awarded funding last year from the Junior Research Associate (JRA) Scheme.
- We are delighted to announce that Emma Beeden was awarded the prestigious 'Snowdon Masters Scholarship' for her studies in Children's Rights and Development at Kings next year.

Childhood and Youth Studies MA

Our Childhood and Youth Studies MA students carried out some fascinating research studies for their dissertations during 2020-21. They included studies into parenting cultures in China, youth involvement in the End SARS protests in Nigeria using social media, and UK school responses to children's experiences of domestic violence, amongst many others.

We were incredibly impressed by the range of work produced by the students, as well as the quality of their research and writing. In what follows, we provide a flavour of some of our students' research, by shining a spotlight on last year's prize-winning dissertations.

Spotlight on Undergraduate Research 1

'Becoming Independent:
How adolescents with kidney transplants
form their own identify as they get older'

Emma Beeden

The aim of my research was to explore how adolescents with kidney transplants are supported to take control of their healthcare as they approach adulthood and how having a transplant can impact everyday activities such as going to school. To explore this, I created a questionnaire for healthcare professionals and interviewed young adults following a kidney transplant.

The professionals were asked three questions. The first was whether young people are being supported to transition to adult services? 43% said yes, 28% said no and 29% said sometimes. Written responses included how paediatric healthcare professionals have a limited understanding of adolescence and that patients should not transition at 16 – an already vulnerable time. Both responses suggest young people are not getting the support they need to manage their healthcare during transition.

The second question concerned the ways in which young people are currently being supported to manage their condition. Responses to this varied; while one professional described how their service had successfully implemented peer support, others suggested services still have a long way to go and that it is a 'postcode lottery' with some patients having access to adolescent friendly services and some simply managing on their own. Finally, professionals were asked what was the biggest issue that young people with health conditions face today. Isolation and young people finding it hard to know where to access appropriate services were particularly cited. While these have been significant issues that have been increasing for some time, it was expressed that matters are now nearing crisis point.

In the second stage of the research, young adults were interviewed who had received a kidney transplant during childhood. Six questions were asked, themed around education,
the support they had received, and friendships.

When asked about their time in education, all interviewees explained how they had to spend a lot of time catching up and were offered very little support. One interviewee explained the frustration of trying to pursue their education whilst also having to look after their health. When asked whether friendships or relationships had been affected by their transplant, one responded commented that friends who had known them whilst they were in hospital treated them very differently to friends who only knew them post-transplant. This response suggests that, for some young people, a transplant returns their independence despite their ongoing medical interventions. A final question asked how participants were supported when transitioning to adult services. This is an important question as, without support, young adults can engage in risk taking behaviour, which can result in them forgetting to take their medications. One interviewee explained the benefit of having a youth worker to help with life issues as well as health issues.

Reviewing the answers from the questionnaires and interviews I was able to formulate three recommendations:

- Holistic joined up care that supports young people in managing their condition, pursuing their education and becoming independent
- Better education for healthcare professionals on life as an adolescent with a chronic condition
- Promoting the development of peer supports for young people.

I hope my work shines a light on a group of young adults that, while having lots of additional challenges, simply want to live their life and have the same experiences as their peers.
However, my research suggests that, sadly, the process for transitioning to adulthood and adult healthcare services is not yet supporting people as it should.

BACY students, Emma Beeden and Eden Franklin-Lester, receive funding in 2021 from the Junior Research Associate (JRA) Scheme on the basis of the quality of their dissertations.

Spotlight on Undergraduate Research 2

'Subverting Normative Representations of Disability: Exploring the relationship between TikTok and British Sign Language users'

Eden Franklin Lester

This research project was designed to explore attitudes among adolescents towards the emerging popularity of signed languages on mainstream social media. As social media is becoming increasingly visual, it is allowing deaf and BSL users to reshape the meaning of the 'normative' social media user.

Research into deaf childhoods and technology is limited, often focusing on assistive technologies rather than what adolescents who sign British Sign Language (BSL) use in their daily lives. We have experienced a cultural shift in BSL representation after an increase in mainstream media casting deaf actors such as Rose Ayling-Ellis, showing that deaf people are just as capable as hearing people when given equitable access. If we view deaf BSL users as a language minority instead of a disabled group, we can encourage the growth and development of BSL in hearing societies, such as the introduction of a BSL GCSE.

My project aims were to contribute new insights into the under-researched digital lives of BSL-using adolescents, and to address how we can increase exposure to BSL to encourage learning and empower those who use it to communicate. This research explored how young people aged 13-19 respond and relate to BSL through videos of signed songs on TikTok to understand if and how attitudes towards this language and its users have evolved with the new generation.

I engaged in content analysis of comment thread responses to 6 signed song videos, sampling 180 comments to explore how use of these videos can increase exposure to BSL and promote learning and understanding. I analysed signed songs produced by deaf and hearing creators on TikTok to survey concepts of empowerment for the language and its users, as well as discussions of representation of the deaf and signing community.

The data showed adolescents on TikTok are responding to BSL in a positive way, with the comments falling into six main categories:

- Learning: comments linked to interest in learning the language
- Praise: comments linked to the creator of the video and the language itself
- Interactions: comments around personal stories of BSL users
- Media specific: comments relating to the language and the TikTok platform
- Questions: comments linked to asking questions around BSL and deafness in a safe space
- ASL: comments relating to the comparison of BSL and ASL (American Sign Language) as this is a global media platform.

The importance of this study sits in the positive safe space for learning and development that young people on TikTok have created. This space, predominantly used for entertainment, has allowed for these positive attitudes to show through direct and indirect responses to the signed songs

This study is also relevant as the Coronavirus pandemic shifted the ways in which young people use social media to communicate, relate and connect with each other. Continuing to address how we can integrate and normalise BSL in our communities would create a more accessible future for all.
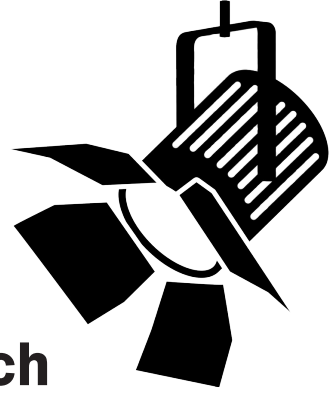
Spotlight on Postgraduate Research

'An Exploration of the Conception, Implementation and Experiences of Education, Health, and Care Plans, and their Impact on Children and Young P with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities'

Meg Best

Barrie Thorne Prize Winner for Best Overall Academic Achievement

This literature review dissertation examined Education, Health, and Care Plans (EHCPs), and the impact they have had for children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND). To achieve this, the dissertation analysed the legislation that preceded the Children and Families Act 2014, and considered how it impacted on the conception of the EHCPs. The dissertation then considered the implementation of EHCPs and the impact of this on children and young people with SEND. Finally, the dissertation explored some of the unintended consequences of EHCPs, and how they affected the experiences of children and young people with SEND. The dissertation aimed to provide a comprehensive overview of the impact of EHCP and consider whether the intentions of the Children and Families Act 2014 were, in fact, delivered.

'Formally Supported but Actually Isolated: Teachers creating gender-fluid environments

Valeria Yanez Carvajal

Cathy Urwin Prize Winner for Work with the Greatest Impact on Practice

The current social context requires educational spaces where young children can express themselves regardless of their constructed gender identity. This exploratory research project addressed teachers practices in nursery and primary schools in creating gender-fluid environments in the South East of England. Through a qualitative approach, the study analysed the political discourses of four school settings and four teachers to create gender-fluid environments.

The key findings of the project were that the teachers were personally committed to their practices on gender fluidity and felt isolated in their workplaces. They spontaneously divided into two groups: EYFS (Early Years Foundation Stage) and primary school teachers. The teachers discussed aspects such as: models of discourse they maintain about childhood, the parental intervention in gender-fluid education, family background and gender, and how access to social media influences their practice.

These prize-winning Masters dissertations can be read in full in the CIRCY journal on our blog.

The annual CIRCY community arts project

Every year, CIRCY invites children and young people to engage in a community arts project.

The entries can be seen on our website and illustrate our annual reports. You may remember that, for the past two years, we only collected images online due to the pandemic. This year, we were back in person, and visited the Crew Club – an independent youth and community charity in Whitehawk, Brighton. The Crew Club provides a safe space for children, young people and families living in Whitehawk and the surrounding neighbourhood to have the freedom to explore, create, learn and challenge themselves to make a difference in their own lives - and those in the wider community. It has supported thousands of young people by providing face-to-face hours of support. This support includes a range of sports, music and media provision, youth support, dance and drama sessions, and education support. The Crew Club also supports many adults and families with their social, physical and emotional wellbeing through football, boxing, running and fitness groups, parent support groups and volunteering opportunities.

On Mondays, the Crew Club hosts 'Safe Start', an after-school club for 7 to 11 year olds and Youth Session for secondary school aged young people. As part of drop-in sessions, children participate in a range of activities, including music, football and cooking. One week, CIRCY's Postgraduate Research Assistant, Brontë McDonald, hosted an art session with the wonderful help of Sharon Tiley, the Crew Club's Art Coordinator. We asked children and young people to draw or paint 'where they belong' or 'where they are happy'. Children dropped in and out to partake in the activity, and chatted with the researcher and fellow adults about where they feel they belong or feel happy.

In the first session, children predominately talked about their homes, drawing images of their bedrooms or houses/flats. One child drew different buildings that she called home, including a flat *"where I was in Mummy's tummy."* There was a particular focus on different family members that made them feel

they belonged, such as parents, step-parents, grandparents and pets.

Outside of the home, children drew or talked about places in their local community. Initial suggestions centred around the Crew Club itself, with young people creating pictures of activities at the Crew Club, ie. *"I drew this because guitars and bass make me feel calm and I learnt these at the Crew Club"*. Other children drew places they liked visiting, such as *"Nana's house round the corner"*, going to ASDA with their mum, and Brighton Beach.

Some young people were reluctant to draw or paint as they felt they weren't good at it. They nevertheless stayed and shared with the group the places where they felt they belonged. They also discussed - and eventually drew - places in the local community. For example, one young person decided upon the football stadium because *"in that 90 minutes is the only time when I feel happy and in the moment"*. One adult suggested school as a place the young people might feel they belong, but this was dismissed by the young people. As the young people drew their pictures, they shared stories of conflict they had with teachers. For example, *"They always think I am like my big brother, who was crazy. But I'm not. I'm good.But they don't see that"*. It was very apparent that the young people were comfortable at the Crew Club; they spoke of how they enjoyed the relaxed structure of being able to move and do what they choose to and they commented on preferring this in comparison to the strict structures of school.

Thank you to all the children and young people who participated in creating artwork and partaking in discussions on the topic of belonging! Additionally, thank you to the Crew Club for hosting us, and the support from the adults there.

The Crew Club is a registered charity and you can donate to support their fantastic work on their website.

Jasmine, age 8: A collection of places she feels happy and belongs, including her house, her granny's house, and in her bedroom with her hamster.

