



Notre Dame Kinship Family Support Service Evaluation

About the study

An outline of the planned study is given below.

Background

The Notre Dame Centre is a voluntary agency established in 1931 in response to local need. Since its inception, it has provided a range of services to emotionally troubled children, young people and their families as well as those who work with them. The history and longevity of the Centre is significant in itself in that it originated around the time of the early pioneers in our present understanding of child development such as Donald Winnicott, John Bowlby, Melanie Klein and Anna Freud; this was also around the time of child guidance service becoming established as a service in the UK. The approach adopted by the Centre since its early days is described as psychodynamic and holding the child at the centre of any intervention. Work with those now known as 'Kinship Carers' and the children they support therefore fits in with Notre Dame's historical role in Glasgow as adopting an innovative response to local need.

Kinship Family Project

There has been growing awareness in Scotland of the need for support for Kinship Carers and the children whom they look after. This is possibly reflective of the increasing number of children placed in kinship care; these children are estimated to make up around a fifth of all looked after placements (over 3000 children) (Kidner 2012) . In addition, informal kinship care arrangements are common. The Centre noted that CAMHS teams, Social Work and Educational Psychology departments were referring increasing numbers of children who were being looked after by relatives. In response, the Notre Dame Centre designed a designated Kinship Family Project, specifically to meet the needs of this group. Funding for the project was initially obtained from Children in Need. This funding has additionally allowed families to self-refer and the Centre to respond more quickly than would otherwise have been the case.

Intervention comprises individual work with carers and with children as well as dyadic work and group work. The Centre's independent status, allows the service for any child to be led by the needs of the child and family rather than by the restrictions imposed by the funding body. In addition, links have been

established with a number of Kinship Carers groups in Glasgow and the Centre Manager of The Notre Dame Centre visits regularly in a supportive role. The project work thus far provided evidence for a successful application to the 'Big' Fund for the forthcoming project (2013- 2018).

The Objectives for the evaluation study are as follows:

1. To identify the processes of the service:

- What are the unique features of the service?

In this question we are seeking to establish 'what is different' in this project from other services that the families may have been offered.

- How do children and families experience the service?

In this question again we are seeking to explore from the children and families perspective, how they experience receiving the service.

- What are the views of staff and other stakeholders?

In this question again we are seeking to explore from other stakeholders, what they perceive as the unique features of the service and what this offers carers and children.

- What do children, carers, staff and stakeholders identify as the impacts of the service?

In this questions we are seeking to explore from the different 'stakeholders' what they experience as the impact of the service. This may be different for each person.

- How are positive impacts derived from the activities provided?

In this question we are seeking to ascertain how these are achieved; which part of the process has led to positive impacts.

- Are there any refinements or improvements that could be made?

Sometimes those in receipt of a service are reluctant to raise how this could be improved. This will give an opportunity to raise these with a third party.

2. To assess impact (outcomes) designed to answer questions such as:

- What types of outcomes are achieved by children and carers?

Sometimes outcomes can be set by other agencies. This question gives an opportunity for those in receipt of the service to comment on what they perceive to be the outcomes.

- What size and scale of change to outcomes are achieved by children and carers?

As above, those in receipt of a service will have their unique perception on the outcomes.

- Are these outcomes sustainable?

This questions aims to identify if changes are sustainable over time and in the face of new challenges once the service has withdrawn.

- Can these outcomes be directly attributed to the service (or activities within it)?

This question seeks to explore any correlation between outcomes and the service itself. Again families and professionals bring a different perspective to this.

3. To explore the context of the service:

- Why do families self-refer and what are families referred by stakeholders?

This question seeks to understand the difference between those families who chose to refer themselves v those who are referred by other stakeholders. While we may hold ideas, again families can give a different insight to this.

- What other services or sources have these families used / attempted to use?

This question not only seeks to tease out what other services families have used, but also the experience of these. Are children experiencing a sense of 'failure' at other services before referring to the Notre Dame service? Are there other services that can be used in partnership with the Notre Dame project? What are the links and communication between the services.

- What else in the lives of these children and families is important?

This question seeks to explore other important experiences in children and families lives; other family members, friends, community projects, social and leisure pursuits, etc.

- Which children and families might be best able to benefit from the service?

This question seeks to establish if there are some children and families who are better able to benefit from the service; this may be related to age gender or other personal, family or social attributes.

- What else could be done to help these families benefit from the service

This question seeks to establish if there are any other ways in which the service could be delivered to benefit the families.

Methods used:

This study will employ a mixed methods approach to the research, utilising mainly qualitative methods, and descriptive analysis of any numeric data available. The mixed methods approach will enable the research team to gather information about different areas of the service with views from multiple perspectives. In particular it will enable to team to gather information about :

- The context of the service
- The impact of the service
- Profile of service users
- The carer and children's perspective and experience of the service
- The service delivery process

Use of Existing Data

A considerable amount of data is already collected by Notre Dame Centre to review outcomes for individual children and their families, to meet the requirements of referrers and funders and for internal monitoring and review purposes. Tools include:

- Strength and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ)
- Children's Global Assessment Scale (CGAS)
- Stirling Children's Wellbeing Scale (SCWS)
- Health of the Nation Outcomes Scales (HoNOS)
- Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale (WEMWBS) [used with adults]

The Centre also holds administrative data which could indicate drop-out rates, rates of re-referral and other potentially useful indicators. A further potential source of data includes team reviews of family interventions which occur every 8-10 weeks and service reviews conducted by the staff team every six months.

Existing data from these sources will be used as part of the study process. This will be passed to the research team in aggregated form. Data will be fully anonymised where they could be disaggregated to individual level. Any worker asked to share this information will be asked to consent and will be given information about effective ways to anonymise information.

Collection of new data:

- Pre and post-intervention interviews with kinship carers using the service. These will be semi-structured interviews to ascertain baseline, expectations of service, impact and evaluation. These will be conducted by the researchers, Interviews will be semi-structured typically around 60 minutes, with permission they will be audio recorded. If researchers are not able to access the family prior to intervention, they will still be invited to take part in a one-off interview to provide information about the project.
- Interviews with children and young people using the service (potentially using talking mats, art work or similar approach where required). For example 'interviews' with younger children (8-12 for example) may involve participation in a favoured activity such as drawing, modelling or playing with toys. With permission they will be audio recorded. These interviews would typically be one-off, unless the young person asks to meet again whilst they are still using the project.
- Context group interview(s) / focus groups with kinship carers not using the service. Kinship Carers have regular group meetings in community centres throughout Glasgow attended by staff from Notre Dame Centre. Focus groups inviting participants from these groups will contribute to understanding and explaining the challenges wider context. With permission of all participants they will be audio recorded.
- Participant observation of group session(s) Subject to agreement of anyone present, researchers will attend the centre and engage in some of the group activities provided, they will write outline field notes following these sessions. They will not be recorded in any other way.
- Interviews with workers from the project and other professionals (e.g. referrers). These will be conducted face to face or by phone if the participant prefers. They will be semi-structured and will take place at a time and location suitable for the participant. With permission they will be audio-recorded,

In preparation for all interviews and focus groups broad, flexible topic guides will be prepared (draft questions attached as a single document). Schedules will be used flexibly to allow the participants to share their narrative at a pace that is suitable for them. It may be in some interviews that a 'couple' e.g. grandparents or co-workers would want to take part, researchers will respect the preference of each individual in this regard, consent would be sought from each individual.

More information about the study can be obtained by contacting Dr Vicki Welch, Senior Research Fellow, CELCIS. Vicki.welch@strath.ac.uk 0141 555 8505