

ANNUAL REPORT
2018-2019

CSWIR

CENTRE FOR SOCIAL WORK INNOVATION
AND RESEARCH



US

UNIVERSITY
OF SUSSEX

Contents

Welcome	1
Achievement highlights	4
Research	7
Spotlight on research	10
Spotlight on research	15
Events	16
Spotlight on research impact	19
Open research seminars	34
Academic dissemination and knowledge exchange	36
Doctoral researchers	39
Publications	47
Membership	54

Welcome

The Centre for Social Work Innovation and Research (CSWIR), located in the School of Education and Social Work, seeks to undertake, support and profile research and innovation activities within the field of social work, with its dual identity as an academic discipline and a professional practice.

Since its inception in 2015, CSWIR has made significant contributions to social work research and innovation and this past year has been no exception. In 2018 Barry Luckock, the founder Director of CSWIR, stepped down and this report provides an ideal opportunity to acknowledge our gratitude to Barry for his distinctive contribution to establishing and developing the Centre in its early developmental stages. He has certainly helped CSWIR learn to walk!

With the transition of directorship to Gillian Ruch and Lisa Chen, CSWIR is in a position to build on its existing successes and areas of impact and develop its reach in new and exciting ways. Gillian Ruch, Professor of Social Work, brings expertise in child care social work, with a particular focus on social work practices with children and on professional wellbeing. In the newly created role of Deputy Director, Dr Lisa Chen, lecturer in social work, brings her expertise and interest in the field of social work with older adults to the Centre, thereby ensuring that social work with adults develops a stronger profile in the Centre's work moving forward.



Clockwise, from top left: Barry Luckock, Professor Gillian Ruch, Dr Lisa Chen and Dr Nathalie Huegler (CSWIR Research Fellow)

In writing an annual report, it feels important to be reminded of the remit and objectives associated with what is being reported. For CSWIR this has been formulated as it being a Centre responsible for:

“...advancing the international profile and impact of research on innovative interdisciplinary approaches to social work. Our aim is to bring together social work scholars, professionals, and students, and to provide a distinctive ground for research and innovation focusing on the changing nature of social relations of social work and other social action interventions.”

As an innovation and research centre, CSWIR aims to:

- promote social justice and rights
- support protection and development of vulnerable populations under new global conditions of austerity and inequality
- strengthen the re-articulation of social work as a distinctive mode of collaborative and participatory relationship-based social action.

In CSWIR, we benefit from cross-disciplinary internal, national, and international collaborations and links, and aim to extend and advance our partnerships with scholarly, professional and governmental bodies.

And we can confidently state that over the past year all the activities undertaken under the auspices CSWIR - and reported here - have been in pursuit of these aims.

The format of this 2018-19 report has been designed to mirror the structure of the Centre’s website: research, events, publications, teaching and people. Inevitably there are some activities that straddle these categories and the choice of where to locate them is made in relation to where they most appropriately seem to fit. But needless to say it is an inexact science. Porous boundaries are not only a feature within the different areas of CSWIR activities, but also evident in the synergies between the other research centres located in the School of Education and Social Work; notably in 2018-19 this has been the case with CSWIR and the Centre for Innovation and Research in Childhood and Youth (CIRCY).

We celebrate this state of affairs, seeing it as a virtue of our connected but distinctive perspectives on disciplinary and practice issues pertinent to children and young people.

As we move forward, creating wider synergies with the University’s Centre of Innovation and Research in Wellbeing (CIRW) located in our School will be a focus of our work.

A warm welcome to the CSWIR 2018-19 annual report.

Footnote:

Many of the images in this report are taken from the Visual matrix part of the CSWIR Psychosocial Symposium (read more about it on p.25).

Achievement highlights

In November 2018, **Professor Gillian Ruch** held her Inaugural lecture 'We had the experience but missed the meaning: Reflecting on Reflection' at the University of Sussex.

In January 2019, **Professor Michelle Lefevre, Dr Kristine Hickle, Barry Luckock** and **Professor Gillian Ruch** were awarded the *British Journal of Social Work's* BASW/Kay McDougall Prize 2018 for the paper 'Building trust with children and young people at risk of Child Sexual Exploitation: The professional challenge' (*British Journal of Social Work*, 2017, 47(8), pp. 2456–2473). The article discussed findings from a study (funded by the Office of the Children's Commissioner) of how local authorities might develop more child-centred services for children and young people at risk of sexual exploitation. The award is based on: breadth of scholarship; sophistication of theory; rigour of research; relevance to practice; and international appeal. The same paper is also one of the most tweeted among social work colleagues. In the Altmetric breakdown for 'attention score', the paper is listed in the 98th percentile of 13.3 million papers tracked, placing it in the top 5% of all research outputs ever tracked by Altmetric.

Professor Michelle Lefevre is the Principal Investigator on a [Department of Education funded evaluation of Contextual Safeguarding in the London Borough of Hackney](#) – a new approach to address complex extra-familial risks facing young people, such as criminal and sexual exploitation, gang-involvement and serious youth violence. The team includes **Professor Robin Banerjee** and **Dr Helen Drew** (both Psychology), **Michael Barrow** (Economics), **Dr Kristine Hickle** and **Dr Tam Cane** (both Social Work and Social

Care), alongside three colleagues from Research in Practice - Oli Preston, Rachel Horan and Susannah Bowyer.

March 2019 saw the Department of Social Work and Social Care appointed to the Panel of Evaluators for the What Works Centre for Children's Social Care (WW-CSC). This was a cross-Centre bid between CSWIR, CIRCY and the Andrew and Virginia Rudd Centre for Adoption Research and Practice; it was led by **Professors Elaine Sharland, Michelle Lefevre** (both Social Work and Social Care), with **Professors Robin Banerjee** (Psychology), **Janet Boddy** (Education), **Gordon Harold** (Rudd Centre) and in collaboration with a wider group of Sussex and external colleagues. The WW-CSC is part of Nesta, the UK's innovation foundation. It seeks better outcomes for children, young people and families by bringing the best available evidence to practitioners and other decision makers across the children's social care sector, and to support practice leaders in promoting evidence-informed practice in their organisations. The Centre plans on supporting research into a wide range of interventions in children's social care, using a variety of research methodologies. As a member of the Panel of Evaluators, Sussex will be among the range of diverse organisations eligible to undertake these evaluations.



In April 2019, **Professor Elaine Sharland** (Social Work & Social Care) completed her two-year role as Chair of the European Social Work Research Association (ESWRA). Elaine was one of the founders of ESWRA in 2014, and previously of the European Conference for Social Work Research from which the Association emerged. [ESWRA](#) is the only Association of its kind in Europe. It has already become the go-to arena for social work researchers across Europe, offering resources, events and networking opportunities, and raising the profile of social work research internationally. The last two years have been exciting and hugely productive. Under Elaine's leadership, ESWRA membership (700+) and country coverage (42) have doubled, and its annual conference – most recently in Leuven, Belgium - has continued to grow and thrive. There are now 22 Special Interest Groups fostering collaboration and exchange among researchers around themes ranging from Mental Health Social Work and Social Work with Children and Families, to Transnational Social Work, Social Work Research Ethics, and Social Work in Film, Television and the Media. Elaine has greatly enjoyed working with this initiative and will continue to be a member of the Board for one more year.

Professor Elaine Sharland has been appointed to the Research Excellence Framework (REF 2021) assessment panel. This significant achievement is a reflection of the successful high regard with which Elaine is held in the social work academy.

On 20 June 2019, **Paul Shuttleworth**, a third year doctoral researcher in the Department was awarded 1st place at Sussex University's Doctoral Research Poster Competition for his presentation 'Absent Voices - Where Are Children's Accounts Of Being In Kinship Care'.

In July 2019, **Professor Michelle Lefevre** (Social Work & Social Care), along with Sussex colleagues and colleagues from Research In Practice, University of Bedfordshire and the Innovation Unit were successful with their application to the ESRC Innovation in Social Care call (£1.9K - see p.11 for further details). This considerable achievement represents a significant landmark in researching the emerging innovative complex safeguarding practices designed to safeguard and protect children and young people.

Research

In Progress

The following are both current and forthcoming research projects that showcase and focus in on the Centre's four research themes:

- promote social justice and rights
- support protection and development of vulnerable populations under new global conditions of austerity and inequality
- strengthen the re-articulation of social work as a distinctive mode of collaborative and participatory relationship-based social action.

Many of the projects embrace more than one of the Centre's primary research themes and are reported chronologically with the most established projects in progress coming first.

Contextual Safeguarding Evaluation, London Borough of Hackney

Funder: Department for Education, 2018-2020, £147K

As part of the Government's Innovation Programme in Children's Social Care, **Professor Michelle Lefevre** is leading a DfE funded evaluation of contextual safeguarding practice in Hackney. The project team encompasses representatives from across the University - **Professor Robin Banerjee** and **Dr Helen Drew** (both Psychology), **Dr Michael Barrow** (Economics), **Dr Kristine Hickie** and **Dr Tam Cane** (both Social Work and Social Care) – who are working alongside colleagues from Research in Practice to deliver a mixed methodology evaluation.