CIRCY
10 YEAR REVIEW

As CIRCY approaches its ten-year anniversary, we have consulted with our members about CIRCY's aims, processes, and future directions.

This has included gathering feedback about our current future goals, activities, research themes, networking and interdisciplinary approach. This has helped us identify both strengths and areas in which we could improve.

22 members of CIRCY completed a short survey

5 members participated in an interview

2 focus group sessions with our steering and advisory group

What do you value about CIRCY?

Encounter innovative and participatory methodologies

Interdisciplinary imagination

Facilitates networking with other CIRCY members

Provides the opportunity to hear about other people's research

Supports their researcher development

Interdisciplinarity

- The interdisciplinary nature of CIRCY was commonly mentioned with members reporting that this is a key strength of CIRCY.
- This is particularly important when aiming to "improve services and research in the way the themes suggest we do".
- One member highlighted that it would be useful to stretch this further

"So I think you can kind of be inter-disciplinary on paper, but CIRCY was very good at embodying that."

Community

- Members felt that there was "a sense of a home and community" in CIRCY
- CIRCY members are seen as approachable and value the thoughts of researchers, practitioners and students alike.
- The interdisciplinarity nature of CIRCY also provided further community-building. It "feels like a home for people that didn't feel like they had a home".

"It was a real gift to be part of a community and feel like you weren't just totally by yourself doing research in this like little hole."

Research dissemination

- This sense of community often rose from the opportunities CIRCY provides for their members to share their research,
- Listening to others' research also stimulated new ideas and approaches,
- This was particularly helpful in regard to working with children as there are often important theoretical considerations as well as methodological barriers.

CIRCY
10 YEAR REVIEW

Strengths

Nurturing a space for thinking across disciplines

Networking opportunities

Range of variety of seminars.

Focus on the process of research over the outcome

> ""it was the cup of tea, it was the like... it was really interesting when you said that but I didn't feel able to say it in front of everyone. And I think that that is like essential."

Next steps

Continue more of the same

Post-pandemic return to informal social events

Further expand interdiscplinary connections

Improve CIRCY visibility within the university

Research themes

Childhood Publics

Good Childhoods' and (Extra)ordinary Children

Emotional Lives

Digital Childhood

Methodological Innovation.

- The majority of research, of those who completed the survey, fit very closely with most or one of the research themes. The rest had at least some connection with the research theme
- It was felt the research themes were meaningful and helpful for others to understand what research is associated with CIRCY.
- It was suggested that these could be better presented by making the focus more on the aims and intentions of CIRCY as opposed to the content of the research.
- There will need to be further thought and discussions around the research themes in the next academic year.
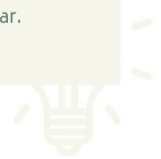
CIRCY
10 YEAR REVIEW

Thoughts on our event/activities?

Open research seminars

Postgraduate researcher meetings

Reading group

Festival of science exhibitions

Coffee and Collaboration

Ideas in action

To what extent do you find CIRCY events helpful welcoming and accessible?

- CIRCY's welcoming and accessible nature are key in developing the community-feel
- This is often attributed to the directors in CIRCY "making people feel welcomed and valued".
- The steering group mirrored this through members also sharing they felt events were friendly and supportive.
- Looking forward, members felt they were most likely to attend the open research seminar, Coffee and Collaboration and large events such as a 10-year anniversary event.

"I feel that CIRCY makes inclusion, kindness and welcome, as well as 'rigour' key facets of what it does"

Thoughts on our annual report, newsletter and blog?

Annual report
- The design of the annual report was highlighted as a strength because it is accessible to a wide range of audiences.
- The use of spotlights in the annual report was appreciated by one member for providing opportunities to "showcase research, impact and knowledge exchange of members".

Newsletter
- All those who had read the newsletter, found it somewhat to very engaging and informative.
- Members highlighted the use of illustrations and short passages of text being a strength of the newsletters.

Blog
- All but one member felt that it was somewhat to very engaging and informative.
- One suggested that it might be more helpful to have the blog more available on social media/emails.

Spotlighting our research

Childhood publics / Public childhoods

In some contemporary work that focuses on childhood, the child can be defined in a way that can seem individualised, isolating, or abstracting: the child at risk, the child at play, the sexual child. The phrase 'childhood publics' reminds us that children are never confined to the family, or even to the family and school; they are never outside of politics and history. They experience versions of public life that may be distinctive, in comparison to adults' experiences, not least in the ways they are shapedand controlled by adults. But public life is no less relevant –no less intense or formative –for children and young people than for adults. Now especially, in our digital age, children have access to a multitude of mediated public spheres; the child alone in their bedroom is, more often than not, participating in a childhood public.With these considerations in mind, our 'Childhood publics/Public childhoods' theme acts to emphasize work that foregrounds and theorizes children's interaction with public life, reminding us to stay attuned to the rich range of questions that emerge from the formulation of childhood as always 'public' and publicly constructed.Several short examples fromwork within this thematic areahighlight very different ways in which children and young people engage in the world agentically.

- **Dominic Dean** (Research and Enterprise) convened and spoke at a panel on 'Are Children Still the Future?',held as part of the English: Shared Futures conference in Manchester on 8thJuly 2022. Thepanel explored whether, almost 20 years after the publication of Lee Edelman's landmark work of queer theory, No Future, Edelman's idea of the image of the child as a dominant and coercive force in politics still holds in an era of pronounced political hostility to migrant, queer, Trans, and politically active children and youth.

- **María Moscati** (Law) co-hosted a webinar in Januarywith young people from the African Movement of Working Children and Youth, Act2gether -Bolivia and Apocalypse Now -US. The webinar looked at several human rights issues and explored how adults and adult led organisations can better support children and young activists. The video recording of the webinar has been edited, with the help of the young activists, into two short videos that provide insights and advice from the young activists.

- **Dorte Thorsen** (IDS) led a small team of researchers from IDS and the Centre for International Education (CIE) undertaking a global review of the effects of COVID-19 policy and programming responses on child labour in agri-food systems. Due to the paucity in empirical data on children's work, the team adopted a case study methodology and reviewed secondary information on agri-food systems in nine countries to make inferences about how the various effects of Covid-19 mitigation measuresimpacted on the likelihood of children's work tipping into the categories of child labour (working at an early age or working long hours relative to age) and hazardous work (doing work that might be harmful). Other researchers in the project included **Sara Humphreys**, Justin Flynn, and **Máiréad Dunne** (Education) with assistance from doctoral researchers, Julian Neef and Neha Yadav.

The following two 'spotlight' features provide more in-depth details on children's varied ways of engaging in the world –then (Hannah Field) and now (Rebecca Webb and Perpetua Kirby)...

Spotlight on
Childhood publics/Public childhoods (1)

'Seeing The World Upside Down'

Rebecca Webb and Perpetua Kirby (Education)

"Lay the head down. Or better still, face away from what you look at, and bend with straddled legs till you see your world upside down." (Nan Shepperd, *The Living Mountain*)

30 young bodies in high visibility vests are running. The drum beats a fast, short, resonant repetition. High vis subjects shriek. Stop! Up tails all! The high vis bodies look through their legs and contemplate what they notice. They have been transplanted from their urban school into a Forest Food Garden, hewn from the chalky grasslands of the Sussex South Downs on the edge of the University's campus.

We have brought a class of 10 year olds to our university as part of an ongoing research project funded by Ian Scoones (Institute of Development Studies) as part of the 'Pastoralism, Uncertainty and Reslience' (PASTRES) programme. We are exploring how lessons learnt from our previous research in the Global South, 'Hope in the Present', conducted with Mika Peck (Life Sciences) and Vinita Damodaran (Environmental History), might translate into existing sustainability curricular within the National Curriculum for schools in England. This work is also informing, and is informed by 'Creating with Uncertainty' (a HEIF project co-sponsored by the Sussex Sustainability Research Programme), which brings together colleagues from four University of Sussex Schools, plus partner organisations, culminating currently in summer workshops with nine local schools. The latter is a collaboration between the School of Media, Arts and Humanities and Education & Social Work, together with Michael Jonik (English), John Parry and Simon Thompson (both Education). The common thread in all our work is fostering the possibilities for divergence and defamiliarization; seeing the world 'upside down'. This includes recognition of inter-species entanglements and co-dependency for survival. It is necessarily slow and uncertain work.

We pause together to write this contribution for this CIRCY Spotlight feature via the internet, a practice that was necessitated by Covid in a different time, that also now 'saves time'. As we do so, we become aware of the tensions between our researcher-pedagogical practice emphasising a slower rhythm, in contrast with the demands of the academy that speeds exponentially. We feel the lived ontological contradiction between our conceptual and practical imperative to perform slowing down, whilst the adrenaline pulses through us. We are running at pace, with a sense of being in process, where we are grasping the threads of what it is we might be doing in this moment, with a looming urgency to work out what it is that we feel compelled to draw attention to and make some sense of. We are reminded by Merlin Sheldrake, the author of *Entangled Life*, that we are not alone in feeling our way: 'mycelial networks' but also 'all life forms are in fact processes'.

We began this work three years ago, when youth activism for climate change spawned across global streets, including those within our locale. Since then, we have explored multiple ways to bring youth concerns into the space of the school to inform and reanimate a too narrow sustainability curriculum. Now we sense the mushrooming of other competing concerns, enmeshed within the messy veins of pandemic aftershocks and a global economic crisis, that crowd out accepted urgencies of biodiversity loss and climate change.

With those with whom we are currently researching - including academics, teachers, artists and students - we forage for possibilities to surface hope in the present. We play with creative and deliberative practices, bringing together multiple disciplines, to pay deep attention to the world, in ways that might engage students and teachers to ask: 'what is this to me, my school and my community'? The arts, suggests our colleague, Michael Jonik, *"brings us to our senses"*, and Hustak and Myers (2012) stress that interdisciplinary work 'requires reading with our senses attuned to stories told in otherwise muted registers'.

And as we write, we find that we wander and digress, sharing stories and photos, thatpermit us to laugh and to mourn. This method of slow, playful not-writingalso allows us 'to be disrupted' (Ulmer, 2018) in such a way that we discover something of what we know about our ongoing research that we feel compelled to convey.

Children from urban schools explore the Sussex Forest Food Garden upside down as part of the PASTRIES programme
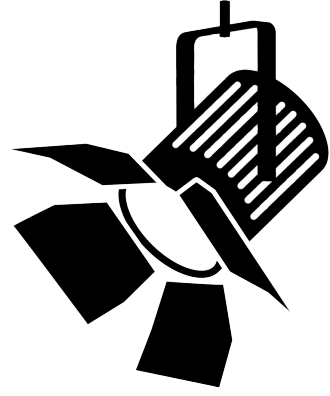
Spotlight on
Childhood publics/Public childhoods (2)

'Not Only Dressed but Dressing: Clothing, Childhood, Creativity'

Hannah Field (English)

My four-year-old daughter has a favourite dress. It's quite an unusual design. The top is like striped thermal underwear - the long johns sort, and the bottom is a puffball tutu. It came from a friend: a hand-me-down. When I was given the dress I was happy - as I am when anyone gives me or my daughter clothes. When my daughter wants to wear it *everywhere*, I'm less happy. I start to suggest other outfits: clothes that are less eye-catching, that are more gender neutral, that are made from corduroy rather than tulle. But my daughter will not be swayed. What's more, she uses it in ways I don't expect. She bounces on trampolines in it. She plays in the mud in it. And once, to my great anxiety, she tried to launch herself from a first-floor balcony in it - as though the beloved garment gave her the power of flight! Children's clothes might seem like a minor concern; as long as they're warm enough, who cares? But in fact, as my exchanges with my daughter show, children's clothing raises important issues - not just of changing styles, but also of power dynamics between adults and children.

