

Making Research Count



Autumn | 2014



Looking back and looking ahead

This autumn's newsletter looks back at what has already proved to be a very stimulating programme, with seminars covering The Troubled Families Programme, palliative care, Roma inclusion and how to get the best out of being a part of the social care profession.

We are also starting to develop our programme for **2015-16**. Topics already suggested include serious case reviews, autism, alcohol and substance mis-use and working with lesbian, gay and transgender people. Please tell us what you would like to see on the programme. Also, if you have suggestions for venues, we are always willing to consider them. This year we are delivering events in Leeds and Hull as well as York, so do tell us what you think.

Our full programme can be found at www.york.ac.uk/spsw/mrc/events - do get in touch if you would like to attend.

The Researcher-in-Residence model

A paper has been published recently in BMJ Quality and Safety about the emerging 'Researcher-in-Residence' model which attempts to break down the traditional barriers between researchers (traditionally seen as the producers of scientific knowledge) and practitioners (traditionally regarded as recipients and users of that knowledge). We think it makes for interesting reading! : bit.ly/11sXiZ6

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2014-15 Programme

The 2014-15 event programme is now under way, with the first 4 events having taken place. The programme was launched with **‘Troubled families; policy and practice’**, led by Aniela Wenham of the University of York and Stephen Crossley from the University of Durham.

Stephen Crossley opened with a timely reminder of the history of language and terminology from Victorian times to present day. This led to a discussion about what’s changed – if anything – since the family service units of the 1950’s.

“Interesting forum to debate the programme and how outcomes are measured”

There was some lively and thought provoking debate on the ethics and politics of talking to families about whether they were labelled as a troubled family, with many practitioners pointing out that their local authorities would recontextualise this in a less judgemental way.

“Research can change the shape of practice”

Aniela Wenham focused on young people’s perceptions of the Troubled Families Programme, observing that young people were often passive and silent.

Our second event, **“Does palliative care need its own advanced care plan?”** was delivered at the Academic Unit within St. Gemma’s Hospice in Leeds, in partnership with the regional hospice network in Yorkshire and Humber. Many of the speakers and presenters were engaged in hospice based research. Topics covered included the prevalence of life-limiting and life-threatening conditions in young people, upskilling adult teams, respite care and breathlessness.

Our third event on 15th October was **“Roma: employment and routes to inclusion in the UK”**. This event was held in partnership with Salford University, with speakers from the Tavistock Institute for Human Relations, Durham University and Migration Yorkshire. The seminar brought together key findings from some of the latest comparative empirical research in the field of Roma inclusion, with a specific focus on employment.

“This event has widened my knowledge and passion to pursue further training and learning”

Our fourth event, **“Thriving and Surviving in Social Work”** brought together recently qualified social workers and more experienced colleagues for a range of research dissemination presentations and practical workshops. Keynote speaker Jemima Burnage spoke about her personal journey as a social worker and topics included the recruitment and retention of social workers, and secondary trauma and resilience in social work.

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PhD Spotlight

In this section we select a recent PhD that has caught our eye and provide you with a brief summary. If you would like further details, or would be interested in seeing this research featured in our events programme, do get in touch.

Exploring the Lived Experiences of Young Women who are also Mothers

Barry Fearnley, undertaken at Leeds Beckett University, supervised by Professor Nick Frost.

The predominant discourse, and social constructs, of teenage pregnancy and teenage motherhood is that they are a 'problem'. Much of the existing research is based on quantitative research studies and many of these studies are secondary analysis of previous research or literature reviews. There are few studies that explore the lives of young mothers. There are fewer studies exploring the lives of young women who are also mothers. However, the status of 'mother' forms only part of the young woman's identity. This doctoral study was an exploration of the lived experiences of young women who are also mothers and therefore, the young women's voices were paramount.

The research included a focus group, eighteen semi-structured interviews, thirty-six hours of participant observation and a final sample of fifty-six young women. The young women's narratives and fieldnotes provide an illustration of contemporary young motherhood. The narration of their experiences included their exuberance of being a mother. They described life prior to the birth of their children, discussed education and their relationship with the children's father, their parents and friends. All of the young women had experienced some form of hostile reaction towards them leaving them feeling intimidated, frustrated or angry. Most of the young women had aspirations, but all spoke about improving their lives for themselves and their children. The significance of this study was that it did not focus on the 'pregnancy' or 'mother' status, but rather on the voices of the young women who are also mothers.

The research highlighted many positive aspects of young motherhood. These included how the young women parented their children, had re-engaged in education and had aspirations for their own futures. These aspects are rarely recognised or acknowledged by professionals. Other experiences were in relation to the hostility they were subjected to on a daily basis. This hostility was not just instigated by strangers and in fact many of the young women reported that the professionals who were working with them also often displayed hostile behaviour.

It is evident from the findings that professionals need to be cognisant of their own practice and acknowledge that young mothers are not a homogenous group and many can, and do, parent their children as well as any other parent.



Impact; Can attending an event *really* change the way you work?

In June 2014 we held an event “Taking on and taking over; physically disabled young adults and their care and support arrangements”. The event featured presentations by researchers Wendy Mitchell and Jenni Brooks from the University of York, David Abbott from the University of Bristol, and the personal story of a young man from York, Chris Edmondson. Little is known about the experiences of physically disabled young adults, despite this group being perhaps one of the most likely to aspire to manage their own care and support arrangements. Practitioners also report little experience of working with this group.

Delegates were posed some thought provoking questions about the policies and practices within their own organisations, which as one delegate said, “instigated a major debate to take back to our team”. We will follow up this event in March 2015 by inviting the delegates to share with us whether their practice has changed and whether their employing organisation has reviewed its policies in this area of work. We will report back in our Summer 2015 newsletter

Meet the team


Martin Webber is the Academic Lead for MRC York. Martin is an Anniversary Reader in Social Work and Director of the International Centre for Mental Health Social Research.

Angela Portz is the programme co-ordinator, liaising with subscribing organisations and academics to design and develop the programme of events.

Lisa Thurlow is the programme administrator, managing bookings and finance.

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