Using qualitative and quantitative methods and measures, the team will generate rich data to evidence the impact of innovative approaches to safeguarding young people at risk outside of the home from criminal and sexual exploitation, gang-involvement and serious youth violence. The final report will be available in March 2020.

Pause Evaluation

Funder: Department for Education, 2018-2020, £404K

With funding from the Government's Innovation Programme in Children's Social Care, **Professor Janet Boddy** (Education) is leading an evaluation of Pause, a national service for women who have experienced recurrent removals of children into care, and who have often experienced significant trauma and disadvantage through their own childhoods. Working collaboratively

with Janet are colleagues from Sussex, Research in Practice and Ipsos Mori. The study is engaging with women and professionals involved with Pause to deliver a mixed methodological evaluation of the service. Findings to date highlight the complex sensitivities surrounding the lives of the women involved with Pause and the importance of working and researching in ways that fully acknowledge their circumstances.

Partners in Practice: A Practice Review
Funder: Department for Education, 2019-2020, £50K.

In May 2019, Principal Investigator **Professor Gillian Ruch** and **Dr Reima Maglajlic** were awarded £50K from the Department of Education to undertake a review of the work and impact of Partners in Practice (PiPs). The PiPs group comprises local authorities who were identified by the Department of Education's Innovation in Children's Social Care Programme as high functioning and high quality local Children's Services. Over the past two years, PiPs have showcased their good practice across the sector and have offered focussed assistance to local authorities who have been encountering difficulties in the delivery of services to children and families experiencing vulnerability and hardship. Over the period July 2019 to March 2020 the study will review all relevant documentation that tracks the progress and impact of the PiPs work and will engage with the sector to report back and discuss the study findings in light of their direct experiences.

Safeguarding in UK-funded Official Development Assistance research: An evidence review

Funder: UK Collaborative for International Development Research £21,025

Dr David Orr received a grant from the UK Collaborative for International Development Research to review the evidence base on safeguarding in UK-funded Official Development Assistance research and propose principles for the sector. This project was commissioned following concerns about safeguarding in the international development sector and aimed to investigate how related issues might apply in research. David led a team with Sussex colleagues Dr Synne Dyvik and Dr Gabrielle Daoust (both International Relations), **Professor Janet Boddy** and **Sangita Puhan** (both Education) and the report produced has gone out for consultation with stakeholders. This is hoped to stimulate an important conversation about the responsibilities of researchers and funders, and what can be done to prevent harm and exploitation in the course of research:
Orr, D., Daoust, G., Dyvik, S.L., Puhan, S.S. & Boddy, J. (2019): *Safeguarding in International Development: Evidence Review*. London: UKCDR



Spotlight on research

Madness After The War: Exploring alternatives to dominant understandings of mental health in the context of political conflict

Funder: Independent Social Research Foundation, July 2019, £5K.

As a global development priority, mental health is a challenge beyond the scope of a single discipline. It requires new modes of inquiry to advance new knowledge and support practices. In this project the Principal Investigator, **Dr Reima Maglajlic** with co-Investigators Dr China Mills, Senior Lecturer in Public Health, City University of London, Halida Vejzagić, Survivor Researcher from 'Menssana' (Association for Protection of Mental Health, Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina - BiH) and Jasmin Palata, Survivor Researcher from 'Fenix' (Association for Mutual Support in Mental Distress, Tuzla BiH) will offer new insights on mental distress during and after political conflict in Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH) - a site of various post-war development interventions. One of the rare development successes was the introduction of community mental health services, including the development of organisations run or led by people who use mental health services as experts by experience (EBE).

To date, the impact of the war on mental health is mainly conceptualised and researched through Western and

medicalised understanding of mental distress. Reforms in BiH have been criticised for being predominately shaped by donor interests. Meaningful engagement with EBE has been identified as missing from much global mental health research and practice, particularly in low- and middle-income countries. This exploratory study will be implemented through co-production by two professionals with a variety of disciplinary backgrounds and two BiH EBE. It will include narrative interviews with people from two BiH regions on their experiences of mental distress and support they received.

This research is underpinned by the emerging interdisciplinary field of Mad Studies which offers a critical challenge to the medical model of mental distress. It takes an interdisciplinary approach to contextualising and historicising madness. Furthermore, narrative analysis of the data will utilise the concept of border thinking from decolonial theory, enabling focus on the lived dimension of experiences which have been excluded from knowledge production. In line with the ISRF goals, this study will offer insights into novel ways of understanding and supporting people experiencing mental distress and promote them across a variety of relevant fields and disciplines.

Forthcoming

Improving Social Care Systems and Practices for Young People at Complex Safeguarding Risk: What promotes and sustains innovation?

Funder: ESRC £1.9K

Hot off the press, as this report was being compiled, the Department of Social Work and Social Care had confirmation that **Professor Michelle Lefevre's** bid to the ESRC Innovation in Social Care call entitled '*Improving social care systems and practices for young people at complex safeguarding risk: what promotes and sustains innovation?*' had been successful. The ESRC reviewers' comments acknowledged the attuned attention paid in the research proposal to the sensitive relationship between social and structural factors and their capacity to overwhelm the efforts of individual young people, their parents, carers and practitioners. Alongside this was the recognition given to the inclusive and empowering methodology that is distinctive to the research design and crucial for the effectiveness of a project which involves conducting research with such marginalised participants. This outstanding achievement will bring almost £2million of research funding to the Department to finance a four year project. The research team comprising colleagues from Sussex, the University of Bedfordshire, Research in Practice and the Innovation Unit will collaborate with practice-based colleagues and service user groups across three discrete, but inter-connected, research strands: contextual safeguarding, trauma-informed practice and transitional safeguarding. We look forward to reporting on the project's progress in future CSWIR annual reports.

Reducing Parental Conflict Project Evaluation, Brighton Oasis Project

Funder: Department for Work and Pensions, Reducing Parental Conflict Fund, £15K

Professor Gillian Ruch and **Dr Jeri Damman** are conducting an independent evaluation of the Reducing Parental Conflict Project funded by the Department for Work and Pensions, Reducing Parental Conflict Fund and being delivered by the Brighton Oasis Project. The project consists of four distinct service delivery components to address parental conflict among individuals with prior substance misuse difficulties in East Sussex: (1) the Parents as Partners programme, an 8-week curriculum-based programme for parent dyads; (2) individual and group support for fathers; (3) establishing regional professional 'father champions' role, and (4) professional training. A particular emphasis of the project is on strengthening the role of fathers. The purpose of the evaluation is to better understand the impact the project has on parents, children and professionals in the community. Evaluation findings will contribute to the development of knowledge about how to improve outcomes for families in conflict, the enablers and barriers to success and the conditions required to replicate success. Knowledge will also be developed on effective strategies to strengthen father engagement and the role of fathers in families.

The 'Rethinking Families' Programme Evaluation

Funder: East Sussex Children's Services (ESCC) and CSWIR, £3400

The 'Rethinking Families' programme seeks to effect positive change in families currently involved with Children's Services where there has been significant involvement with social services over many years (where problems are deemed entrenched). The model of intervention is based on an attachment based therapeutic method, known as the Dynamic Maturational Model of Attachment. DMM emphasises the dynamic interaction of the maturation of the human behaviour and focuses on underlying attachment patterns and function of behaviour. It is being piloted by East Sussex County Council and has been jointly designed and taught by accredited DMM trainers commissioned by ESCC. The model mirrors the 'Love Barrow Families' project which is currently showing positive outcomes for families. East Sussex Children's Services and CSWIR are co-funding a small-scale independent evaluation of the programme's impact so far. The evaluation is intended to illuminate the extent to which the programme can be shown to have had a positive impact on child and parent outcomes in two exemplar cases. It also aims to assess the impact on the immediate practice system in the primary project site of ESCC, such that informed decisions can be taken about the efficacy of the model. The project is being led by **Professor Gillian Ruch** with evaluation work undertaken by a CSWIR post-doctoral research associate, **Dr Louise Sims** and will report in early 2020.