Clothes can constrain children. This is true of adults, too, but certain widespread aspects of children's dress - such as uniform regulations - may be incompatible with children's right to express their religious, racial and gender identities. At other times, clothing allows children to *'adorn themselves in dreams'*, to borrow the fashion historian Elizabeth Wilson's celebrated phrase. It fosters rebellion and self-growth. These issues are at the heart of 'Not Only Dressed but Dressing: Clothing, Childhood, Creativity', the Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC) Research Network I am currently leading alongside Co-Investigator Professor Kiera Vaclavik (Kiera is the founder and director of the Centre for Research in Childhood Cultures at Queen Mary University of London - a research institute I think of as a sister to CIRCY). The network brings together UK-based and international scholars from a range of disciplinary backgrounds (including art and design, history, law, literary studies, sociology, and theatre and performance) with expertise in childhood and/or dress. It also seeks to foster dialogue between university researchers, museum professionals and artists to forge new methodologies. We're working with three museum partners, all of them with outstanding collections of children's clothing - the Young V&A, the Worthing Museum, and the Musée du Textile et de la Mode de Cholet in the Loire region of France - and have run three of our four network events so far.

The first was a children's event at Worthing Museum designed by Anna Twinam-Cauchi, the museum's Education Officer. A group of ten 7-12 year-old kids came to Worthing to learn about historic children's dress and to make their own artworks inspired by dress: from paper dolls to bonnets to fully-fledged outfits. I was struck by how children's clothing allows adults and children to bond as they share craft skills and also how making always works as an alternative form of literacy - as well as of course by the fabulous creations.

The next two events were for academics, curators, and makers: one at Worthing and one at the Young V&A. Highlights include a presentation from CIRCY members Nuno Ferreira and Maria Moscati (Law) on school uniform and human rights, and contributions from artists and designers who make children's clothes. Check out Maija Nygren's innovative child-centred business Puzzleware which lets children sew together precut pattern pieces to make their own designs, and Ryan Mario Yasin's label Petit Pli, which pioneers eco-friendly clothes that grow with children from birth to 12 months, or from nine months to four years.

We've also been thinking about how the revamp of the V&A Museum of Childhood as the Young V&A - a museum for children celebrating creativity, rather than a museum of the history of the childhood - provides directions for new interdisciplinary work in childhood studies.

Our final event is in September at Cholet, after which Kiera and I will begin planning next steps. We'd love to hear from anyone with an interest in children's clothing.
Check out our website for more information.

'Where I Belong': By a young person from Crew Club

Spotlight on 'Good childhoods', everyday lives and (extra)ordinary children

'Exploring the Direction of Commercially Projected Identity in Children's Animation / Toy Production'

Jenny Hewitt (Education and Social Work)
and Sarah-Jane Phelan (Global Studies)

The University of Sussex is famed for its interdisciplinary approach to research, and this conceptual project emerged from this proud tradition. As ESRC PhD researchers (at the time, now doctors!) we - Jenny Hewitt and Sarah-Jane Phelan found commonality through discussions critically examining children's media and toy production. ESRC 'Business Boost' funding in 2018 provided us a joint opportunity to visit Denmark and Ireland, with a unique opportunity to build networks in children's industries. Meeting with toy and media producers and spending time within industry provided an invaluable opportunity to examine ways in which stereotypes about societal constructions of children were perpetuated, and what these might tell us about the multitudinous conceptualisations of 'childhood' - as well as a chance to see the business models bringing products from initial concept to final market.

This mutual interest and ongoing investigation ran alongside both of our full-time PhDs but, far from waning, the passion to highlight possibilities for change in children's media and toy production deepened.
A further ESRC 'Business Boost' award in 2020 during the Covid-19 pandemic facilitated a deeper exploration of the experiences of independent toy producers and media content creators, at a time when a spotlight was being shone on the deplorable lack of representation in commercial production for children. Since then, we have been working on pulling together threads around the relationship between social change, play and children's media. We have increasingly been focused on the people who tenaciously hold space for alternatives at the edge of commercial production. This spans those prefigurative books, visual media content and toys that diverge from the standard commercial production process, as well as those with experience of interrupting norms in mainstream publishing, animation and toy production processes from within (bearing in mind there is an overlap between these two groups!).
The central focus is on people who have shaped their careers around creating what they've seen to be missing or misunderstood in the field of children's play and entertainment. Through using these experiences as a prism, we want to trace the edges of the field historically and pay attention to the contours of what may be emerging.

Given the bloom of public interest in the entanglements between inequality and representation, we are optimistic about this being of interest to broader publics who want to learn more about how play and children's media shape individual lives and broader society. The aim is to produce a book, drawing together the many experiences, perspectives, insights and literature that we have gathered over the last five years. The book will act as an interdisciplinaryresource for university-level students of sociology, child development, education and design focused on media and childhood studies.
Optimistic about a significant shift in commercial and public attitudes, we chart the conversations continuing to enter the mainstream, butare concerned about a sense of urgency that may be preventing reflection and accountability from embedding meaningfully within practice.

We believe the voices of those who have been working towards more exploratory and affirming play - and media experiences before it entered the public consciousness - are the ones we need to be listening to. And that these voices will provide exceptional insight on how we got here, and how we may move forward. We believe framing these perspectives into a resource for emerging creators at the start of their careers would facilitate learning and reflecting on the political economy of play and media, ideally helping to build awareness and accountability into their professional practice from an early stage.

Meanwhile, broader dissemination will contribute to more nuanced public debate about how children's products can shape social change. Our individual expertise and mutual passion have driven this project forward unwaveringly, as we layer deeper understandings of the discourses and observe the sea changes. As the project crystallises into tangible outputs and our independent producer network blossoms with its own interconnected ideas for change, we remain committed to extending this research toward a meaningful, long-term future.

[See our project film on YouTube for further information.](#)

Emotional lives

The theme of 'Emotional lives' takes account of historical and cultural contingencies, reminding us to consider the ways in which emotion expresses and confirms the materiality, relationality and sensuality of social lives. It aids the building of critical thinking about established and taken-for-granted issues in childhood and youth – whether studying young people, policy or professional practice – by thinking through the lens of emotion and affective practice.

Work to support children's flourishing as Covid starts to abate continues to befunded by Sussex. **Perpetua Kirby** (Education) led a successful application to the Capacity Building Fund with **Michael Jonik** (Media, Arts and Humanities), **John Parry**, **Simon Thompson** and **Rebecca Webb** (all Education) for the project 'Creating with Uncertainty: Covid recovery to educate for sustainable futures'. The study will support 13 local schools to cultivate the capacity to respond where solutions are-as-yet-unknown, enabling teachers and pupils to co-construct locally relevant, deeply engaging sustainability curricula that also acknowledge the existential and uncertain dimensions of the pandemic and climate change, and identify gaps in established knowledge/skills. This includes creating opportunities for teachers/pupils to relate facts to their own experiences (ie. feelings, resources, practices, external pressures), to critically assess competing information sources, and navigate inherently difficult ethical tensions and questions. **Jenny Hewitt** (Social Work and Social Care) and Sarah-Jane Phelan (Global Studies) were part of a £25k grant from the HEIF fund to do a pilot research study into teachers' experiences during the Covid-19 pandemic. Their research, 'Care In The Classroom', involved giving teaching staff in five primary schools dictaphones to create audio recordings, followed by an interview.

Following data analysis, they are creating a 'toolkit' developed with 'Pursuit Wellbeing' who specialise in helping teachers and school leaders with mental health and wellbeing. This will be trialed in Sussex primary schools, and they are further applying for some funding focusing on policy development to explore an integrated approach with East Sussex County Council. They will also be recording several podcasts exploring teachers' experiences, following on from research findings.

A number of studies focus on children's mental health. **Robin Banerjee** (Psychology) held a webinar reporting the findings of a 'Best Practice Review of Whole School Approach (WSA) within Mental Health' with practitioners and policymakers - including from the Department for Education and the Department of Health. The Psychology team included Tanya Procter, Lucy Roberts, Ian Macdonald, Alice Morgan-Clare and Becca Randell. The study was funded by the NIHR Applied Research Collaboration Kent, Surrey and Sussex and Sussex Academic Health Science Network. An extensive body of work is also building with colleagues in Psychology around the building of empathy and other skills with children. **Robin Banerjee**, **Jane Oakhill** and **Alan Garnham** are working together on an ESRC-funded study of, 'Reading Feelings: Does reading fiction improve children's empathy and pro-social skills?'

In June, Robin took part in a high-profile public engagement activity as an online panelist for Empathy Lab's 'Empathy Conversation', speaking with Michael Rosen, David Baddiel, Catherine Johnson and Miranda McKearney. Robin also gave keynote speeches at the East Sussex Mental Health and Wellbeing Conference for practitioners in health and education, and at an enterprise event organised by Empathy Lab on empathy, child development and books.

'Where I feel happy': This young person from the Crew Club explained: "In that 90 minutes is the only time when I feel happy and in the moment". They described how watching football made them feel happy and calm because they could focus just on the game.
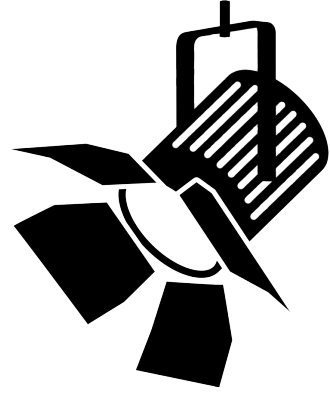
Spotlight on Emotional lives

'Mental Images of the Self in Young People with Depression:
A creative photo study'

Becca Dean (Psychology)

Mental images are sometimes described as 'seeing with your mind's eye' or seeing pictures in your head. Most people experience these mental images, but not everyone is aware of them until you really start thinking about them. For some people, mental images can be very vivid and almost like real life, but for others they can be faint. Some mental images are positive - many people can relate to looking forward to an upcoming holiday and visualising themselves on a beach soaking up the sun. But for others, mental images can be more negative, such as replaying memories of being bullied like a video in your head. Research has found that more frequent and vivid negative mental images are associated with depression.

My PhD research is supervised by **Kathryn Lester** and Faith Orchard (Psychology) with Victoria Pile (King's College London), and focuses on mental images of the self in young people. Our sense of self develops in adolescence, which coincides with when many people begin to develop depression. How we imagine ourselves in our minds may have an impact on how we perceive ourselves, which has implications for the development and maintenance of depression. My research aims to better understand young people's experiences of mental images of the self, so we can explore whether this could be a potential target for future treatments.

