

Identifying and Responding to Child Neglect in Schools in Wales

Overview

Child neglect is possibly the most complex form of child maltreatment. This is because it is often chronic and informed by a range of causal factors, rather than being based upon any specific incidents as with physical or sexual abuse (Daniel et al, 2010: 161).

It is often difficult to identify in a timely manner whether the care a child is receiving is poor enough to be labelled neglect. This makes it difficult to respond effectively and provide comprehensive support that will improve the child's situation sufficiently. This project will analyse the role of schools in tackling neglect in Wales.

Design and Method

The research will take place in two main phases:

- (1) Analysis of a sample of case files in children's services in three local authority areas with varying neglect rates on the child protection register, to explore the extent of involvement of schools in identifying and responding to child neglect.
- (2) Interviews with school-based staff in the three local authorities (both primary and secondary schools), to investigate the relationships between education and other services in responding to neglect. Semi-structured interviews will explore staff experiences, feelings & needs regarding child neglect (Daniel et al, 2010).

Need and Impact

Schools are pivotal sites for identifying and responding to child neglect (Shaw & Holland, 2014; Daniel et al, 2010). Children are seen for many hours each week and staff observe interactions between children and their parents. It is unknown to what level Welsh schools provide informal support to neglected children (Baginsky, 2007).

This project will provide evidence to inform the development of major Government programmes such by providing new evidence about how successfully schools are currently able to play a part in multidisciplinary efforts to prevent, identify and respond to child neglect.

Aim & Outcomes

This doctoral study aims to develop new and original evidence on the role of schools in identifying and responding to child neglect. It will also inform ongoing development and implementation of the Child Neglect Project which is a collaboration between NSPCC Cymru, Action for Children/ Gweithredu dros blant and Welsh Government, with research support from Cardiff University.

Dissemination will take place in three ways: (i) Production of an accessible CASCADE research briefing, (ii) Publication of 2-3 peer-reviewed journal articles, (iii) Presentation of posters & papers at a range of conferences.

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