Evaluation Panel Member, What Works in Children's Social Care

Funder: What Works in Children's Social Care

In March 2019, the Department of Social Work and Social Care, under the skilled leadership of **Professor Elaine Sharland**, was successful in being appointed to the Panel of Evaluators for the What Works Centre for Children's Social Care (WWC CSC). This cross-Centre bid between CSWIR, CIRCY and the Andrew and Virginia Rudd Centre for Adoption Research and Practice was led by Elaine in collaboration with a wider group of Sussex and external colleagues, including **Professors Robin Bannerjee** (Psychology), **Janet Boddy** (Education), **Gordon Harold** (Psychology and the Rudd Centre) and **Michelle Lefevre** (Social Work and Social Care) being named as prospective Principal Investigators. The WWC CSC is part of Nesta, a high profile UK innovation foundation, which seeks better outcomes for children, young people and families by bringing the best available evidence to practitioners and other decision makers across the children's social care sector, and supports practice leaders in promoting evidence-informed practice in their organisations. The WWC plans on supporting research into a wide range of interventions in children's social care, using a variety of research methodologies. As a member of the Panel of Evaluators, the Department of Social Work and Social Care will be among a range of diverse organisations eligible to undertake these evaluations.

Practice research projects

CSWIR has a firm and foundational commitment to supporting small scale research that is closely aligned with practice. Highlights of the past year include the imaginative work being undertaken by **Rebecca Watts** (Social Work and Social Care & Brighton and Hove City Council) to revise child care social work reporting practices for children in care so they are more child focussed and friendly.

South Coast Regional Centre Teaching Partnership Practice Research Hub

The Practice Research Hub, co-chaired by **Professor Gillian Ruch** with University of Brighton colleague, Cath Holmstrom, is a unique feature of the South Coast Regional Centre Teaching Partnership. It continues to play a pivotal role in supporting practitioners to develop their research mindedness and undertake research.

As part of the Hub's commitment to promoting practice research academic colleagues from Sussex and Brighton Universities are supporting practitioners from adult and children's services in East Sussex and Brighton and Hove to undertake a range of research projects. Anna Bouch, a social work practitioner in Brighton and Hove's Adult Care services, supported by University of Brighton colleagues (Jackie Lelkes and Cath Holmstrom) is the first practitioner to complete her project entitled



Wellbeing': From concept to Practice?
Writing about her experience of conducting the research, Anna writes:

" In the summer of 2019 results from the first collaborative project between the HEIs University of Brighton and Sussex and the Local Authorities at Brighton and East Sussex, were accepted for presentation at a national conference. The Practice Research Hub (PRH) of the Teaching Partnership, co-chaired by Professor Gillian Ruch, University of Sussex, and Cath Holmstrom, University of Brighton, was invaluable in providing the initial impetus, ongoing steering and structures to enable this, and other collaborations between the HEIs and Local Authorities, to reach fruition. This ambitious research project involved interviewing 36 social workers about their understanding of the concept of 'well-being.' Using thematic analysis on individual and group interviews we discovered interesting differences depending on the practitioners 'cognitive style' and whether they were thinking about well-being for a person who lacked or retained mental capacity. The results will inform the design of practitioners' assessment recording tools, agendas for group supervision and help target training. We are currently preparing the results of the project for a co-authored journal publication.

The PRH is instrumental in ensuring that opportunities for collaboration between the Universities of Brighton and Sussex and their local authority partners are taken up. Of additional note is how the PRH has driven the model of collaborative working on projects which in turn has increased the research-mindedness of social work practitioners in the local authorities; practitioners involved in this research project fed back that the process itself had been valuable, giving them a chance to come together to wrestle with difficult concepts within a research context."

Overview of practice research projects

Does the complaint (complainant parents) affect the risk assessment and decision making abilities of the social workers?

Principal Researcher: Shabana Warne, BHCC Children's Services.

What is the impact of SWIFT assessments in the context of cases involved in /at risk of legal proceedings?

Principal Researcher: Anna Wilson, ESCC Children's Services

Do we achieve the Family Court agreed care plan for children within the planned timeframe?

Principal Researcher: Emma Johnson, ESCC Children's Services.

Wellbeing': From concept to practice?

Principal Researchers: Anna Bouch, BHCC Adult Services & Jackie Lelkes, University of Brighton.

What Really Helps? The lived experience of cuckooing victims; a thematic analysis.

Researcher: Sebastian Barens, ESCC Adult Services.

Exploring how the role of social work is understood in a multidisciplinary hospital setting which delivers three different models of integrated care.

Researcher: Elmien Brink, BHCC Adult Services



A painting by Lily Webb



Spotlight on research

Me and My World: Developing practice and procedure with children in care

Rebecca Watts, Lead Practitioner, Brighton and Hove City Council, Co-Director of Practice Learning, University of Sussex and **Professor Gillian Ruch**, University of Sussex.

Since November 2018, Rebecca Watts, Lead Practitioner with Brighton and Hove City Council has been supported by Professor Gillian Ruch, CSWIR Director, to undertake an evaluation of the Me and My World model for working with children in care. The model promotes child-centred practice by emphasising social workers' relationships with children in care, uses reports where social workers write directly to the child, places an emphasis on capturing holistic information to aid life story work and ensures that Child in Care Reviews incorporate direct work activities to promote the genuine participation of children and young people.

The Me and My World model also requires foster carers to write letters to children in their care every six months. The overall aim of the model is to create a system that can meet core statutory functions at the same time as promoting child-centred, relationship-based practice.

The research has included a documentary analysis of Me and My World Reports and focus groups with social workers, foster carers and Independent Reviewing Officers to capture their experience of implementing the model. Individual interviews will be undertaken with children and young people between the ages of 6-16 to explore their experiences too. The final report is due to be completed by the end of September 2019. Findings from the research will aim to embed the model further and consider how any challenges to further implementation might be overcome to support relationship-based practice with children in care.

Events



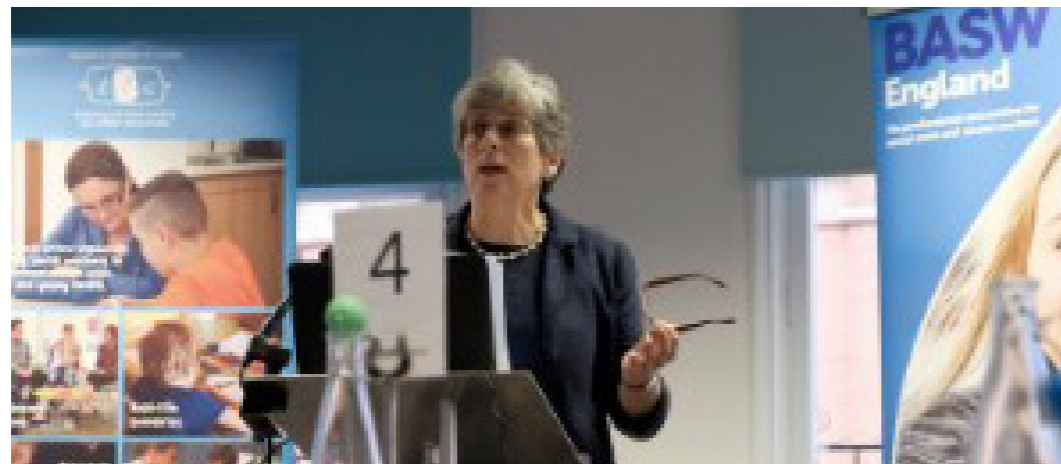
The BASW 80-20 and the Talking and Listening to Children Kitbag Conference 2019

In April 2019, **Professor Gillian Ruch** co-hosted a national event with BASW as part of the BASW 80-20 and TLC Kitbag campaign. Over 80 social workers from across England attended the event where they heard Gillian talk about the findings of the UK-wide ESRC funded Talking and Listening to Children (TLC) research project. The research found that less than 20% of social workers used any type of resource when communicating and engaging with children.

In light of this finding Gillian has been working to introduce social workers to the Kitbag. Designed by the International Futures Forum (www.internationalfuturesforum.com & www.iffpraxis.com/kitbag), an educational charity in Scotland, the Kitbag is a resource that helps promote children's emotional literacy. Seven local authorities are working with Gillian to trial the use of Kitbag.

[Video of event](#)

[Kitbag in action](#)



Talking and Listening to Children Kitbag Workshops

With monies from the University of Sussex's ESRC Impact Accelerator Fund and Higher Education Impact Fund **Professor Gillian Ruch** has been delivering Kitbag workshops to local authority social workers across England. Seven local authorities represented by social work practitioners ranging from newly qualified to experienced senior social workers are currently working with Gillian to introduce Kitbags into their daily working practice. In the workshops participants get a hands-on opportunity to learn about Kitbag and also complete a self-assessment of their direct work with children skills.



Social workers who have taken part in the Kitbag workshops are already providing inspirational testimonials of the impact of Kitbags on their communicative encounters with children. The plan is for Gillian to revisit the authorities in six months' time to review how working with Kitbags has informed practice and to ascertain the views of practitioners, children and families about its usefulness for social work interventions.