I'm currently running a qualitative study using photo elicitation and semi-structured interviews with young people aged 14-21 with lived experience of depression (current and past) to find out more about the mental self-images they experience. This study is supported by MSc Clinical Psychology student Hannah Allum. We hope to learn more about the characteristics of mental self-images, how they relate to mood, and whether this is something young people with depression would like support with.

Young people can sign up to the study online and are first asked to complete a short demographic questionnaire and the Revised Children's Anxiety and Depression Scale (RCADS) to measure symptoms of anxiety and depression. They can then book in a short briefing meeting with a researcher so we can explain the photo task. Participants are asked to take around five photos that represent their mental self-images over one week before meeting for an interview. The photos could replicate their mental images, be a representation of the mental image, or could be about how they make the young person feel. Since mental imagery is so visual, using photos is a useful way to tap into a concept that young people may not have been so aware of previously. It's also a chance to get creative, which many participants definitely have been!
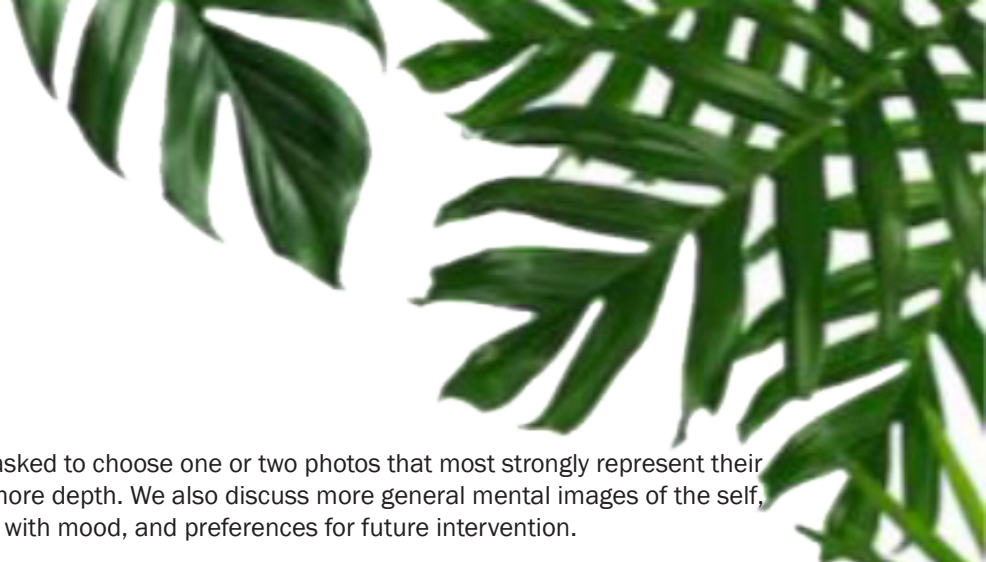
In the interview, participants are asked to choose one or two photos that most strongly represent their mental self-images to discuss in more depth. We also discuss more general mental images of the self, their relationship with mood, and preferences for future intervention.

We piloted the photo elicitation method and interview topic guide with two lived experience advisors, who found that taking the photos helped them to be more aware of their mental imagery of themselves before the interview and helped them to feel more prepared to answer questionsabout it. Some adaptations to the briefing guidance were made based on their suggestions.

We have been working with online and community-based groups for young people to advertise the study, parent groups and other social media advertising. Participant recruitment is still ongoing, and we're particularly interested in getting more under 16s involved so we can represent their views and experiences of mental self-imagery. We've completed several interviews and look forward to analysing the data this summerand sharing our findings!

Some examples of photos taken by participants have been included below (with their consent)
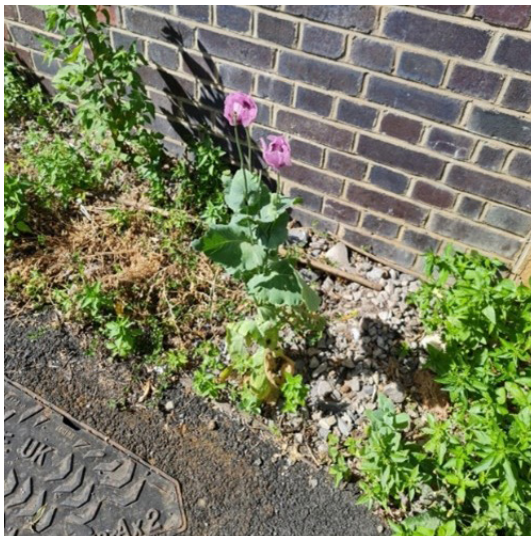
Above: This photo represented the participant's mental image of themselves as someone resilient who had grown through adversity and the hope this gave them for the future.

Above: This young person described a mental image of being at the back of a classroom, feeling alone and out of place.

Left: This participant recalled memories of their childhood as a 'sad chubby kid' who was anxious and didn't fit in.

Young people and safeguarding risk

All children's everyday lives involve some aspects of risk, but a growing area of CIRCY's research has been focusing on professional systems and interventions to address safeguarding risks.

It is increasingly recognized that the wellbeing and life chances of children and young people who become involved with social work and social care services due to safeguarding risks are particularly vulnerable. **Louise Gazeley** won a £40k tender from Essex Children's Services to study multi-agency working to improve the educational outcomes of children known to Social Care. The aims of the research include: identifying barriers to and opportunities for closer working; enhancing shared understanding of roles and remits; identifying routes to more effective intervention with young people known to social care; and supporting the development of culture of high aspirations for young people's educational outcomes. The research team includes **Julia Sutherland** (education), **Tam Cane** and **Michelle Lefevre** (Social Work and Social Care), supported by doctoral researchers **Greg Campbell** and **Hannah Olle**.

Kristi Hickle (Social Work and Social Care) won a tender to evaluate the Children's Society's Disrupting Exploitation Phase II programme. The evaluation is utilising a Contribution Analysis methodology to consider the programme's impact on the lives of young people who are affected by criminal exploitation in Manchester, Birmingham, and London. The three year project is funded by the National Lottery Community Fund at £170k. **Lisa Holmes** is leading the Cost Effectiveness analysis, **Michelle Lefevre** will lead the engagement with Learning Partners, and **Carlie Goldsmith** will conduct the qualitative fieldwork (all Social Work and Social Care). Nat Cen is an external partner, supporting with quantitative data analysis of system pattern and outcome data, and service costs.

Michelle Lefevre has led a £89k evaluation of a new Contextual Safeguarding approach in the London Borough of Hackney aiming to address extra-familial risks and harms, which young people encounter in relationships and situations beyond their home. The team has included: Robin Banerjee (psychology); Lisa Holmes (education); **Kristi Hickle**, **Carlie Goldsmith**, **May Nasrawy**, and **Nathalie Huegler** (all Social Work and Social Care); and doctoral researchers **Felipe Paredes** and **Alejandro Farieta**.

The Innovate Project, led by **Michelle Lefevre**, is now in its third year, and moving towards its final stage of fieldwork. This four-year study is in collaboration with the University of Durham, the charity Research in Practice, and the social enterprise Innovation Unit. Funded by the Economic and Social Research Council, it is exploring innovation in social care services to address extra-familial risks and harms experienced by young people, such as child exploitation and serious youth violence. As well as developing new knowledge about the processes of innovation, the project is exploring three practice methodologies in six research sites: Trauma-informed Practice, Transitional Safeguarding and Contextual Safeguarding. We're spotlighting on two of those approaches here, as well as a book that's due to be published open access shortly. If you want to know more about the project, the website is full of information, including blogs and a range of resources.
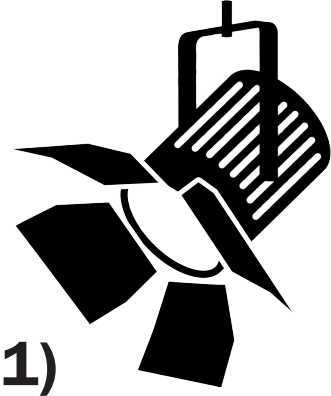
Spotlight on The Innovate Project (1)

'Talking to Young People about Trauma-informed Practice: Challenges and responses'

Carlie Goldsmith, Kristi Hickle and Reima Ana Maglajlic (Social Work and Social Care) with Carlene Firmin (Durham University)

Trauma-informed Practice is a multi-disciplinary framework that provides a way of understanding the impact of traumatic experiences on people's lives and responding in ways that increase safety and facilitate healing. Interest in this practice methodology has grown substantially over the last several years and it is being adopted enthusiastically in services across the UK. Despite this, there is currently very little understanding of what young people think and feel about Trauma-informed practice as an approach, if they think it has value in social care, and how they would know it was present in their local system, organisation or services.
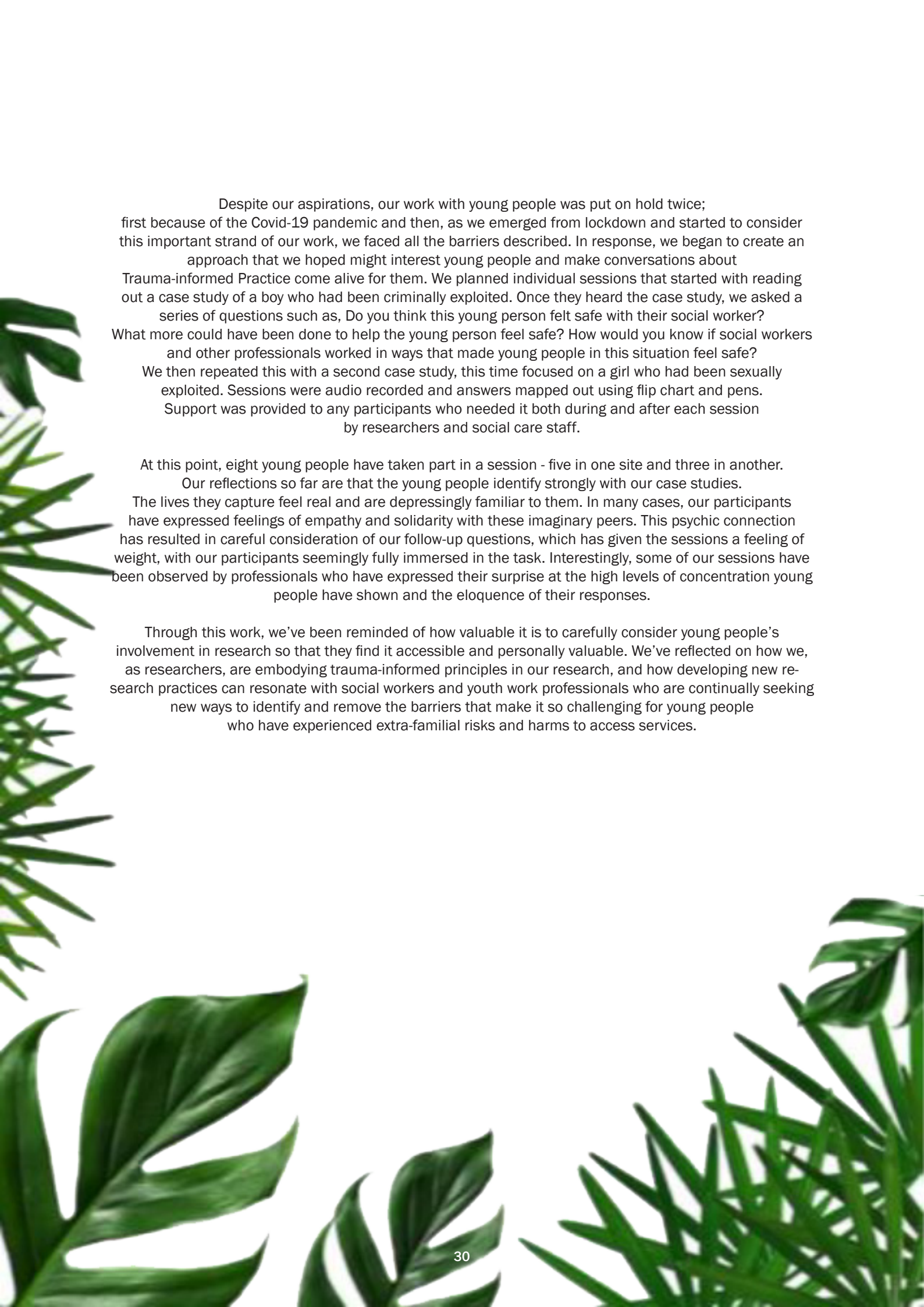
Over the past 18 months of fieldwork, the Trauma-informed Practice strand of the Innovate Project has been utilizing a range of methodological approaches to follow the development of this new approach in North Lanarkshire Education and Families Service and Brighter Futures for Children in Reading. We had always intended to ensure young people's voices were central to our methodology, whilst never expecting it to be straightforward. Gathering the views of young people about social work practice is challenging. Children and families exist inside a maelstrom where, despite the current fashion for collaboration and co-design, they remain more likely to be worked on rather than worked with, are rarely informed by professionals about the social work practice/s they are subject to, and are not asked for consent when this changes, despite the often unknowable and sometimes unintended consequences triggered by innovation. Put simply, how can you give a view on something when you haven't been told what's going on and have no power to change it?

