

# DoCS Research to Practice Update

A regular update for staff on the latest national and international research

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## Research Publications – What's New!

### Research to practice

*The Research to Practice Program provides an essential link between the latest research and DoCS staff.*

*As part of this important initiative, the Research to Practice Update encompasses a broad range of research publications and resources to reflect the diversity of DoCS staff.*

*If you have any comments or suggestions about how we could improve this Update to make it more useful or relevant to your work, please email the Research to Practice Team at:*

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### Early Intervention & Prevention

**Placing the Horse in Front of the Wagon: Toward a Conceptual Understanding of the Development of Self-Esteem in Children and Adolescents**

Yan D, S., (2007) *Child and Adolescent Social Work Journal*, 24 (2), pages 121-131

The article describes how self esteem is developed and maintained in children and adolescents and is conceptualised in three distinct ways. It provides insight into factors that influence self esteem development and suggests interventions that can assist build up self esteem in children and adolescents.

This article is available from the DoCS Library.

**Variation in community intervention programmes and consequences for children and families: the example of Sure Start Local Programmes**

Edward Melhuish et al., Institute for the Study of Children Families and Social Issues, Birkbeck, University of London, UK, *Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry*, 48 (6). Published June 2007, pages 543-551

An area-based initiative, Sure Start Local Programmes (SSLPs), was established by the UK government to reduce social exclusion through improving the well-being of children aged 0-3 years and their families in disadvantaged communities.

This article discusses the national evaluation which examined the links between variation in programme implementation and effectiveness.

This article is available at:  
<http://www.blackwell-synergy.com/doi/abs/10.1111/j.1469-7610.2007.01705.x>

**From Evidence to Practice: Addressing health inequalities through Sure Start**

Halliday, J. and Asthana, S. (2007) *Evidence & Policy: A Journal of Research, Debate and Practice*, Volume 3, Number 1, January 2007, pages 31-45

Tackling health inequalities has become a key policy objective in the UK in recent years, with inequalities in early life accorded strategic importance. The Sure Start programme has been central to this strategy. Over time, however, the early recognition given to the evidence base and the interconnected nature of social problems has given way to a more targeted approach, arguably marginalising those aspects that have been key to success. The aim of this article is to explore and explain this shift in focus and to assess the implications for the health inequalities agenda.

This article is available from the DoCS Library.

### Child Protection

**Child Neglect and the Law: Catapults, Thresholds and Delay**

Dickens, J. (2007), *Child Abuse Review*, 16, pages 77-92

This paper discusses the dilemmas and challenges that arise when child neglect cases reach a level of severity that court proceedings become necessary.

It identifies the complexities of determining appropriate social work and legal responses to child neglect and trying to fit these into the wider organisational priorities and social policy imperatives.

The paper draws on data from interviews with local authority social work staff and legal staff in England.

This article is available at:  
[www3.interscience.wiley.com/cgi-bin/fulltext/114214572/PDFSTART](http://www3.interscience.wiley.com/cgi-bin/fulltext/114214572/PDFSTART)

### **Signs, Symptoms and Risk Factors: Health Visitors' perspectives of Child Neglect**

Lewin, D., Herron, H. (2007), *Child Abuse Review*, 16, pages 93-107

This article briefly reviews literature on neglect and reports on a study conducted in the United Kingdom which examined how health visitors rate signs, symptoms and risk factors of child neglect. Neglect was determined as a complex multi-faceted concept making it difficult to recognise and define precisely and operationally. The findings showed that health visitors' perspectives were in agreement with other professional judgements on the significant features of neglect however emphasises the importance of establishing a professional consensus on neglect in protecting neglected children.

This article is available at:  
[www3.interscience.wiley.com/cgi-bin/fulltext/114214578/PDFSTART](http://www3.interscience.wiley.com/cgi-bin/fulltext/114214578/PDFSTART)

### **Can Childhood Neglect be Assessed and Prevented Through Childcare Skills and Training?**

McDaniel, B., & Dillenburger, K. (2007), *Child Abuse Review*, 16, pages 120-129

This paper explores if child neglect can be assessed and prevented through parental childcare skills training with young typically developing parents who are socially isolated and materially disadvantaged.