Spotlight on research impact

Talking and Listening to Children and KITBAG

Becky, a social worker based in a Children in Need team, Metropolitan Borough of Rotherham

“Just wanted to send a little feedback about my first session with the kitbag. I used this with Amy who is 8 years old. I took it out on my first home visit with her and mum to get mum’s approval to use the oil. Both were keen on using this in school and Amy had a look through all the bits and was thinking how we could use these.*

Visited in school and Amy remembered the kit. The mindfulness bit with oil, presence cards and timer worked really well to ‘reset’ us for the session. Amy said it made her feel really calm (it helped me too!). She liked the puppets and we both picked one to sit next to us. We went through the cards and Amy said she wanted to pick some for her and then I could pick some.

She knew what they all meant and was confident in picking some she could explain. After I had picked some she then asked to pick some for mum, mum has been really ill from drinking, but things

are getting better. Amy picked some which showed this, such as energy and courage, and then some such as trust and hope that helped her share that mum has had a slip up with drink again.

I was then able to share this with mum in the Child in Need meeting which was really powerful to share the good things, and the ongoing worries and to help mum understand that Amy was sharing this rather than being directly asked about her drinking.

Amy would like us to use this in the summer holidays at home with mum so that’s my next plan.”

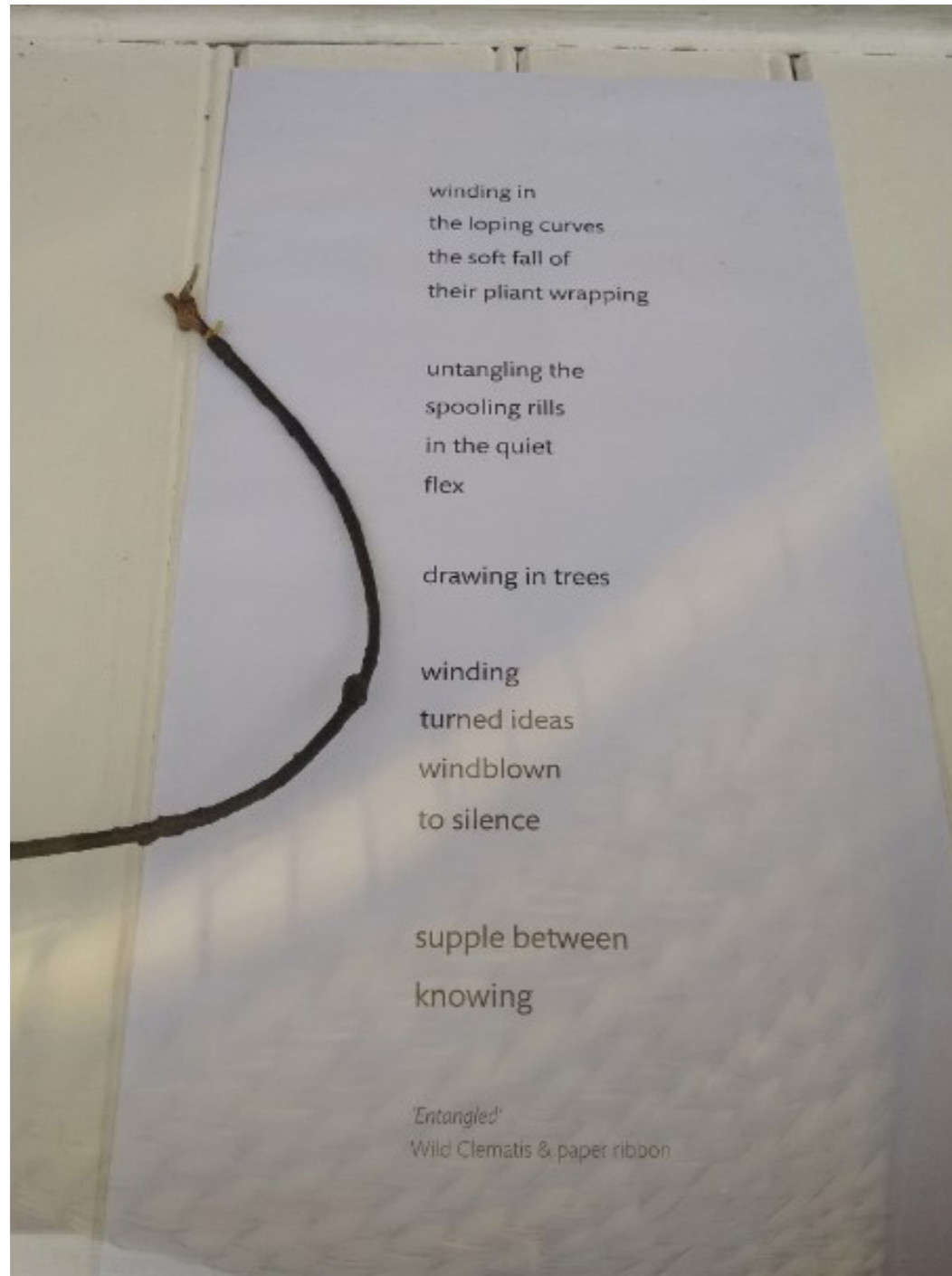
Sarah, Signs of Safety Project Lead, London Borough of Bexley Children’s Services

“John used the Kitbag with a 7 year old boy, Tom and his family. They chose to use the Animal Cards and Tom picked the understanding card to help him tell his mum he wants her to try to understand him more. This led the family to start to have a conversation with one another about their feelings and what they need from each other. The family found the session really helpful and Tom’s wish was for everyone to have a Kitbag!”

**Names of the children have been changed*



Social workers engaging in TLC Kitbag workshops



Unconscious Meanings in the Workplace: Work Discussion in Practice and Research

14-16 June, 2019

Following the success in 2016 of the inaugural international Work Discussion conference in Vienna, in June 2019 CSWIR hosted the second international conference entitled: 'Unconscious Meanings in the Workplace: Work Discussion in Practice and Research'.

The conference was attended by over 40 delegates from Japan, Austria and England working across a range of educational and clinical settings. Four keynote speakers engaged the conference with diverse perspectives on the contribution of work discussion to professional practice.

The presentation of Dr Sebastian Kraemer's paper (retired Child and Adolescent Psychiatrist, the Whittington Hospital and the Tavistock and Portman NHS Trust, London) 'Collective intelligence at the front line' placed the practice of work discussion in its historical context.

It neatly complemented the keynote by Andrew Cooper (Professor of Social Work, Tavistock and Portman NHS Trust) entitled 'Strange Meeting – the relevance of work discussion to the Brexit crisis',

which considered how work discussion might offer a fertile approach for the Brexit debate.

Dr Jenifer Wakelyn's (Child and Adolescent Psychotherapist, Tavistock and Portman NHS Trust) paper 'Observation and attention in professional network meetings for children in care' focused on the detail of work discussion underlining with powerful examples the importance of observation and attending to the intimate details of work interactions.

The final keynote 'Dealing with the impact of separation in the context of a therapeutic intervention called Special Time' given by Dr Gianna Williams and Dr Alessandra Cavalli (child psychotherapists) took the conference audience to Mexico to hear about the adaption of work discussion model to educators who work with street children. The keynotes were complemented by three sessions each having a specific focus on work discussion and practice, research and pedagogy.

Discussion was rich and expansive underlining the integrity and applicability of the approach to a wide range of professional practice contexts.





Participant perspectives

The Academic

**Rebecca Stephens, Teaching Fellow,
Department of Social Work and Social
Care, University of Sussex**

"I attended the International Conference to learn from and engage in a unique knowledge exchange with colleagues from Japan to Austria to Sussex. The afternoon commenced with being placed in small groups to share our experiences of work discussions in practice and to practice a work discussion from a case study based on a lived experience from one of the conference speakers. Without any first-hand experience of partaking in a work discussion myself, I listened intently to the varied experiences and contributions of those in my small group and felt privileged to have two people in the group from Austria who had extensive experience of engaging in work discussions in an education and psychotherapy context. Having that initial experience of learning about how work discussions had positively impacted on those in my group in terms of heightening their own critical reflective skills and confidence to contribute in group discussions, I was keen to learn more from others during the large group discussion that would follow.

The old adage 'silence is golden' is a generally accepted statement. It is true that silence can have a well-intentioned and powerful presence when given the respect it deserves.

But how long must a silent space be honoured before it feels awkward to some of those sitting in that space? With all attendees at this conference sitting together in one large group of around forty, the invitation was extended for us to contribute our reflections and learning from the small group work discussions we had just experienced. Sitting amongst some nationally and internationally renowned academics and professionals was for me a very unique position to be in, so I was ready to hear some inspirational contributions. A silent space emerged and remained for around ten seconds before all eyes either turned to the floor or ceiling. A further ten seconds of silence continued, then what was quite possibly, a full two minutes of no one speaking. I couldn't help but wonder why no one in the room volunteered to initiate the discussion, not even those with exceptional credentials. I questioned why this was the case and whether this amount of silence was common in such situations. Following the much anticipated moment when the silence was broken by one brave person, it was confirmed by the keynote speaker that this experience of silence was, in fact, a common feature of the model. My learning from this experience was not only how powerful work discussions can be in enhancing critical reflective and analytical skills, but how powerful a silent space can be."