There are other challenges too. Concerns about risk, a desire to maintain control, a lack of existing consultation processes or culture that puts young people's views at the centre of everything, and the absence of meaningful relationships between professionals and young people combine to create significant barriers to access for researchers. If access can be negotiated there remains an intellectual hurdle, namely, what methods might be used that make the research accessible for young people so they can consider a particular way that things are done whilst minimizing the potential for further harm to them.
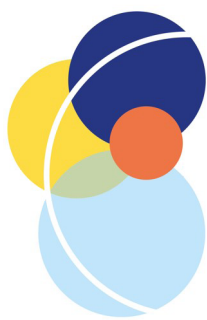
The Innovate Project
## Researching youth, risk and complexity

Despite our aspirations, our work with young people was put on hold twice;
first because of the Covid-19 pandemic and then, as we emerged from lockdown and started to consider
this important strand of our work, we faced all the barriers described. In response, we began to create an
approach that we hoped might interest young people and make conversations about
Trauma-informed Practice come alive for them. We planned individual sessions that started with reading
out a case study of a boy who had been criminally exploited. Once they heard the case study, we asked a
series of questions such as, Do you think this young person felt safe with their social worker?
What more could have been done to help the young person feel safe? How would you know if social workers
and other professionals worked in ways that made young people in this situation feel safe?
We then repeated this with a second case study, this time focused on a girl who had been sexually
exploited. Sessions were audio recorded and answers mapped out using flip chart and pens.
Support was provided to any participants who needed it both during and after each session
by researchers and social care staff.

At this point, eight young people have taken part in a session - five in one site and three in another.
Our reflections so far are that the young people identify strongly with our case studies.
The lives they capture feel real and are depressingly familiar to them. In many cases, our participants
have expressed feelings of empathy and solidarity with these imaginary peers. This psychic connection
has resulted in careful consideration of our follow-up questions, which has given the sessions a feeling of
weight, with our participants seemingly fully immersed in the task. Interestingly, some of our sessions have
been observed by professionals who have expressed their surprise at the high levels of concentration young
people have shown and the eloquence of their responses.

Through this work, we've been reminded of how valuable it is to carefully consider young people's
involvement in research so that they find it accessible and personally valuable. We've reflected on how we,
as researchers, are embodying trauma-informed principles in our research, and how developing new re-
search practices can resonate with social workers and youth work professionals who are continually seeking
new ways to identify and remove the barriers that make it so challenging for young people
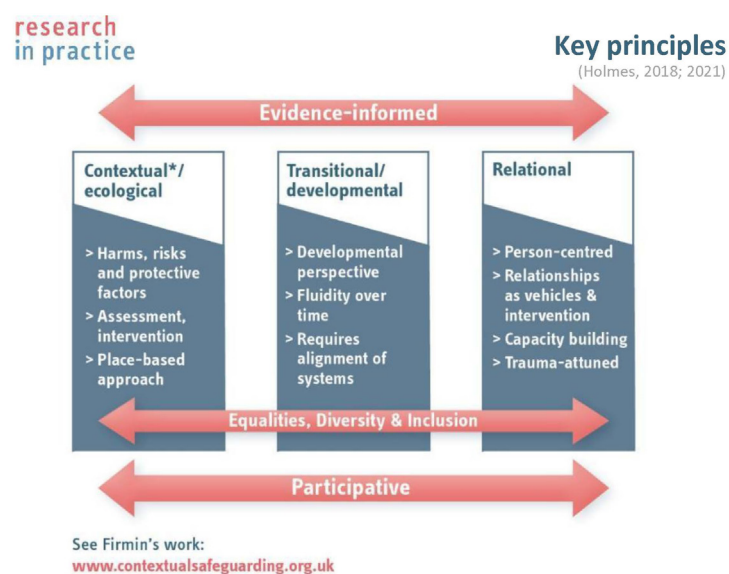who have experienced extra-familial risks and harms to access services.
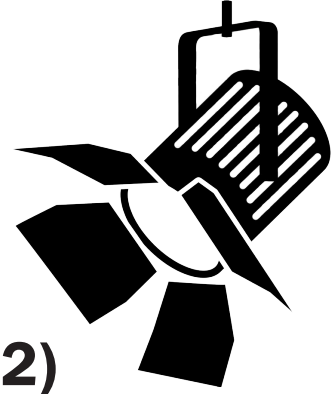
Spotlight on The Innovate Project (2)

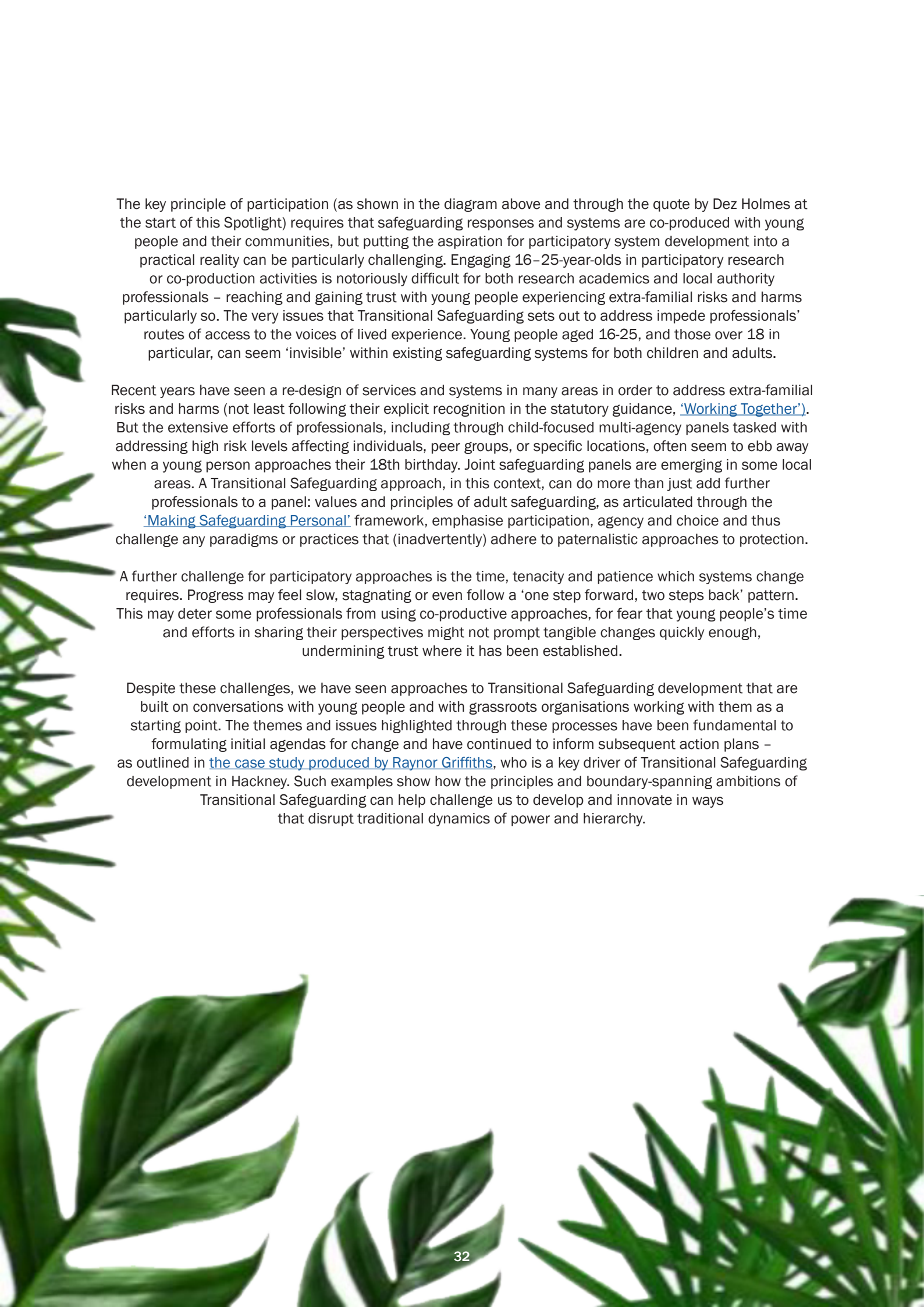## "If you're not thinking about participation, then it's not Transitional Safeguarding"

Nathalie Huegler (Social Work and Social Care) with Susannah Bowyer (Research in Practice)

The Transitional Safeguarding strand of the Innovate Project involves Gillian Ruch, Jeri Damman and Nathalie Huegler (Social Work and Social Care), and our partner Susannah Bowyer, Assistant Director at Research in Practice. We are examining this new approach which is aimed at changing systems, services and practices to better respond to the needs of young people experiencing extra-familial risks and harms as they transition to adulthood.

