

Permanently Progressing Project Update

April 2016

During early 2015, we conducted a recruitment drive of local authority areas within which to conduct the study. We were very pleased by the response, with 21 local authorities signing up with enthusiasm to participate in the outcomes sub-study and ten of those wishing, in addition, to be part of the qualitative, 'in-depth' sub-studies. This exceeded our target number. The participating local authorities represent a good spread of geographical areas and include populations living in urban, rural and island communities. We are grateful to senior management and our designated liaison people in each local authority for their help in progressing the research over the last year.

To date, progress has been made across all six of the research sub-studies.

The Pathways Study

We have started our initial analysis of the national CLAS returns to investigate attributes, circumstances and pathways of a cohort of all children in Scotland under 5 accommodated in year 2012-13 and a comparison group of those looked after at home.

The Policy and Decision-Making Study

Our liaison people in nine local authority areas each arranged a day of focus groups and interviews for us with the aim of exploring policy issues, the permanency planning process and the impact of recent legislation. In total, 16 focus groups and 20 interviews were held with social workers, social work managers and Permanence Panel Chairpersons. These included 131 participants. In addition, two focus groups were held with Children's Hearing System panel members and interviews with two key informants. Feedback indicated that participants valued the opportunity to discuss the issues raised and we have amassed very useful data, which is currently being analysed and will be written up in a stand-alone report.

Literature Reviews

We have completed our search for relevant published work and in the process of drafting the two parts of the review, one that focuses on adoption and fostering and one that focuses on the impact of parental substance misuse upon children.

The Outcomes Study

Information managers and liaison people in 19 local authorities very helpfully provided us with up-to-date information about children's placements, based on the SW identifier numbers of children from the CLAS returns, and their social worker's contact information. Social workers were sent a survey questionnaire asking for detailed information on individual children. We have been very pleased with the response of 409 completed questionnaires, and really appreciate everyone taking the time to fill them in. The data they include will shortly be analysed.

The Qualitative Study

We have recently finalized the research materials for this sub-study, which involves interviews of 40 foster and kinship carers, prospective adopters and adoptive parents in total and the children for whom they are caring, across the ten areas participating in this sub-study. We will shortly be recruiting participants for this and we have confidence in our local liaison people continuing to offer us the considerable help that they have to date in progressing this exciting part of the research.

Ethical approval

Ethical approval for the project has been given by the Stirling University Research Ethics Committee which, according to the agreement between ADSW and the Scottish Government on ethical approval and access for social care research in Scotland, precludes the requirement for multiple separate ethical applications.