Participant perspectives

The Practice Manager

**Jaina Sloan, Pod Manager,
Brighton and Hove Children's Services**

"When I arrived at the conference I was preoccupied by 'my day job'. I'd recently returned to operational management and one of my concerns in changing role was the possible loss of space to think. Throughout the conference I experienced a growing confidence that this would not be the case. This came from listening to people presenting their work and demonstrating a commitment to think about the impact of the work and understand what happens to workers in the most difficult of circumstances. It was a powerful experience.

Hearing how work discussion groups provide a safe space to explore responses to working with people of all

ages who are vulnerable and how they offer workers experiences of containment and understanding which enable them to work with a tenacity, I found very moving. As I listened to the diversity of the settings in which work discussion groups take place, my confidence grew with regard to my ability to hold such a space to think in my own organisation. The breadth of what was looked at in the conference gave me a context within which to place the work discussion groups and with this came a sense of belonging as I realised how far reaching the model is and how it is happening in so many places and in different contexts.

I left with hope that I can carry it with me and a commitment to use it in my new role."

Researching with Feeling: 1st CSWIR Psychosocial Methodologies Symposium

June 2019 saw the first of what we intend to be an annual fixture in the CSWIR calendar. The 1st CSWIR Psychosocial Methodologies symposium: 'Researching with Feeling' saw 20 doctoral researchers, research associates and academics from a range of disciplinary backgrounds, meeting to experientially and imaginatively explore two psychosocial research methods.

Inspired by our commitment to psychosocial approaches and a growing urgent conviction that we must to conduct our research differently in light of climate warming, the event boldly experimented with a carbon-lite design, that involved overseas colleagues to

participate virtually in the event. Divided into two halves the carbon-lite morning involved participants present in the room and virtually on line to take part in a visual matrix. In the afternoon the 'many minds' approach to data analysis was explored using data provided by group members.

The participants' accounts below give a flavour of the generative nature of the day was experienced. A paper arising from the event, co-authored by the event organisers (**Professor Rachel Thomson, Dr Louise Sims, Professor Gillian Ruch, Dr Jette Kofoed, Dr Lois Tonkin, Professor Emerita Wendy Hollway**) is being prepared for publication.



In fondest memory of Lois Tonkin, collaborator on the CSWIR Psychosocial Symposium and the image she chose





Participant perspectives

The Doctoral Researcher

Paul Shuttleworth: Social Work & Social Care PhD, Department of Social Work and Social Care, University of Sussex

"I am a practitioner, researcher, PhD student, and an individual who, some psychologists may say, relies heavily on cognitive rather than emotional or compassionate empathy. I, therefore, approached the 'Psychosocial Symposium – Researching with Feeling' with some trepidation and possibly even some cynicism. However, I am using some psychosocial concepts in my work and believe it can provide a unique perspective for research and for those in the field of social work.

I welcomed the way that the symposium was set up. At the start of the day, we used tools and cards which gave us an awareness of each other's feelings and also got us into a respectful place of mindfulness and togetherness. This was both grounding and helpful. It also helped to increase the sense of connection with those participants that were present remotely through the internet.

I struggled to be evoked by the visual images, but this was no surprise to me because as a child I was typically led through art galleries, pressed by my parents to state what emotions and thoughts different art conjured. As such the only real emotions the images produced for me were that of teenage surliness. We then progressed to the visual matrix.

It was at this point that I started to enjoy the perspectives of others and settled into the role of an active listener. The quality of thought was extraordinary and sometimes bizarre. However, they led to new ways of thinking and I felt very open and interested in others' standpoints. Furthermore, mapping the matrix allowed us to further deconstruct and take ownership of our experience of social dreaming.

In the afternoon, a group of 5 reflected on an interview that a child participant and I had undertaken for my research. This firstly helped to provide affirmation for my thinking for my thesis, but it also opened up a new avenue of exploration and analysis regarding my positioning as a researcher and how the participant was actively constructing this. The participant had been recruiting me into their complex narrative around recognition, love, and loss to such an extent that it was seemingly difficult for me to see it clearly. I had become immersed in their world. Following from the symposium this has led to further discussions around the benefits and challenges of participatory methods and how to convey the authentic voice of the child.

Overall, I found the experience sometimes bizarre but never uncomfortable. It led me to recognise different ways of thinking, and whilst the particular methods may not be something that I feel will work for me personally in my research, they very much helped thinking in different ways. I would welcome the opportunity to do it again.



Participant perspectives

The Doctoral Researcher

Rachael Owens: Social Work & Social Care PhD, Department of Social Work and Social Care, University of Sussex

"There was an air of anticipation and nervousness as, on a green early June morning, we gathered in a circle around a vase of wild flowers, to experience a different kind of academic communion. As a social work doctoral student just getting my head around what psychosocial research means for me, it was delightful to find myself sitting next to someone just about to start the journey, discovering connections and passions that we had in common. In fact, connections between us all became one of the 'leitmotifs' of the day, particularly when we moved into the preliminary round of introductions and met colleagues joining us virtually from both Denmark and New Zealand.

As well as social worker students and staff from Sussex, we were joined by academics experienced in psychosocial approaches from other disciplines and places. The morning session was led by Wendy Hollway, who guided us through a fascinating process called a Visual Matrix. This allowed us to delve into the concept of the collective unconscious, working with visual material to free associate meanings and connections, adding a richness and contrast to my own studies which are largely conducted alone. The complexity and multi-faceted nature of human and beyond-human life came to the fore – in a process that was sometimes funny, sometimes confusing, sometimes conflicting and sometimes deeply moving.

After discussing the content and process of the visual matrix, we gathered in small groups for a 'Many Minds' reflection on a piece of data. All the material used in the day had been supplied by members and curated by the organising team. In my group we undertook a close psychosocially informed reading of a text. The deep satisfaction of working psychosocially for me, is the invitation to bring my whole self to the data – including my feelings, spontaneous responses and intellect. The Many Minds method, as with the Visual Matrix, however, are also characterised by boundaries, which create a containing structure around how they are followed. In our group this structure was held by a member experienced in the method. This supported us to work together, within which we responded to the text and each other in ways that were generative, surprising and exciting.

As a participant, I felt that the day had been carefully planned and that I was in safe hands to experiment and discover. Working psychosocially in a group has felt initiating to me in the past – it can feel quite vulnerable to speak out in a group when unconscious processes are being attended to! On this day, however, I felt that the generosity of those more experienced in the methods and the attention to detail in the planning made it entirely accessible and enabled me to learn and grow."

Recurrent Removals Symposium

In July 2019, Professor Karen Broadhurst and Dr Claire Mason from the University of Lancaster presented findings from their Nuffield Foundation funded national research into recurrent removal of infants at birth.

Colleagues from our partner local authorities - Cas Short from Looking Forward, part of Brighton and Hove Children's Services and Jacquie Holloway from the Foundations programme in East Sussex -

complemented Karen and Claire's work outlining the local provision and highlighting moving examples of the work they undertake with this vulnerable population.

Nicola McGeown, Principal Social Worker for East Sussex Children's Services reflects below on what she learnt from the event.



The Senior Professional

Nicola McGeown: Principal Child and Family Social Worker, East Sussex County Council

"I recently attended a CSWIR symposium event on Recurrent Removals at the University of Sussex in collaboration with CIRCY, East Sussex, Brighton and Hove and the University of Lancaster. The session began with Professor Broadhurst and Dr Mason sharing learning from their research on recurrent removals. The study involved looking at records relating to 65,000 birth mothers who appeared in care proceedings at least once between 2007/08 and 2015/16. The research found that over 11,000 mothers had more than one child removed between 2007 and 2014. Many of these women had been in care themselves. 40 per cent of the mothers had been in foster care or children's homes. Most were young mothers and had babies removed from their care in quick succession, not having enough time to evidence change. For those working in the front line - though depressing - this is not surprising.

Cas Short from the Looking Forward Programme in Brighton and Hove talked about the excellent work they are doing working with parents following their children being placed in permanent alternative care as did Jacquie Holloway from Foundations in East Sussex.

A key theme from all presenters was that despite this heartbreaking experience for families there are ways in which the desolation can be navigated so that parents can look at their parenting identities with the view to accepting their childless state or to working towards being able to parent safely in the future. This is a slow process, achieved by walking alongside parents following their loss, understanding and responding to the overwhelming feelings of grief and providing specialist intervention when the families are ready. These interventions range from group parenting work to evidence based trauma interventions.