The term 'Transitional Safeguarding' was first coined in 2018 in the paper 'Mind the Gap', co-authored by project partner Dez Holmes at Research in Practice, and developed further over the intervening years (see, for example, the Knowledge Briefing 'Bridging the Gap'). The diagram below outlines the conceptual pillars and three core principles of Transitional Safeguarding:

research in practice

Key principles
(Holmes, 2018; 2021)

Evidence-informed

Contextual*/ ecological	Transitional/ developmental	Relational
> Harms, risks and protective factors > Assessment, intervention > Place-based approach	> Developmental perspective > Fluidity over time > Requires alignment of systems	> Person-centred > Relationships as vehicles & intervention > Capacity building > Trauma-attuned

Equalities, Diversity & Inclusion

Participative

See Firmin's work: www.contextualsafeguarding.org.uk

Holmes: 2021

Beyond considering the transitional needs of individuals, Transitional Safeguarding aims to achieve boundary-spanning whole systems change to bridge the gaps (or sometimes, chasms) between services and sectors in local areas, and mitigate their negative impacts on young people's experiences during transition. Since the beginning of 2021, we have been undertaking fieldwork in the London Borough of Hackney and Sheffield. We have observed and enquired as they began the process of considering how transition pathways between children's and adults' services could be improved in their local areas, and how discrepancies between different systems and legislative frameworks might be addressed.

The key principle of participation (as shown in the diagram above and through the quote by Dez Holmes at the start of this Spotlight) requires that safeguarding responses and systems are co-produced with young people and their communities, but putting the aspiration for participatory system development into a practical reality can be particularly challenging. Engaging 16–25-year-olds in participatory research or co-production activities is notoriously difficult for both research academics and local authority professionals – reaching and gaining trust with young people experiencing extra-familial risks and harms particularly so. The very issues that Transitional Safeguarding sets out to address impede professionals' routes of access to the voices of lived experience. Young people aged 16-25, and those over 18 in particular, can seem 'invisible' within existing safeguarding systems for both children and adults.

Recent years have seen a re-design of services and systems in many areas in order to address extra-familial risks and harms (not least following their explicit recognition in the statutory guidance, 'Working Together'). But the extensive efforts of professionals, including through child-focused multi-agency panels tasked with addressing high risk levels affecting individuals, peer groups, or specific locations, often seem to ebb away when a young person approaches their 18th birthday. Joint safeguarding panels are emerging in some local areas. A Transitional Safeguarding approach, in this context, can do more than just add further professionals to a panel: values and principles of adult safeguarding, as articulated through the 'Making Safeguarding Personal' framework, emphasise participation, agency and choice and thus challenge any paradigms or practices that (inadvertently) adhere to paternalistic approaches to protection.

A further challenge for participatory approaches is the time, tenacity and patience which systems change requires. Progress may feel slow, stagnating or even follow a 'one step forward, two steps back' pattern. This may deter some professionals from using co-productive approaches, for fear that young people's time and efforts in sharing their perspectives might not prompt tangible changes quickly enough, undermining trust where it has been established.

Despite these challenges, we have seen approaches to Transitional Safeguarding development that are built on conversations with young people and with grassroots organisations working with them as a starting point. The themes and issues highlighted through these processes have been fundamental to formulating initial agendas for change and have continued to inform subsequent action plans – as outlined in the case study produced by Raynor Griffiths, who is a key driver of Transitional Safeguarding development in Hackney. Such examples show how the principles and boundary-spanning ambitions of Transitional Safeguarding can help challenge us to develop and innovate in ways that disrupt traditional dynamics of power and hierarchy.
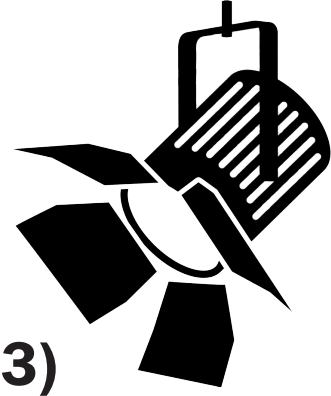
Spotlight on The Innovate Project (3)

'Unintegrated Systems for Young People caught up in Extra-familial Risks and Harms: A risk of institutional harm?

Michelle Lefevre and Nathalie Huegler (Social Work and Social Care) with Delphine Peace and Carlene Firmin (Durham University)

As this report goes to press, it is being reported by the Children's Commissioner that 650 children (some as young as 10) were strip-searched by the Metropolitan Police Service between 2018 and 2020. Half of these searches did not lead to any further action, suggesting that this measure is often not a proportionate response to concerns about children and young people's involvement in criminal activity. So, how has it come to pass that such intrusive and traumatising measures can be the first recourse of an agency with statutory responsibilities to safeguard and promote the welfare of children?

Our recent Innovate Project evidence review suggests that such measures are reflective of an uncertainty and ambivalence at a policy and practice level about how services should respond to young people caught up in risky relationships and situations that lie beyond the family home and at the boundary of criminality – for example, child criminal and sexual exploitation, serious youth violence, radicalization, and abusive peer-relationships. In the 1990s and 2000s, issues associated with these extra-familial risks and harms were predominantly viewed in the UK through the prisms of 'anti- social behaviour', youth crime, and discourses which constructed sexual activity as 'promiscuity' and young people's agency as culpability. When the serious harm caused by child sexual exploitation was revealed through reports into interagency safeguarding failures in Rochdale, Rotherham and elsewhere, young people's vulnerability and need for protection were finally recognized – but often accompanied by a denial of young people's rights to autonomy and voice; we have reported previously on how young people considered at risk commonly have their phones confiscated, their friendships and relationships surveilled, and may find themselves placed in secure accommodation.
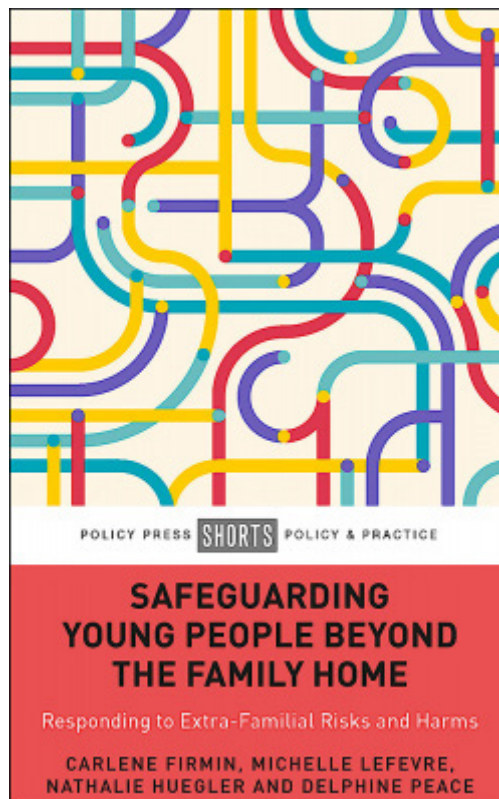
Conflicting paradigms of care and control lie squarely at the heart of why professionals may find themselves unable to balance a young person's welfare, support and safeguarding needs alongside public protection and criminal justice concerns. And responsibility for this does not just lie at the level of an individual practitioner but is reified within divergent public policy and system structures, both in the UK and in a range of other countries in the Global North. Rather than receiving a solely youth justice response, young people whose victimisation coincides with involvement in offending or results in some form of material, social or relational gain, require nuanced responses that integrate care and safeguarding principles. They need interagency systems that can build relationships of care with them, operate via a youth-centred philosophy, respond to the specific dynamics of the type of risk or harm, and create safety in the contexts of risk themselves. To make farther-reaching inroads, though, policymakers and service providers also need to address the structural drivers of risk and harm, such as poverty, racism and sexism. It is notable that the Children's Commissioner analysis referenced above reported that of all boys who were strip searched, 58% were Black – young people are unlikely to feel confident in a system which they experience as fundamentally racist and it is essential that professional systems do not compound existing risks and disadvantage with institutional forms of harm.

The Innovate Project undertook a rapid evidence review of how social care organisations have responded to extra-familial risks and harms experienced by young people in adolescence. This was the first of its kind, most likely related to the recent emergence of this social problem as a constituted category.
It is due for publication by the Policy Press on 13.10.22 and will be published as an open access e-book as well as a pay-to-purchase paperback:

Firmin, C., Lefevre, M., Huegler, N. and Peace, D. (2022 in press):
Safeguarding Young People Beyond the Family Home: Responding to Extra-Familial Risks and Harms
Bristol: Policy Press.

Spotlight on Digital childhoods (1)

'Local Learning, National Change:
Data and voice to improve children's lives'

Elaine Sharland (Social Work and Social Care)

High quality, and meaningful information can improve professional practice in the lives of vulnerable children and families. But, at present, children's information and its use fall far short. Administrative data are collected and often kept in silos; they don't reflect well children and families' experiences and needs, still less their voices or the voices of professionals working with them; and the ethical use of children's information is a serious and growing public concern.

ESW colleagues Elaine Sharland, Lisa Holmes, Perpetua Kirby, Liam Berriman, Gillian Ruch and newly appointed researcher Caitlin Shaughnessy, are delighted to have started work (in October 2021) on a five-year research project which aims to transform how information about and from children and families is gathered, interpreted and used in child and family social policy, services and practice, at local and national levels.

This ambitious programme is funded by the largest single project award – £2.8 million - that the Nuffield Foundation has ever made. Led by Professor Leon Feinstein at the Rees Centre, University of Oxford, we're working in partnership with the London School of Economics, University College London and Manchester Metropolitan University. We're collaborating, too, with Greater Manchester, Oldham, Rochdale, North Yorkshire and Hampshire local authorities, to build their capacity and understanding about how to make better use of information, to improve children and families' services and in turn improve their lives. We'll also be working with wider network of local authorities nationally, to extend and support sustainable learning and change.

Our project will focus on children and families who are more vulnerable or disadvantaged and who need additional support from local services, and within this Sussex colleagues are leading in particular on Voice. From start to finish, we'll be working with children, young people, parents and carers, as well as professionals and policymakers, to foreground their voices within administrative information, and to co-design and shape how children's information can be used ethically and effectively. We don't yet have a confirmed project title (the one at the top is just provisional) and there's a good reason for this: we're busy consulting with children, and families about what name makes best sense to them, and we'll announce it with a formal launch in October.

Meanwhile, we've been working hard with local sites, in the 'Discovery Phase' of the project, to identify where in particular they want the focus to be of their initial 'information use projects'. In two sites the spotlight will be on improving the use of data and voice to meet the needs of vulnerable children within the first two years of life. In the third site we'll be supporting better use of data and voice to improve experiences and outcomes for care leavers, and in the fourth to enable more effective targeting of early help for teenagers on the edge of social care. By the end of the Discovery Phase, together we will have 'mapped' existing data and voice resources and practices in each of these areas, and co-produced 'theories of change' to set the foundations for each site to try out their information use project in the next phase of the project. There are many hurdles to negotiate along the way – not least grappling with all the ethical and data protection complexities before we're approved to engage and collaborate fully with children, families and practitioners. It's an exciting journey, and we're delighted to be on our way!

You can keep up with our progress via our website, and there will be blogs, podcasts and other communications aplenty to come.

