



THE UNIVERSITY OF
MELBOURNE



Newsletter - December 2016

Welcome to the last edition of the *kContact Newsletter* for 2016.



Project Update

All follow-up interviews with parents, carer and workers have now been completed in both Victoria and the ACT, and data entry has begun. We were pleased that most people who participated in the baseline interviews also completed a follow-up interview.

While the follow-up interviews have not yet been analysed, worker interviews in Victoria indicate a generally positive reaction to the principles driving the practice enhancement intervention. In particular, planning contact in a more structured way was seen by a large proportion of workers as useful in that more thought was put into arrangements that suited everyone, and into planning activities with parents that parents (and children) could manage without things falling apart. Workers had definite (and various) opinions about which cases were most appropriate for the intervention.

NSW Study

In NSW, three organisations have so far agreed to participate in the study, and data collection will begin in early 2017. The NSW study will use the same study methodology as has been used in ACT and Victoria. The additional study sites will add to the robustness of the study findings.

Children's Study

Analysis from the children's study continues to progress. Recent efforts have focused on an activity which explored what children's families would look like if they could make them any way they wanted. Some children expressed clear wishes to return exclusively to their birth parents' care, but the majority described families which included their foster family as well as some form of relationship with one or both birth parents. Interestingly, children who focused much more on their birth family often struggled with contact as their actual experiences on contact visits usually fell short of their hopes. On the other hand, children who focused on their foster families appeared to prioritise the light hearted and fun aspects of visits. Some children also made important distinctions between what they wanted and what they believed was good for them in the long term. We look forward to opportunities to share these findings. (Rhys Thorpe, PhD student)

Contact Mapping Exercise

The Contact Mapping Exercise was undertaken to establish which children in the kContact partner programs have had contact with their parents, their siblings or extended family over the past 12 months, and whether contact with parents drops off once children move into long-term care of permanency case plans.

Information about just over 1000 children was collected and is currently being analysed. Findings show that during the 12 months prior to the data collection in June :

- 1 in 5 children had had no contact with either *parent*
- 1 in 6 children had had no contact with any *siblings*
- 1 in 17 children had had no contact with *parents or siblings*
- 1 in 30 children had had no contact with *parents, siblings or extended family*

If you have any queries or updates about any aspect of the kContact study please contact Stephanie Taplin or Margaret Kertesz via their personal email or the study email ICPS.KContact@acu.edu.au.

Welcome to the new project manager – Aino Suomi

Aino Suomi has now commenced as project manager. She will be based in the ACT and her main role will be managing the NSW arm of the study. Aino is trained as a clinical psychologist (child & family specialisation) and has over 10 years of research experience working with a range of vulnerable populations. Aino's PhD examined clinical assessments in the placement decisions of children at the Children's Court of Victoria. Since finishing her doctorate in 2012 she has been working on projects on family impacts of addictions, family violence, problem gambling and the treatment of co-morbid mental health conditions. Based in the ACT, Aino is employed part-time 3 days a week and can be contacted on aino.suomi@acu.edu.au.



And the winner is...

We have conducted a draw for the workers who participated in the follow up interviews for a \$100 gift voucher. In the last newsletter we reported on the winners for the ACT.

The winners in Victoria are.... **Abby Busst** and **Shirlene Laurie**

Congratulations, and thank you to everyone who helped with or participated in the interviews.

Save the Date...

Monday 6 March 2017 - a workshop will be held in Melbourne to review the kContact research and discuss implications for practice and professional development.

Please put this date in your diaries and now – we will be in touch with further details.

What we hope to achieve over the next few months...

- Continue baseline data analysis and drafting articles reporting the baseline results.
- Complete data entry of the follow up interviews.
- Complete analysis of the mapping exercise data, report back to research partners on findings and draft an article for publication.
- Commence the study in NSW.
- Plan and present reflective practice workshops in the ACT and Victoria, to reflect on what we have learned about contact over the last 3 years.
- Full analysis of the data from the follow-up interviews and intervention in Victoria and the ACT will be held over until the NSW data can be added.

Reporting our study findings...

Publications to date

Bullen, T., Taplin, S., McArthur, M., Humphreys, C. Kertesz, M. (2016). Interventions to improve supervised contact visits between children in out of home care and their parents: A systematic review. *Child and Family Social Work*.

<http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/cfs.12301/full>

Bullen, T., Taplin, S., Kertesz, M., Humphreys, C., & McArthur, M. (2015). *Literature review on supervised contact between children in out-of-home care and their parents*. Canberra: Institute of Child Protection Studies, ACU.

http://www.acu.edu.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0010/743833/kContact_LiteratureReview_2014.pdf

Bullen, T., Taplin, S., & Barry, E. (2015). *Supporting quality contact visits for children in out-of-home care*. Research to Practice Series, Issue 10. Canberra: Institute of Child Protection Studies, ACU.

http://www.acu.edu.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0009/799848/ResearchtoPractice_10_2015_ContactwithKidsinOOHC.pdf

Taplin, S., Bullen, T., McArthur, M., Humphreys, C., Kertesz, M., & Dobbins, T. (2015). kContact, an enhanced intervention for contact between children in out-of-home care and their parents: protocol for a cluster randomised controlled trial. *BMC Public Health*, 15, 1134.

<http://link.springer.com/article/10.1186/s12889-015-2461-3/fulltext.html>

Presentations

- Presentation to the 6th Annual Sector Research Symposium, Centre for Excellence in Child and Family Welfare. Melbourne, October 2016.
- The Webinar “Perspectives on Children’s Contact with their Parents”, held on 21 July in Victoria, is also available on this website. It provides some detail about the practice enhancement intervention that was trialled and will be available until the end of 2016 only.

These presentations and publications are available on the kContact webpage.

http://www.acu.edu.au/about_acu/faculties_institutes_and_centres/centres/institute_of_child_protection_studies/kcontact_project/kcontact_publications_and_presentations

Project Team

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