Key lessons for me in my role as a Principal Social Worker with responsibility for taking forward practice development are: ensuring our learning opportunities about court work are firmly grounded in relationship-based practice and a whole family approach; making sure that we are putting in place supports for parents following their children being removed from their care, mindful of the compounded trauma this may cause (the trauma that led to their poor parenting initially and then the trauma of the court process), and being aware of the short and long term consequences. As an organisation we similarly must be mindful of the secondary trauma our practitioners can experience - having the right support for them so that they can stay with the parents' experience and be as helpful as they can at this most painful time."

Participant perspectives

Birth Parents: Experts by experience

Louise

"I found the Parent Peer Support Conference absolutely compelling. I was gripped with intrigue and excitement all the way through. It was well managed and extremely informative. Having had the unfortunate experience of having my own children subject to a child protection register due to my poor mental health, it is a subject I hold very dear to my heart. If this project could help just a handful of struggling parents find the right path in life, hold on to their children, nurture them and watch them grow into healthy and happy adults then already a miracle has been produced. I for one would be first in line to offer any help advice and support to a parent and child in need. I firmly believe many parents that have been in my situation and very nearly lost everything would feel the same. I would love to see this project flourish and become a large support system in the UK. It is absolutely imperative and invaluable for parents of today and our children of the future."

Carole

"The Parent Peer event was well organized, with a wide range of information available to participants, without being overloaded with data. The segment with the conference call with people who are already engaged with programmes in the U.S. was excellent, it gave us a perspective on the practicalities. There was a good cross-section of participants, evenly spread to promote varied points-of-view during group discussions. I felt that most participants believe such a programme will be a force for good. I left the event enthused and full of ideas, because as a parent I know that relationships between

CYPS and families can be fraught with historical bias; "Social Workers are child-snatchers", "they don't help families" or "cause huge upheaval then leave." Parent Peers can help bridge that divide and support parents who are struggling with involvement from CYPS and support in making lasting changes to prevent the need for care proceedings."

The Senior Professional

Lore Riedel: Partners in Change Hub Manager, Brighton and Hove Children's Services

"I thoroughly enjoyed the peer mentoring event. My particular interest was as a newly appointed manager in a practice hub designed to support excellent, relationship based social work practice with families. Listening to the research and to the panellists highlighted for me that working towards both peer mentoring, but also strategic involvement of families in service development, is the last piece of the jigsaw in thinking about relationship-based practice. In discussion with colleagues at the event, we agreed this is something we intend to keep on our agenda. It was particularly thought provoking to consider the parent partner values and principles set out in Jeri's presentation and the message and impact that adopting that value base might have for our practice and engagement with families. Prior to my current role, I was a chair of child protection conferences. The presentation from Dr Marina Lalayants on her research into parent advocacy in child safety conferences was also really interesting in terms of the potential support at the time, but also the long term benefit of that ongoing supportive relationship in improving the chances that families stay out of child protection. It was engaging and really interesting to listen to the panellists describe how their services work, the pitfalls and the positive examples."

Parent Partner Programmes in Child Protection: Considering the case for peer mentoring approaches: A Research Impact Workshop

June 2019 saw **Dr Jeri Damman**, Lecturer in Social Work, in partnership with Recovery Partners, an East Sussex-based mental health recovery project with peer support expertise, hosting a research impact workshop, funded by the School of Education and Social Work Higher Education Quick Boost Impact Funding Scheme.

The workshop focused on Parent Partner Programmes, an innovative approach in the US where birth parents with previous child protection service experience provide peer mentoring support to parents currently involved with the system. Participants included birth parents with Children's Service experience and managers and practitioners from the public and voluntary sector.

The three-hour event began with a presentation on the evidence-base for these programmes. Jeri was joined by Dr Marina Lalayants, Associate Professor at Hunter College, New York, and each presented their research findings on peer mentoring in child welfare. The event continued with a virtual, interactive panel moderated by the Birth Parent National Network in the US and three birth parents who have helped develop programmes there: Denise Moore (Iowa), Timothy Phipps (Oregon) and Toni Miner (Colorado).

The workshop concluded with a working group session where participants reflected on the information shared and considered the potential for similar programme developments locally and nationally.

HIV Awareness Training for Children and Families Social Workers: A Research Impact Workshop

In June 2019, **Dr Tam Cane** (Social Work and Social Care) co-facilitated with Travis Cox from the Terrence Higgins Trust a day workshop on HIV awareness training for children and families social workers. The workshop, funded by the School of Education and Social Work Higher Education Quick Boost Impact Funding Scheme, had as its overarching aim the provision of up-to-date knowledge about 'HIV today' and was attended by sixteen social workers from a range of child and family social work teams, independent fostering and adoption agencies.

Drawing on Tam's research in the field of HIV and adoption, the workshop explored what it means to live well with HIV and how this should be understood in practice when conducting assessments

and decision-making. The workshop explored advancements in HIV treatment, viral loads, mother-child-transmission and treatment as prevention (pre-exposure and post-exposure prophylaxis). Participants welcomed the space to reflect on the impact of stigma and risk aversion practices that might affect people living with HIV and considered the importance of adapting their practice to ensure approaches were culturally sensitive, as well as capable of preserving confidentiality requirements ascribed to HIV.

Those who attended the workshop reported having greater understanding of the subject and feeling more equipped to make better informed judgements when conducting assessments.

Open research seminars

Meeting with the Stranger as an Opportunity for Personal and Professional Development

Dr Shirley Ben Shlomo, Bar-Ilan University in Tel Aviv, Israel

Dr Ben Shlomo, a clinical social worker and psychotherapist specialising in therapeutic work with parents, children, and youth is a faculty member and the Head of the Bachelor's degree programme at the Louis and Gabi Weisfeld School of Social Work at Bar-Ilan University in Tel Aviv, Israel. Her seminar introduced 'meeting with the stranger', a theoretical concept coined by Julia Kristava as a framework to support the development of cultural competence among social work students and lecturers.

Children Who Care: Young carers' research, policy and practice

Ms Feylyn Lewis and Professor Saul Becker, University of Sussex

This seminar presented a review of the 30 year history of research, policy and practice developments for children with unpaid family caring roles. It critically examined why children take on significant responsibilities that would normally be associated with adults, reflecting on family practices and cultural and societal factors. The impact of substantial care provision during childhood on psychosocial development, educational experiences and the transition into adulthood were also considered. The seminar finished by sharing initial findings from the first phase of another research study on the mental health wellbeing of European adolescent carers.

In Whose Interest? The privatisation of child protection social work in England,

Professor Ray Jones, Emeritus Professor, Kingston University and St Georges Hospital, University of London

Speaking from his extensive experience as a senior figure in Children's Services and social work education Professor Jones presented a comprehensive overview of the recent history of child care social work and the unsettling trends towards privatisation of the sector. Discussion centred on the ethical and political implications associated with child care organisations orientated towards profit as opposed to welfare considerations.

Traps, Gaps and Benefits Distress: The harmful psychosocial impacts of welfare reform

Dr Rich Moth, Senior Lecturer in Social Work at the Liverpool Hope University

In May 2019, Dr Moth presented the findings from the Horizon 2020 Re-Invest Study on rebuilding an inclusive, value-based Europe of solidarity and trust through social investments. Rich's presentation focused on one of the strands of the wider study, which highlighted the psychosocial impacts of the welfare reform in the UK and the enhanced vulnerabilities of people in receipt of benefits.

Academic dissemination and knowledge exchange

Third year doctoral researcher, **Paul Shuttleworth**, presented his conference paper 'Absent Voices - What Matters To Children Living In Kinship Care' at the South East Network for Social Sciences Conference in July 2018.

In August 2018, **Professor Michelle Lefevre** hosted a webinar in to help practitioners to think about developing a rights- and relationship-based approach with children facing child sexual exploitation.

In August, **Dr Jeri Damman** presented a national webinar by the Birth Parent National Network to birth parents, service providers, and policy makers across the US entitled 'Birth Parent Involvement at a System Level in Child Welfare: Exploring the perspectives of birth parents in parent partner programs'.

In October 2018, **Professor Gillian Ruch** presented on 'Talking and Listening to Children: Understanding the terrain' at the University of Trento, Italy.

In October, **Paul Shuttleworth** attended the European Scientific Association on Residential and Family Care for Children and Adolescents Conference 2018 where he displayed his poster presentation 'Children's Voices in Kinship Care across Europe'.

Also in October, **Dr Reima Maglajlic** delivered a keynote speech at the international conference of the Department of Social Work, University of Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH), to mark 50 years since the Department was founded. A range of stakeholders took part, including presenters from BiH and from the wider region (Serbia, North Macedonia, Slovenia, Croatia). The visit was also an opportunity to make links with the newly formed joint Association of Social Workers at national level in Bosnia and Herzegovina,

in a context where after the war, each of the two political entities (the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina and Republika Srpska) had a separate association.

Dr Jeri Damman presented a paper at the 23rd Annual Conference, The Society for Social Work and Research Conference (SSWR) in San Francisco, California in January 2019 on 'Screening Decisions at Child Protective Services Intake: A systematic review'.