The study looked at the capacity of parents with learning difficulties to care for their children adequately. It assesses parents' skill level prior to, during and following the implementation of the

parental skill training programme intervention. It provides an analysis of the differences in maternal behaviour patterns for specific tasks. The study suggests that some parents with learning difficulties can learn and maintain new skills however serious difficulties can arise if these are not maintained. The findings purport that childcare skills, assessment and training may offer an early indicator of long term difficulties.

This article is available at:  
[www3.interscience.wiley.com/cgi-bin/fulltext/114214576/PDFSTART](http://www3.interscience.wiley.com/cgi-bin/fulltext/114214576/PDFSTART)

### **Ampe Akelyernemane Meke Mekarle "Little Children are Sacred"**

### **Report of the Northern Territory Board of Inquiry into the Protection of Aboriginal Children from Sexual Abuse 2007**

Department of the Chief Minister, Office of Indigenous Policy (2007), Darwin

The Board of Inquiry was created by the Northern Territory Government in August 2006 to research and report on allegations of sexual abuse of Aboriginal children. The Inquiry was established to find better ways to protect Aboriginal children from sexual abuse. The Inquiry gathered and reviewed a vast amount of information that was shaped into 97 recommendations for the Chief Minister. Underlying the Inquiry's findings was the common view that sexual abuse of Aboriginal children is happening largely because of the breakdown of Aboriginal culture and society.

A copy of the report is available at:  
[www.nt.gov.au/dcm/inquiry/saac/](http://www.nt.gov.au/dcm/inquiry/saac/)

### **Allegations of family violence and child abuse in family law children's proceedings: a pre-reform exploratory study**

Australian Institute of Family Studies (2007), Canberra

This report examines the prevalence

and nature of allegations of family violence and child abuse in family law children's proceedings filed in 2003; the extent to which alleging parties provided evidence in support of their allegations, and to which allegations were denied, admitted or left unanswered by the other party; and the extent to which court outcomes of post-separation parenting disputes appeared to be related to the presence or absence of allegations.

This article is available at:

<http://www.aifs.gov.au/institute/pubs/resreport15/aifsreport15.pdf>

## Domestic Violence in NSW: Briefing Paper No. 7/07

Drabsch, T. (2007) *NSW Parliamentary Library Research Services*, NSW Government.

This Briefing Paper discusses issues surrounding domestic violence in NSW. Domestic violence is an issue that permeates all levels of society and it is believed that approximately 1.6 million women in Australia have experienced domestic violence in some form since the age of 15. The paper discusses the various ways in which domestic violence and family violence are defined, as well as the incidence, prevalence and strategies being adopted by various jurisdictions.

A copy of the Briefing Paper is available at:

[www.parliament.nsw.gov.au](http://www.parliament.nsw.gov.au)

## Out-of-Home Care

### Returning to education after care: Protective factors in the development of resilience

Mallon, James, *Adoption & Fostering Journal*, Volume 31, Number 1, Spring 2007, British Association for Adoption and Fostering, pages 106-117

Research to date on the academic performance of looked after children have tended to concentrate

on their consistent and significant underachievement compared to the general population of schoolchildren during the school years. However, some people who have been looked after in local authority care during childhood return to study later in life as mature students. This study identifies protective factors that enabled some participants to develop resilience and achieve academic success, despite many risk factors in their pre-care and care experience.

This article is available from the DoCS Library.

### The Search For Stability and Permanence: Modelling the Pathways of Long-stay Looked After Children

Schofield, G., Thoburn, J., Howell, D. and Dickens, J. (2007) *British Journal of Social Work*, Volume 37, No. 4, pages 619-642

This paper presents findings from a study of children looked after by 24 local authorities. It highlights a complex picture of continuity and discontinuity in attempts to achieve stability and permanence in a range of birth family, foster care, adoption, residential and leaving care placements for long-stay children.

This article is available at:

<http://bjsw.oxfordjournals.org/cgi/reprint/bch275v1>

### Educational outcomes of children on guardianship or custody orders: A pilot study

Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (2007). *Child Welfare Series* no. 42. Cat. no. CWS 30. Canberra.

It is well known that education is important for the overall wellbeing of children and that literacy and numeracy levels are generally high among Australian children. But what is not so well known is whether all children, including those children who are in the child protection

system, are academically performing at similar levels. There is limited Australian research on this topic, and this pilot study addresses this gap by examining the educational performance of children and young people on guardianship or custody orders.

