

Improving outcomes in the care system

The University of Strathclyde has developed a new initiative to improve the lives of all looked-after children in Scotland. The Centre of Excellence for Looked After Children in Scotland (CELCIS) supports parents, carers, care professionals, health workers and teachers to strengthen the welfare of children in all care settings.

The issue

With the number of looked-after children increasing every year since 2001, it has never been more important for care professionals to work together and share their knowledge and expertise to improve the life-chances of looked-after children. What these children and young people have in common are life experiences



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The launch of the Centre for Excellence marks another milestone on the road to significant improvements in the care system that ensures the interests of children are at the heart of everything we do.”

Angela Constance MSP, Minister for Youth Employment

that sometimes need some form of intervention from a wide range of services. Interventions come from local authorities, the Children's Hearings system or the law courts and may sometimes, but not always, lead to that child or young person becoming 'looked after' by their local authority.

Developing a solution

Wholly funded by the Scottish Government and hosted by the University of Strathclyde, CELCIS is committed to improve the outcomes and opportunities for looked after children. It aims to do this through a collaborative and facilitative approach that is focused on having the maximum positive impact on children's lives. Ensuring that the views of children are represented prominently is an important value underpinning the work of CELCIS. The University of Strathclyde has a long-standing record of conducting research on the education and wellbeing of looked after children.

CELCIS builds on the success of, the Scottish Institute for Residential Child Care (SIRCC). SIRCC was established in April 2000 to reflect the importance and growing challenges of providing effective residential child-care services.

Sharing knowledge

Strathclyde and its partners have an excellent record of providing undergraduate and postgraduate teaching to, and professional development opportunities for, teachers, social workers and other staff involved in providing services to children in care. This research and teaching background is built upon a long history of interaction with the various organisations who are active in the residential child-care sector.

The collective expertise of Strathclyde and its partners, together with long-lasting relationships of trust, have helped formulate a range of targeted knowledge exchange activities by CELCIS. This includes the production of multi-professional training materials, international engagement and a programme of seminars and conferences.

CELCIS is committed to improving the knowledge, skills and qualifications of the child-care workforce in Scotland who work directly and indirectly with looked-after children,

the place of useful learning

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University of Strathclyde Glasgow G1 1XQ

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and provide a programme of learning and development opportunities across Scotland. This is delivered through close working with Government, relevant agencies and care providers.

Supportive initiatives

CELCIS has introduced a number of well-received knowledge exchange initiatives since its launch in 2011. A large part of CELCIS's work consists of CPD, training and events that are held for a range of groups, including carers, social workers, teachers and health professionals.

Notably, CELCIS has been contributing expertise to the Glasgow Parenting Support Framework Evaluation that is being conducted jointly by the Department of Mental Health and Wellbeing (part of the School of Medicine) at the University of Glasgow, NHS Greater Glasgow & Clyde



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CELCIS offers a wealth of knowledge and experience to everyone working with looked-after children. It is a forum where they can share their expertise to strengthen the increasingly high quality of services for looked-after children and young people.”

Dr Graham Connelly, Research & Qualifying Courses Manager, CELCIS

Health Board and Glasgow City Council. The Parenting Framework is a city-wide programme involving collaboration between universal and specialist services for children.

Providing an integrated consultancy and training service for care providers is an important element of CELCIS's work. It involves working closely with staff groups and bringing elements of formal training into the process, allowing care providers to reflect deeply on their own experiences with a clear sense that this fits into wider evidence-based formal knowledge.

There have also been long-term consultancy projects to support staff dealing with distressing feelings generated through their work with very unhappy young people. CELCIS consultants are well placed to help staff and managers reflect either individually or as a group on their own inter and intra personal dynamics that can adversely affect the young people for whom they care. Evaluation of this service has suggested that such consultancy work has helped staff to become more effective, created a safe reflective space, changed attitudes and helped develop action plans for improving the provision of care.

Professional networks play an important role in knowledge exchange. Since its inception CELCIS (and its predecessor, the Scottish Institute of Residential Child Care) has been instrumental in developing or supporting a number of professional networks. These focus on or are directly relevant to looked-after children, such as the Looked After Children Education Forum and a network on the social networking service, LinkedIn.

A measure of CELCIS's success to date has been the number of organisations that have sought help in evaluating new or existing services. In some cases this has been located within the research hub, but often there is a requirement for consultancy to be built into the work.

How we can help your organisation

If you are interested in how CELCIS can help your organisation, please contact:

John Paul Fitzpatrick
CELCIS Business Development Lead
johnpaul.fitzpatrick@strath.ac.uk
0141 950 3219

If you are interested in how the University's research and knowledge can help your organisation, please contact:

Madeleine Rooney
Strategic R&KE Development Manager
Research & Knowledge Exchange Services
madeleine.rooney@strath.ac.uk
0141 548 4538

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