In February 2019, **Professor Michelle Lefevre** hosted a webinar on 'What can be learned from looking closely at practice'. This was based on her research into social workers' communication and engagement with children and young people in home visits.

In March 2019, **Professor Gillian Ruch** presented 'We Had the Experience but Missed the Meaning: Reflecting on reflection' at the Department of Social Work, VID University, Oslo, Norway.

Also in March, **Professor Gillian Ruch** presented her paper 'Relationships Here, There and Everywhere: How they work and why they matter' at the BASW World Social Work Day in London.

Dr Jeri Damman presented a paper on 'Changing the Child Welfare System from Within: The system level involvement of birth parents with prior child welfare service experience' at the European Conference for Social Work Research (ECSWR) in Leuven, Belgium in April 2019.

At the same conference, **Professor Gillian Ruch** spoke at the symposium 'Children's and Practitioners' Voices and Actions: Exploring agency in everyday social work practice'. She also presented her paper 'Researching Emotions in Child and Family Social Work' at the Special Interest Group on Researching with Children and Families.

April also saw **Professor Michelle Lefevre** hold a public lecture on child exploitation to an audience of academics, safeguarding professionals, students and policymakers in Dublin, when she was a Visiting Professor at Trinity College.

In May 2019, **Paul Shuttleworth** presented 'What Matters to Children Living in Kinship Care: Messages from the initial analysis' at CoramBAAF to an audience of practitioners and academics. He gave the same presentation on 18 June at Grandparents Plus to practitioners, professionals, carers and academics.

Professor Gillian Ruch presented 'Vulnerable Competence: Developing a professional identity in challenging contexts' at the Step Up to Social Work Annual Conference at Bournemouth University in May.

Also in May, Gillian presented 'Austerity, Anxiety and Avoidance: Activating reflection and relationship in contemporary practice' at the Olive Stevenson Memorial Lecture, University of Nottingham.

In June 2019, **Dr Tam Cane** held an impact workshop on HIV awareness training for social workers in children and families with Travis Cox from the Terrence Higgins Trust.

Also in June, **Professor Gillian Ruch**, with Professor Anna Gupta from Royal Holloway College, University of London, took over as co-chair of the Association of Professors of Social Work. This group, working closely with the Joint Universities Social Work Education and Research committees, seeks to lobby government

in relation to social work education and research through regular meetings with Department of Education representatives. APSW is currently engaging with the development of the new social work regulatory body Social Work England, with particular focus on improving the social work representation in the body's governance structures.

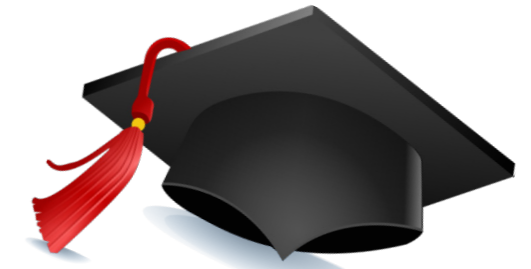
Professor Michelle Lefevre presented her research on child sexual exploitation to the Sussex Family Justice Board Quality Circle, discussing how young people's rights to both participation and protection need to be integrated in situations of child sexual exploitation.

As part of her ongoing role in the British Association of Social Workers' Children and Families Policy Practice and Education Group, **Professor Michelle Lefevre** leads a workstream on child sexual exploitation and contributes to the 80/20 campaign on increasing the proportion of time social workers spend on direct work with families.

Barry Luckock leads a joint East Sussex County Council/University of Sussex-funded evaluation of the Safer Relationships Programme – a practice-led and research informed social work approach to reducing domestic abuse in child safeguarding. Research team members include an agency-based psychologist, business support colleague and service manager, working on a team basis with University researchers. Barry sits on the Sussex Local Family Justice Board. He is a member of the CoramBAAF Research Group Advisory Committee.

Doctoral researchers

Completions



Simon Abbott

'How do Social Work Approved Mental Health Professionals use the Law in Action?'

Simon's research study focused on how social work Approved Mental Health Professionals (AMHPs) use the law in practice. The study explored the relationship between law and social work practice by interpreting meanings contained in case stories told by social work AMHPs about recent Mental Health Act assessments that they undertook. The study contributes to knowledge by illuminating how the use of law in practice is an inherently socio-relational undertaking, involving embodied practice. Bourdieu's concept of habitus is used to make sense of participants' accounts of the action that unfolds when they use the law. A further contribution is made to knowledge on legal literacy in social work, where there is little empirical research focusing on how social workers use the law, and still less on how mental health social workers use the law to consider compulsory powers under mental health legislation. The organisational factors impacting on how participants relate to the law are outlined and discussed drawing on legal consciousness theory, together with an account of how participants adapt to this, drawing on Lipsky's concept of street level bureaucracy.

Rachel Clarke

'Living Well with Dementia: Sustaining psychological wellbeing in working family carers'

With rising numbers of people diagnosed with dementia, the number of working carers (family carers who are maintaining employment alongside their caring roles) is likely to increase in the coming years.

Linked to an ERSC-NIHR funded project (www.idealproject.org.uk), Rachel completed the first multidisciplinary and mixed-methods study on sustainable wellbeing of dementia working carers (DWCs) who are reconciling unpaid family care with employment. Her work comprised a quantitative analysis of secondary data from the IDEAL project, involving 1,238 working and non-working dementia carers, followed by questionnaire, artefact and semi-structured interview research with 27 DWCs. She developed a new working model of sustainability, reporting: (1) the psychological resources associated with sustainability for DWCs were related to high levels of self-esteem and self-efficacy as well as with low strain-based family-to-work conflict; (2) a more positive caregiving experience was associated with low levels of caregiving burden, relative stress and role captivity alongside high levels of caregiving competence and bonded relationships between people with dementia and DWCs; (3) sustainability was associated with high quality social relationships; and (4) sustained cognitive resources were related to bi-transferable work and care skills. Use of both problem-focused (ie. time-management, instrumental support) and emotion-focused coping (ie. emotional support, respite strategies) was essential for most DWCs to achieve a balance between roles. Effective coping strategies can inform policies and practice guidelines for care professionals (including social workers) to support the wellbeing of DWCs comprehensively and innovatively, and to assist DWCs in reconciling their roles for as long as possible. Rachel's research was funded by ESRC-NIHR and she was supervised by Dr Hengli Lisa Chen (Social Work and Social Care) and Professor Jennifer Rusted (Psychology).

Paul Dugmore

‘Acknowledging and Bearing Emotions: A study into child and family social work’

In July 2019, Paul successfully defended his Doctor of Social Work thesis and was awarded an unconditional pass. The examiners, Professor Anna Gupta (Royal Holloway) and Barry Luckock (University of Sussex), celebrated the assured and transparent way in which Paul defended his work, in which he illuminated and engaged critically with some very significant and sometimes troubling psychosocial dynamics in complex child safeguarding practice. Anna and Barry celebrated the ethical and methodological integrity of his fieldwork and data analysis. The conclusions reached add to a growing body of psychosocial research, addressed critically for the field. Paul’s research has enabled him to contribute to an agenda for change in the theory and practice of his discipline and profession, within this distinctive and compelling frame of reference. Paul was supervised by Professors Gillian Ruch and Michelle Lefevre.

Lorraine Ellames

‘Dementia Care Training: The view of dementia care workers’

Using a constructivist ontology and an interpretivist epistemology, Lorraine’s research investigated the views of residential care workers (RCWs) working with people with dementia about the training offered for their dementia care role with older people. Findings from thematic analysis showed that the care workers interviewed had very limited or no dementia training or assessment they could remember, and that training had generally been a negative experience. Lorraine was supervised by Dr David Orr and Professor Emerita Suzy Braye.

Risthardh Hare

‘A Realist Evaluation of the Implementation of a Systemic Therapy Course in a Statutory Social Work Setting in Relation to Work with Domestic Violence’

In October 2018, Risthardh successfully defended his critical realist evaluation of the claims of systemic thinking in social work, where domestic violence is a primary concern. External examiner Professor Stan Houston (Dublin) and Dr Russell Whiting (Sussex) celebrated the ‘really good job’ of translation done by Risthardh and the ‘really interesting’ findings presented. They valued especially Risthardh’s ‘strenuous defence’ of his challenging findings for social work practice and its theorisation, and the reflective capability they found in their very thorough examination of his work. Meanwhile, the findings from his Doctor of Social Work study are already having practice impact. Following their implementation in innovative projects in the London Borough of Greenwich, Risthardh is using the critical realist approach in his new post as Assistant Director in Kent, which requires the development of a more dynamic service-wide quality assurance approach for social work practice impact more generally. Risthardh’s supervisory team was Barry Luckock (first supervisor) and Professor Elaine Sharland (second supervisor).