A copy of this article is available at: [www.aihw.gov.au/publications/cws/eocogoco/eocogoco.pdf](http://www.aihw.gov.au/publications/cws/eocogoco/eocogoco.pdf)

## Other

### Revisiting the Knowledge Base of Social Work: A Framework for Practice

Trevithick, P. (2007) *British Journal of Social Work*, published 24 May 2007

Considerable confusion remains about what constitutes the *knowledge base of social work* and how this can be applied to the dilemmas regularly encountered in direct work. This article begins with an account of key writing on the subject of knowledge and, drawing on these works, it describes a framework that includes three interweaving features: (i) theoretical knowledge (or theory); (ii) factual knowledge (including research); and (iii) practice/practical/personal knowledge.

This article is available at: <http://bjsw.oxfordjournals.org/cgi/reprint/bcm026v1>

### Young Australians: their health and wellbeing 2007

Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (2007), Canberra  
This is the third national statistical report on young people in Australia. This report brings together the most up-to-date national data on the health status of young Australians aged 12-24 years and the factors influencing their health.

This report is available at <http://www.aihw.gov.au/publications/index.cfm/title/10451>

### Evaluation of the Bringing Them Home and Indigenous Mental Health Programs: Final Report

Urbis Keys Young (2007)

This report, commissioned by The Office for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health, Commonwealth Department for Health and Aging, discusses the evaluation of four programs, including:

- The Link-Up Program
- The Bringing Them Home (BTH) Program
- The Social and Emotional Wellbeing (SEWB) Regional Centre (RC) Program; and
- The Mental Health Program.

A copy of the full report is available at: [www.health.gov.au](http://www.health.gov.au)

### Indigenous Community Governance Project: Year Two Research Findings

Hunt, J. and Smith, D.E. (2007), Working Paper 36/2007, Centre for Aboriginal Economic Policy Research, Australian National University, Canberra.

This is the second research report by the Indigenous Community Governance Project (ICGP). This Project explores the nature of Indigenous community governance in Australia—to understand what works, what doesn't work, and why.

This report brings together findings from the fieldwork conducted during 2006, based on evidence drawn from case studies of Indigenous governance in action within differing community, geographical, cultural and political settings across the nation. It focuses on six major governance issues that have come to the fore in the 2006 research. The report identifies a number of practical program and governance development responses that could meaningfully contribute to addressing current governance gaps and shortfalls identified in the case studies.

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A copy of the full report is available at: [www.apo.org.au/linkboard/results.chtml?filename\\_num=151716](http://www.apo.org.au/linkboard/results.chtml?filename_num=151716)

**Homeless people in SAAP: SAAP National Data Collection annual report 2005-06**

Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (2007) *SAAP NDCA report Series 11*. Cat. no. HOU 156. Canberra: AIHW.

This report provides an overview of assistance given to clients and their accompanying children by the Supported Accommodation Assistance Program (SAAP) during the financial year 2005-06. This national report is accompanied by state and territory supplements.

The report is available at: <http://www.aihw.gov.au/publications/hou/saapndcar05-06/saapndcar05-06.pdf>

## New Books

Corby, B. (2006) *Child Abuse: Towards a Knowledge Base* (3<sup>rd</sup> Ed), Buckingham: Open University Press

The need to understand child abuse and neglect in its historical, social and political context remains key to this book with a broadened content to include issues such as the exploitation and maltreatment of children world-wide; the commercial sexual exploitation of children; the treatment of child asylum seekers in Britain; the abuse of children on the internet; and the controversy relating to child deaths.

The also book contains updated research evidence from across the world that investigates child abuse and neglect as they relate to gender, race, ethnicity and poverty.

## Resources

Speech Pathologists working in Early Intervention Programs with Aboriginal Australians: Fact Sheet 2.4 (year unknown)

The Speech Pathology Association of Australia Limited

This fact sheet discusses the issues of middle ear diseases in the high proportion of Aboriginal children, which left untreated, can lead to problems in the development of listening, speech and language skills.

This fact sheet is available at: [www.speechpathologyaustralia.org.au/library/24\\_FactSheet.pdf](http://www.speechpathologyaustralia.org.au/library/24_FactSheet.pdf)

## Useful Website

Early Childhood Australia Inc.—  
[www.earlychildhoodaustralia.org.au](http://www.earlychildhoodaustralia.org.au)

This website contains useful information about a range of issues including links to sites with practical activities to help children improve their self-confidence and esteem.

## Disclaimer

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