



# University of HUDDERSFIELD

## University of Huddersfield Repository

Williams, Sasha

Celebrating child welfare models of social work is everybody's business

### Original Citation

Williams, Sasha (2016) Celebrating child welfare models of social work is everybody's business. In: Joint Social Work Education and Research Conference (JSWEC) 2016, Wednesday, July 13, 2016 - Friday, July 15, 2016, Milton Keynes, UK. (Unpublished)

This version is available at <http://eprints.hud.ac.uk/id/eprint/30964/>

The University Repository is a digital collection of the research output of the University, available on Open Access. Copyright and Moral Rights for the items on this site are retained by the individual author and/or other copyright owners. Users may access full items free of charge; copies of full text items generally can be reproduced, displayed or performed and given to third parties in any format or medium for personal research or study, educational or not-for-profit purposes without prior permission or charge, provided:

- The authors, title and full bibliographic details is credited in any copy;
- A hyperlink and/or URL is included for the original metadata page; and
- The content is not changed in any way.

For more information, including our policy and submission procedure, please contact the Repository Team at: [E.mailbox@hud.ac.uk](mailto:E.mailbox@hud.ac.uk).

<http://eprints.hud.ac.uk/>

# Celebrating child welfare models of social work is everybody's business

University of  
**Huddersfield**  
Inspiring tomorrow's professionals

Inspiring tomorrow's professionals



**THE AWARDS**  
WINNER  
2011, 2012, 2013, 2015

**THE AWARDS** 2013  
AWARD WINNER  
UNIVERSITY OF THE YEAR



# About me

- Senior Lecturer in Social Work at University of Huddersfield
- Registered Social Worker
- Solicitor (non-practising) formerly working in family law and immigration and asylum law
- Graduate member of the British Psychological Society
- PhD awarded in 2015 entitled: *Drawing the Line: An Exploration of How Lay People Construct Child Neglect*

# Rationale for the research

- **Personal interest**
- **Professional – extent and effect of child neglect became research focus** (e.g. reviews by Daniel, Taylor, & Scott, 2011; Davies & Ward, 2012; Meadows et al, 2011; Rees et al, 2011, Brandon et al, 2013, Radford et al, 2011)
- **Practical – lay concern and confusion** (e.g. Burgess et al, 2012, 2013, 2014)
- **Political – Big Society** (e.g. Fisher & Gruescu, 2011)
- **Lay involvement in expert decision making** (e.g. lay involvement in Local Safeguarding Children Boards)

- Qualitative (discourse analysis)
- 10 focus groups
- Pre-existing groups
- Convenience sampling
- Potential participants asked to exclude themselves if they had received professional training in child neglect or considered themselves a child protection professional

# Participants

- 46 adults in total
- Aged 18-90 (one group of 18 year olds)
- 38 female, 8 male
- 34 declared themselves to be white British, English or Scottish, 12 declared themselves to be of other ethnic origin
- 24 participants said that they were/had been parents, guardians or carers, 22 had not.

# Defining neglect: needs

- *Sue: my way of defining [child neglect] is not providing a child with what it needs to develop fully (Group 4)*
- *Kirsty: ...the word 'needs' was the first word that came into my mind... (Group 6)*

# Types of needs

- 4 domains of needs
  - Physical needs – Deprived Child
  - Emotional needs - Unloved Child
  - Training needs – Uncontrolled Child
  - Supervisory needs – Escaping Child
- Unmet needs cause damage – everybody's business
- Unmet needs NOT same as neglect



# Defining neglect: parenting

- *Mel: ...it's not doing what you should be doing as a parent. (Group 4)*
- *Ros: ..where the very basics of parenting has not been provided. (Group 1)*

---

# Failure in normal parenting

- 2 aspects to normal parenting:
  - emotional bond to the child, AND
  - parenting skills and knowledge.
- Failure of normal parenting PLUS unmet need allows child to be positioned as neglected and parent as neglectful

- Neglect –
  - Parent has emotional bond but no skills and knowledge –  
CLUELESS
  - Parent has skills and knowledge but no emotional bond –  
UNDERINVESTED
  - Parent has no emotional bond and no skills and knowledge –  
UNSUITABLE
- NOT Neglect
  - Parent has emotional bond and skills and knowledge -  
OVERBURDENED

# Overburdened parents

- *Cora: ...there was nothing she could do about it, if she could if she could have done something about it she would have, so although it looked, you know, it looked as if her children were being neglected it actually, she wasn't neglecting them. (Group 3)*
- *Kas: ...like the rundown council houses, not clean, not up to standard and children are living in there so would you class that as neglect of parents or would you class that as neglect of the government? (Group 10)*

# Constructing 'social services'

- *Ruth: but then I think [long pause] social services have got such a, those two words can strike a lot of fear into people, can't they? (Group 3)*
- *Sheila:... the word social services drives the parents away. (Group 1)*
- Media driven, negative constructions of an all powerful, punitive, failing and incompetent service.