Tirion Havard

‘Beyond Proximity: The covert role of mobile phones in maintaining power and coercive control in the domestic abuse of women’

This research was a grounded theory qualitative study of 12 women who had experienced mobile phones being used as a technology of control within domestic violence. Since being awarded her Doctorate in Social Work, Tirion has



submitted two papers to international peer reviewed journals which have been co-authored with her main supervisor, Professor Michelle Lefevre. The first examines the women's experience of surveillance through the phone from a Foucauldian perspective. The second re-visits the Duluth Power and Control Wheel to provide guidance to practitioners on risk assessment. Tirion's second supervisors were Dr Lei Meyleal (first two years) and Dr Tish Marrable (remainder of studies).

Rachel Larkin

'Who Do You See? How do unaccompanied young women and UK social workers construct and understand each other in practice encounters?'

Rachel's imaginative and courageous research used creative psychosocial methods to explore the experiences of young unaccompanied refugee women. It highlights the ways in which this particular group are constructed and the implications of their treatment for their social work policy and practice. Rachel's research supervisors were Professors Michelle Lefevre and Charles Watters (both Social Work and Social Care).

Alberto Poletti

'The Relationship Between Emotions and the Working Environment in Two Child Protection Teams in Italy and England: A psychosocial exploration'

This psychosocial study utilised a multiple-case study approach to explore the role played by professionals' individual characteristics, team dynamics and the broader emotional texture of the child protection system in shaping the emotional experiences of front-line practitioners. Fieldwork comprised observation of supervision, interviews with practitioners and managers, and group activities within two child

protection teams, one in Italy and one in England. A key finding was that, if professionals are not adequately supported within their working environment, they may be left feeling doubly deprived at an emotional level, firstly from the nature of their undeniably challenging work and, secondly, through the imposition of an unresponsive working environment over which they have minimal control. Alberto was supervised by Professor Michelle Lefevre and Dr Tish Marrable.

Joanna Rawles

'Educating for Professional Judgement: How social work students develop skills in practice.'

Joanna's thesis presented a hermeneutic phenomenological study into how social work students develop the skills required for professional judgement, an area in which there was little existing research. To explore this, she conducted semi-structured interviews constructed around critical incidents of learning on placement with 14 MSc Social Work students from a university in England who were at the point of graduation. The findings indicated that the development of these skills lay in the presence and interrelation of three domains: professional responsibility, facilitation of the professional voice and learner agency. Jo recommended that a re-appraisal of autonomy as relational, and a consideration of the value of autonomy-supportive learning and teaching, could prove instructive to understanding both the development of skills for professional judgement for social work students and the way in which this can be enabled. Joanna was jointly supervised by Professor Michelle Lefevre and Professor Emerita Imogen Taylor.

Makhan Shergill

'Making the Transition from University to the Workplace: The emotional experiences of newly qualified social workers.'

Makhan's qualitative research study explored the subjective experiences of social work graduates in England as they transitioned from the University to their first professional social work role, identifying the role and influence of individual, cultural and structural factors in shaping this experience. The findings suggest that the emotional experience of transition is significantly influenced by a newly qualified social worker's own early childhood experiences and personal dispositions, the availability of containing experiences within the workplace and the influence of the neoliberalised workplace environment. Thus newly qualified social workers' emotions can be considered to be both psychosocially and socially structured within a political context. Makhan's supervisors were Professor Michelle Lefevre and Dr Reima Maglajlic.

Louise Sims

'What can be Learned from the Practice Encounter in Adoption Support Social Work?'

In December 2018, Louise successfully defended her doctoral thesis for which her examiners commended her on its 'exceptional quality' and awarded an unconditional pass. Barry Luckock and Professor Gillian Ruch had the pleasure of supervising Louise's research.

Current

Millicent Ayeh-Danquah Koomson

'Youth at Risk of Smoking and Illegal Drug Use: A comparative study of use by immigrants in Sweden and UK'

Leethen Bartholomew

'Accusations of Child Spirit Possession and Witchcraft: Experiences and outcomes for non-accused children within the same family network'

Victoria Bromley

'The Road to Temporary Accommodation and the Identity of the Single Mother'

Claire Durrant

'Understanding the Emotional Consequences of Severe Dyslexia and Developing Strategies for Teachers to Support Children in Mainstream Education'

Jenny Hewitt

'How do UK Young Adults Experience Civic and Political Engagement in their Everyday Lives?'

Evelyn Keryova

'Exploring Children and Young People's Critical Thinking: The case of YouTube'

Nesreen HA Munshi

'Using Virtual Reality Games at Kindergarten in Saudi Arabia'

May Naswary

'Exploring the Impact of Engagement in Extracurricular or Community Art Activities on Wellbeing: The experiences and voices of young people in Jerusalem'

Rachael Owens

'Scaling Up and Digging Down: Exploring developmental issues arising in the implementation of the family nurse partnership model'

Sushri Sangita Puhan

'The Social Process of Being Adopted and Becoming Family- An exploration of adoption practice in India'

Loreto Rodriguez

'Experiences and Understandings of Psychotherapy for Young Children in Chile who have Experiences Sexual Abuse.'

Paul Shuttleworth

'A Critical Analysis of Kinship Care to Inform Social Work Policy and Practice'

Emma Sowe

'Learning My Place: Exploring peer relationships and other influences on adolescent identities in diverse and diversifying UK schools'

Roma Thomas

'Doing Boy Work? Young masculine subjectivities and professional practice'



New/Upcoming

CSWIR is delighted by the successful outcome of two applications to the ESRC's South East Network for Social Sciences (SeNSS). The SeNSS funded doctoral students, detailed below, will join us in September.

Amy Lynch, a Research Fellow at the Tilda Goldberg Centre for Social Work and Social Care at the University of Bedfordshire will be exploring the role of empathy in child and family social work. She will be supervised by Professors Gillian Ruch and Michelle Lefevre.

The proposed research of Anna Hutchins, an experienced social worker employed by East Sussex Children's Services, will explore the practice challenges associated with conversations about sex between female social workers and young male clients. Anna will be supervised by Professor Michelle Lefevre and Dr Kristine Hickle.

Jo Williams will be joining the Department to continue her doctoral studies which focus on the role of supervision and supervisory relationships. Currently Jo is Programme Delivery Lead for the Practice Supervisors' Development Programme, funded by the Department of Education and delivered by a consortium led by Research in Practice with Sussex, Goldsmiths and the Tavistock and Portman NHS Trust funded. Jo's supervisors are Professor Gillian Ruch and Dr Jeri Damman.



Publications

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Membership

Directorate

CSWIR's Director is **Professor Gillian Ruch**, supported by **Dr Henglien (Lisa) Chen** (Deputy Director), **Dr Nathalie Huegler** (Research Fellow) and **Heather Stanley** (Communications Officer).

Steering Group

Professor Gillian Ruch (Social Work and Social Care) (Chair)
Professor Janet Boddy (Education)
Professor Jackie Cassell (BSMS)
Dr Lisa Chen (Social Work and Social Care)
Professor Jo Moran-Ellis (Sociology)
Professor David Weir (Informatics)
Paul Shuttleworth (Social Work/PGR Representative)

Sussex Faculty

The following were active members of CSWIR research projects and activities, including in partnership with other University of Sussex research centres, during the past year:

Dr Laia Becares (Social Work and Social Care)
Professor Saul Becker (Provost / Social Work and Social Care)
Professor Janet Boddy (Education)
Professor Emerita Suzy Braye (Social Work and Social Care)
Dr Rachel Burr (Social Work and Social Care / Education)

Dr Tam Cane (Social Work and Social Care)
Professor Jackie Cassell (Brighton and Sussex Medical School)
Dr Lisa Chen (Social Work and Social Care)
Dr Jeri Damann (Social Work and Social Care)
Dr Louise Gazeley (Education)
Dr Kristine Hickle (Social Work and Social Care)
Dr Robert James (Social Work and Social Care)
Dr Victoria Jaynes (Social Work and Social Care)
Professor Michelle Lefevre (Social Work and Social Care)
Feylyn Lewis (Social Work and Social Care)
Barry Luckock (Social Work and Social Care)
Dr Reima Ana Maglajlic (Social Work and Social Care)
Dr Tish Marrable (Social Work and Social Care)
Dr David Orr (Social Work and Social Care)
Professor Gillian Ruch (Social Work and Social Care)
Professor Elaine Sharland (Social Work and Social Care)
Professor Rachel Thomson (Social Work and Social Care)
Professor Charles Watters (Social Work and Social Care)
Rebecca Watts (Social Work and Social Care)
Dr Russell Whiting (Social Work and Social Care)

Location

The Centre for Social Work Innovation and Research (CSWIR) is located within the Department of Social Work and Social Care 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 and Hove. London is one hour away by train, and there is easy access to Gatwick and Heathrow airports.

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