Spotlight on Digital childhoods (2)

'Researching the History of Data Practices in Western Childhoods'

Liam Berriman (Childhood and Youth)

In the UK - and other western countries - children are increasingly the subjects of data practices that not only seek to record their lives, but also intervene in them.

There are many examples of how data are increasingly a pervasive part of children's lives. Digital baby monitors can now be used to track a baby's breathing and heart rate in real time whilst they are resting in a cot, sending caregivers an alert if the data is deemed of concern. In schools, software is increasingly used to not only track the academic progress of pupils, but also to manage behaviour by awarding classifying children based on whether their behaviour is 'positive' or 'needs work'. Such software uses reward systems and leader boards to 'gamify' behaviour management.

In common across these data practices is a shift towards using data as a tool for making children's bodies and behaviours visible, classifiable, measurable and trackable, and of using data to intervene in ways that are seen as in children's 'best interest' (e.g. for their health, education, safety etc.).

Over the last year I have begun working on a book that examines the historical processes that have played a role in shaping children as 'data subjects', and which asks how such methods of data tracking and intervention have been legitimised in children's lives. There have been a growing number of important studies about the growth of data in children's lives, but their historical perspective on children and data have tended to begin with the arrival of digital technology in the 21st century. My work is interested in looking much further back to trace the 'datafication' of childhood over a longer period of time, and examining what has made this present moment of growing data tracking of children possible.

Whilst data on children has become more pervasive with the arrival of digital technologies, the relationship between children and data has emerged over several centuries. In the 19th century, children were increasingly the subjects of data practices as a population (e.g. mortality rates, child poverty) and as individuals (e.g. growth, development). Such practices continued into the 20th century, where data tracking of children was increasingly embedded into schools, clinics, local authorities etc. The aim of my book will be to track these changes over time and to consider how such data practices have played a role in the shaping of Western childhoods both in the past and in the present day.

Ultimately, the book will seek to contribute to growing debates about the role of data in children's lives, and critically interrogate the logics of how and why we collect data on children.

'Where I feel happy': By a young person from Crew Club

Imaginative methodologies

Over the past decade, CIRCY has built an international reputation for methodological excellence, engaging in international advisory work and collaborations. CIRCY has also provided a critical space in which to interrogate the meanings of methodological innovation and creativity across disciplines. Central to our work is the pursuit of imaginative methodologies – sometimes the search for new, innovative approaches, sometimes the reimagining and repurposing of traditional methods – which underpins our fundamental concern with keeping the child or young person at the centre of our thinking.

Regardless of discipline, our methodological approach depends on how we conceive of the child, and we challenge CIRCY researchers to imagine alternatives to reductive, static or objectifying lenses on childhood and youth. In this way, our emphasis on imaginative methodologies provides a distinctive conceptual space that connects our expertise in temporal research methods, in participatory approaches, in research ethics, in cross-national methodology, and in creative, digital, sensual and psychosocial approaches.

'Where I feel belong': This young person from the Crew Club felt they belonged with their community in Whitehawk and depicted their home and the homes surronding them.

Spotlight on Imaginative methodologies (1)

'Imagining Resistance through Participatory Photography'

Kristi Hickle (Social Work and Social Care) with Camille Warrington (University of Bedfordshire) in partnership with the visual artist, Becky Warnock.

Imagining Resistance is a three-year creative participatory photography project funded by the Arts and Humanities Council. In this project we are exploring how girls and young women (age 13-25) who have experienced sexual violence and exploitation alongside other forms of harm (e.g. criminal exploitation, gang involvement and serious youth violence) engage in acts of resistance. The word 'resistance' is loaded with meaning. It has been adopted by activists and consumers and used by researchers in fields such as anthropology and sociology to positively describe how people 'fight back' against oppression and subjugation. However, it is rarely used in direct practice settings to describe acts of 'fighting back' or self-preservation in the context of oppression in relationships - particularly regarding young people. When it is used to describe young people, it has negative connotations: when they 'resist' help, resist engagement, resist participating in prosocial activities.

In embarking on this project, we set out to learn about how creative methods can help make the familiar strange (Mannay, 2016). As both former practitioners and researchers, we have long been familiar with how issues of exploitation are framed in public and policy discourses, and we were intrigued by how creative methods might fight against familiarity for us and help us understand resistance in new ways. We also wanted to learn more about visual methods of data production and how they might enable us to limit the intrusive presence of researchers, extend the sometimes tidier boundaries imposed by eliciting verbal narratives, and allow for a process of defamiliarization (in relation to how problems of exploitation and interpersonal violence are framed) for both ourselves and the young people participating in the project. To do this, we partnered with two photographers and three charities that provide services to young people affected by sexual violence and exploitation (based in London and Nottingham).

Like so many projects intending to draw upon participatory methods, not much has gone according to plan. The pandemic, nuanced particularities of the charities and the realities of young people's lives meant that the projects (we have finished two of the three, involving a total of 11 young women to date) have been facilitated in slightly different ways. We have had the privilege of seeing resistance played out as we tried and failed to engage them in activities. We have collected far fewer images and encountered unexpected limits in our approach to photo elicitation. We have also been overwhelmed by our participants' capacity to sit with the complexity of symbolism and metaphor, using images and playing with words to uncover interesting and meaningful ways of conceptualising acts of individual and collective, (ie. in the context of peers and culture) resistance).

Imagining Resistance is helping us understand how young people's capacity for agency, their strength, and creative skills for survival have enabled them to carry on in the face of sometimes extreme threat or harm. This is true in instances when they resist relationships and activities that are interpreted by adults to be anti-social and destructive alongside acts of resistance that might be framed as pro-social, healthy, and productive. For example, we have seen the young women represent, through creative activities and the meaning they ascribe to their work, how the strength required to resist being dragged into 'post code beefs' and gangs is manifested in the decision to cut ties with an exploitative boyfriend. It is also evident when they refuse to do what a teacher tells them to do, sometimes choosing misbehaviour as an act of resistance against what feels like an impossible request for a young body carrying so much trauma and working so hard to remain self-regulated within environments that simply ask too much of them.

As we reflect upon the data and begin a of process of iteratively analysing field notes, transcripts, and visual data, we have been particularly struck by how the young women's strengths, creativity, and power move between contexts. We've learned that resistance looks like:

- Outsmarting and misdirection
- Proving people wrong
- Resisting binaries
- 'Creating space to listen to myself'
- Refusing to change for other people
- Showing up to school but refusing to engage because what's being asked is more than they can give
- Breaking off contact with an abusive and exploitative ex-partner because:
  'he broke me but I fixed myself'
- Or…not breaking up with the partner but believing:
  'you can't take away from me the fact that I don't want to be with you'
- Holding onto the predictable routine learned at a mother and baby home amidst a chaotic and challenging relational and geographic contexts:
  'no one thought I would have a routine but I have a routine'
- Choosing to believe *'I have a right to be the person I want to be…I have a right to a full life'*

The project is continually unfolding; with just under a year left, we are still learning for ourselves what it means to work in a truly interdisciplinary way, seeing our participants' experiences and strengths through the eyes of our photographer colleagues, beginning to consider new ways of representing the findings from the project in visual and creative outputs, and learning about what might be useful about the project for our colleagues in the creative arts.

We don't know where we will end up yet, but we are immeasurably grateful to be in the presence of young people who are - as one participant aptly described herself and her peers: *'loud, kind, and fiery'.*

I Resist

I resist what society says being smart means. I find intelligence elsewhere. I resist defined outcomes – one thing doesn't have to equal another. I resist following others + being a sheep. I resist my history defining my future. Especially other people deciding that. I resist that prisoners become less than citizens. Friction. No slipping. Im grounded. I resist the word gangs. Its connotations. I resist the binaries that the media + the government tries to tell us we should be. Being materialistic. I am content. I am spiritual. I resist corruption + hypocrisy.

Give a girl the right shoes, she can conquer the World

Good - Black - Don't - Crack -

Girls Just wanna have good shoes

The shoes your wear today will pave your way.

Spotlight on
Imaginative methodologies (2)

'The Value of Group Work and Drama-based Methods in Research with School-excluded Teenage Boys'

Roma Thomas, Social Work & Social Care PhD graduate

Reflecting back on my doctoral research, my feelings about the significance of group work and drama in my methodology have grown stronger. These methods enabled me to draw out rich insights and to stake my claim to a study which uses ethnographic approaches. That is why I am particularly happy to share details of these methods with CIRCY members and others.

Briefly, by way of background, my research is a small-scale qualitative, ethnographic study of the lived experience of teenage boys, age 14- 16 who have been excluded from mainstream school.
The boys have in common disruptive behaviour as the grounds on which they were excluded. Nationally, disruptive behaviour is also the most common reason for both fixed term and permanent exclusions. My research was undertaken in a Pupil Referral school (PRU). School exclusion and its harmful effects on young people is a longstanding problem which spans many decades. Inequality, racism and disproportionality in school exclusion also spans many decades. Department for Education figures show that boys are three times more likely to be excluded from school than girls. Black and mixed race boys from an Afro-Caribbean background are over-represented in the numbers of young people excluded. For instance, rates of exclusion for Black boys in some London boroughs are five times higher than that of their White peers. Other groups disproportionately affected by school exclusion include Gypsy, Roma and Traveller children who have the highest rates of exclusion compared to their peers; young people who receive free school meals or have a Special Educational Needs (SEN) diagnosis are also among those who are disproportionately excluded. While the problems are clear, the perspectives of young people themselves are much less attended to in research and policy in this field. For this reason, I needed to adopt research methods capable of engaging directly with the boys who took part in my study.
My aim was to bring their voices to the fore, and this is why group work was pivotal in this research.

The group work, conducted over a school term with five teenage boys (age 14-15), comprised twice-weekly 1.5 hour sessions, the equivalent of a lesson period. The timing of 1.5 hours was important as this fitted within the structure of the school day. From the outset, I engaged a drama professional to facilitate the group work sessions. This was a key decision which allowed me to take the position of researcher (and participant observer) rather than workshop leader throughout the sessions. The drama specialist (James) devised activities by working to a brief from me that was framed around the research aims and questions. Drama provided a method of enquiry, a way of finding out across my research.

Many of the drama games and warm-up activities which James devised for the sessions would be familiar to youth work professionals. However, the methods in this instance were focused on using the time to address the research questions as an integral part of engaging and working with the boys. For instance, we regularly played a game of 'which side of the fence are you on?' as a way of asking boys about their opinions. Other examples included a TV chat show format which was used as a way for the boys to conduct interviews of staff in the PRU. The chat show provided much hilarity for all as well as yielding rich insights into the nature of relationships of trust and respect between the boys and key staff in the PRU. Memorably, at the start of the research, two boys devised their own scenario depicting themselves arriving late (a regular occurrence at the PRU) for class with James acting the part of an irate teacher. 'We knew we were wrong so we had to defend ourselves', 14 year old Jared explained to me after acting out the scene. This, he told me with a cheeky grin, was the reason behind the defiant stance the two boys had acted out in the scenario. Use of drama provided ways for boys to enact certain performances (or ways of being) and to reflect and have conversations about the reasons behind these performances. Deeper questions of identity could be explored through noticing these practices. The fact that the group work took place over a short but sustained period of time also enabled relational approaches to become part of my research, as the young people got to know me. This would not have been possible for example in a single interview or focus group.