- Removal
  - *Jen: I do believe that quite often it happens, you know swoop and grab. (Group 2)*
- Failure to remove
  - *Lucy: ...you'll read of different cases where social workers have visited two or three times and yet the child is very badly neglected and it's missed. (Group 1)*
- Narrow focus on wrong children
  - *Mark: ....there's nothing a social worker is going to do about it because there are so many of them. (Group 6)*

---

# What participants wanted

- Keep children within their families
- Support for parents (from professionals and community)
- Support for children within families
- Education for everyone about what children need
- Non-stigmatising services
- Non-threatening and non-frightening services

# Meeting children's needs

- *Kam: At the moment it's just getting so difficult with funding being cut back and what's happening with childcare and stuff especially linked to community centres. (Group 9)*
- *Maddy:...in the context of austerity and cuts being made not just to benefits but to services that must increase the pressures that parents experience and will make it more likely that children are neglected. (Group 3)*
- *Laura: ...and you're just muddling through and often there's not the help and support there (Group 6).*



# Celebrating welfare models

- Focus on social work and supporting child welfare
- Focus on working with children and families not child removal
- Support available from easily accessible non-stigmatising universal services
- Engaging communities in supporting children and families
- Reframing social services in terms of family support rather than child removal

# References

- Brandon, M., Bailey, S., Belderson, P. and Larsson, B. (2013), *Neglect and Serious Case Reviews*, available at: <https://www.nspcc.org.uk/globalassets/documents/research-reports/neglect-serious-case-reviews-report.pdf>.
- Burgess, C., Daniel, B., Scott, J., Mulley, K., Derbyshire, D. and Downie, M. (2012), *Child Neglect in 2011: An Annual Review*, available at: <https://www.actionforchildren.org.uk/media/3361/childneglectin2011.pdf>.
- Burgess, C., Daniel, B., Scott, J., Mulley, K. and Dobbin, H. (2013), *The State of Child Neglect in the UK*, available at: [https://www.actionforchildren.org.uk/media/3270/2013\\_neglect\\_fullreport\\_v12.pdf](https://www.actionforchildren.org.uk/media/3270/2013_neglect_fullreport_v12.pdf).
- Burgess, C., Daniel, B., Scott, J., Dobbin, H., Mulley, K. and Whitfield, E. (2014), *Preventing Child Neglect in the UK: What Makes Services Accessible to Children and Families?*, available at: [https://www.actionforchildren.org.uk/media/3214/preventing-child-neglect-in-the-uk\\_annual-review\\_march2014.pdf](https://www.actionforchildren.org.uk/media/3214/preventing-child-neglect-in-the-uk_annual-review_march2014.pdf).
- Daniel, B., Taylor, J. and Scott, J. (2011), *Recognizing and Helping the Neglected Child: Evidence-Based Practice for Assessment and Intervention*, Jessica Kingsley Publishers, London
- Davies, C. and Ward, H. (2012), *Safeguarding Children across Services: Messages from Research*, available at: [https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/183231/DFE-RR164.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/183231/DFE-RR164.pdf).
- Fisher, D. and Gruescu, S. (2011), *Children and the Big Society: Backing Communities to Keep the next Generation Safe and Happy*, available at: <http://www.respublica.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/01/Children-and-BS.pdf>.
- Meadows, P., Tunstill, J., George, A., Dhudwar, A. and Kurtz, Z. (2011), *The Costs and Consequences of Child Maltreatment*, available at: <https://www.nspcc.org.uk/globalassets/documents/research-reports/costs-and-consequences-child-maltreatment.pdf>.
- Radford, L., Corral, S., Bradley, C., Fisher, H., Bassett, C., Howat, N. and Collishaw, S. (2011), *Child Abuse and Neglect in the UK Today*, available at <https://www.nspcc.org.uk/globalassets/documents/research-reports/child-abuse-neglect-uk-today-research-report.pdf>
- Rees, G., Stein, M., Hicks, L. and Gorin, S. (2011), *Adolescent Neglect: Research, Policy and Practice*, Jessica Kingsley, London.

---

# Acknowledgements:

- Many thanks to my PhD Supervisory team Prof. Nigel Parton, Dr. Sue Peckover and Dr. Jo Woodiwiss
- This research was funded by the ESRC studentship scheme [grant number ES/IO24301/1]
- Contact details: [sasha.williams@hud.ac.uk](mailto:sasha.williams@hud.ac.uk)