Group work was central to my ability to conduct ethnographic research, placing myself in the space of the PRU and with my research participants. It enabled me to spend time and pay attention to the boys' everyday lives at the PRU. As researchers, methods for understanding and representing the emotional lives of young people and their lived experience are an ethical imperative. Time and attention are necessary ingredients for such research and group work has provided in me with a glorious way to spend time in the field.

Roma Thomas recently gained her Social Work & Social Care PhD at the University of Sussex with a thesis entitled: 'Being and Doing Boy: Marginalised Young Masculinities and Professional Practice'.
Roma's thesis was examined by Professor Ann Phoenix, University College London, and Dr Louise Gazeley (Education) on 7 October 2021. Roma is a Principal Lecturer in the School of Applied Social Science at the University of Bedfordshire.
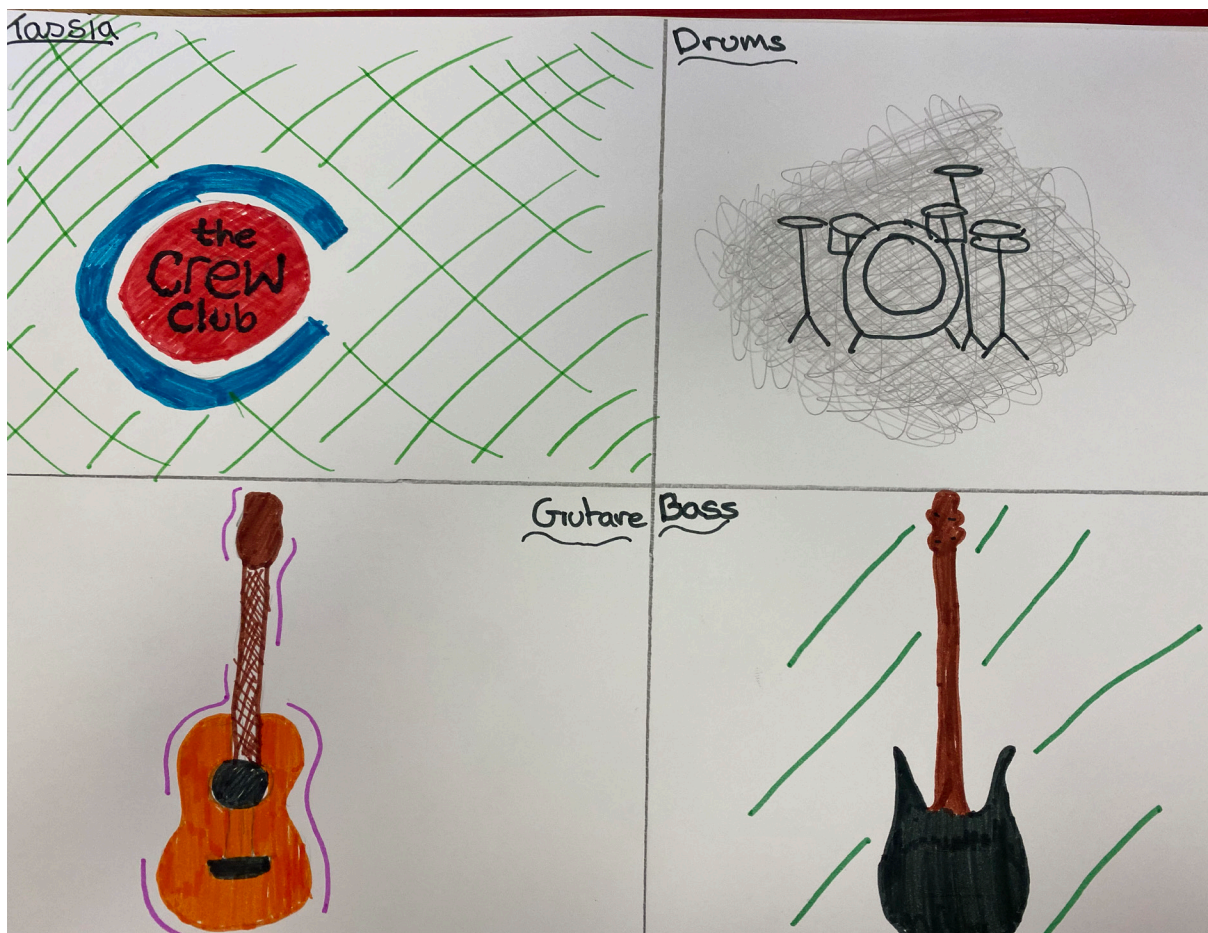
'Where I feel happy': Tassia (aged 14) "drew this because guitars and bass make me feel calm and I learnt these at the Crew Club."

Highlights from CIRCY events this year

CIRCY hosts exciting and inclusive events throughout the year, including members' workshops, seminars, reading group and conferences.

Our 'Coffee and Collaboration' events offered an opportunity for networking, and involved short presentations by CIRCY members on innovative aspects of their research. This year, we ran hybrid events which enabled remote as well as in-person participation. Colleagues that presented this year included **Clio Berry** and **Arianne Shahvisi** (Brighton & Sussex Medical School), **Perpetua Kirby** and **Jenny Hewitt** (Education), **Becca Dean** and **Brontë McDonald** (Psychology), **Sarah-Jane Phelan** (Global Studies), and **Lisa Holmes**, **Carlie Goldsmith**, and **Claire Durrant** (Social Work and Social Care).

Throughout the year, CIRCY hosted seminars on the theme 'Childhoods - Then and now' starting with *'Emotional debt? Understanding emotions in mother-young adult daughter relations in the context of poverty and social marginalization'*. Roni Eyal-Lubling from the Department of Sociology and Anthropology at Bar-Ilan University-Israel, explored the concept of emotional capital within mother and young adult daughter relations in the context of poverty and social marginalisation.

In January, CIRCY welcomed Ephrat Huss from The Charlotte B. and Jack J. Spitzer Department of Social Work, Ben Gurion University of the Negev, Beer-Sheva, Israel, for a seminar on *'Using arts-based methods to access vulnerable children's experiences: The case of children in the Lesbos refugee camp and Bedouin youth in unrecognized villages'*. The study demonstrated how a qualitative arts-based method methodology can be used to understand and evaluate marginalized children's lived experience of their social realities. Our recent PhD graduate, Roma Thomas, shared findings from her doctoral study of teenage boys marginalised through school exclusion, highlighting aspects of the methods she used, including group work and an overall approach of ethnography to centre the voices of young people.

CIRCY also hosted research seminars with other schools. Two were held jointly with the Institute of Development Studies. *'Changing Perceptions of Childhood in Ghana'* and *'Changing Childhoods in Ethiopia'* involved presentations by Yaw Ofosu-Kosi, Professor of Social Studies and currently the Dean of the School of Arts and Social Studies, University of Energy and Natural Resources, Ghana, and Glynis Clacherty, Research Associate in the African Centre for Migration and Society, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, South Africa.

For the presentation *'Intergenerational child-led activism'*, Jessica Taft, Professor of Latin American and Latino Studies, University of California, USA, traced the complex dynamics of age-based power in children's movements, and explored the possibilities and challenges for contesting the accumulation of power and authority in the hands of older individuals.

In *'Kinship Care: Betwixt and Between'*, held jointly with Centre for Social Work Innovation and Research (CSWIR), Louise Sims from the British Association of Social Workers (BASW) considered both the matrix of tensions shaping kinship practices and the possibilities for new understanding and connections within families and across disciplines.

'Where I belong': Farah (aged 7) from Crew Club illustrated how she felt she belonged with her family - and felt happy spending time with them.

The CIRCY doctoral community

The doctoral researchers' network has continued to meet and share knowledge and support throughout the year. We encourage all doctoral researchers with an interest in research that has children, childhood and youth at the centre to make contact and join our network.

Network meetings were co-facilitated by **Michelle Lefevre** (CIRCY Director) and **Brontë McDonald** (CIRCY PGRA). We started the academic year discussing key ethical considerations when working with children with the support of Tim Parkinson, Senior Research Ethics and Integrity Officer. We moved on to exploring different research methods suitable for capturing children's voice with **Anna Ridgewell** (PhD researcher, Social Work & Social Care) who shared her research using photovoice, and Devyn Glass who shared her digital storytelling method. We considered the strengths and barriers of these methods - particularly in regard to collecting data from younger children.

Three Social Work & Social Care PhD researchers completed their doctorates in the last year, and we extend our congratulations to **Sushri Sangita Punam** (Thesis: 'Illuminating Adoptive Family Practice in India: A narrative analysis of policy and lived experience'), **Roma Thomas** (Thesis: 'Being and Doing Boy:

Marginalised Young Masculinities and Professional Practice') and **Claire Durrant** (Thesis: 'I didn't want to face another day of failing': The emotional well-being of young people with severe dyslexic difficulties in state mainstream education: social and discursive constructions').

Second- year PhD researcher, Anna Ridgewell, presented CIRCY's Doctoral Research in Progress (DRiP) seminar on 11 February 2022 (11am-12pm) on the theme 'Navigating The Field: My experiences working in early years childcare and primary education as a PhD researcher'. Anna shared insights from the 'Growing up Green' project where she examined what opportunities children have to access nature in primary schools and early years childcare settings, across both state and private sectors and diverse populations. Anna is also exploring whether this access is perceived as enhancing nature connectedness and what the drivers and inhibitors of accessing the outdoors might be.

CIRCY PGR's listening to Anna Ridgewell's experience of photovoice in her research

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- **Hickle, K.** & Lefevre, M. (2022): 'Learning to Love and Trust Again: A Relational Approach to Developmental Trauma', in D. Holmes (ed.) *Safeguarding Young People: Risk, Rights, Relationships and Resilience*. London: Jessica Kingsley, pp. 159-176.
- **Kirby, P.** & **Webb, R.** (2021): 'Conceptualising uncertainty and the role of the teacher', Special Edition on Youth Climate Activism and Climate Change, *Educational Review*.
- **Kirby, P.**, Villani, M. & **Webb, R.** (2022): 'Children's Covid-19 writing and drawings and the existential imperative to educate for uncertainty', *Children & Society*.
- **Lefevre, M.** Skidmore, Pl & Firmin, C. (2022, in press): 'Counting children and chip shops: dilemmas and challenges in evaluating the impact of Contextual Safeguarding', in C. Firmin and J. Lloyd (eds.) *Contextual Safeguarding: The Next Chapter*. Bristol: The Policy Press.
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LOCATION

The Centre for Innovation and Research in Childhood and Youth (CIRCY) is located within the School of Education and Social Work which is based in Essex House on the University of Sussex campus. The University is situated on a modern campus on the edge of the South Downs National Park near the lively seaside city of Brighton. London is one hour away by train, and there is easy access to Gatwick and Heathrow airports.

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