

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE RESEARCH

My name is Helen Whincup. I qualified as a social worker in 1991 and worked with children, young people and their families from 1991-2004. I now work at Stirling University teaching social workers and team managers and am doing a PhD.

Although we know some things about what children and young people who are looked after at home think about some things (for example, going to Hearings and being involved in other decision making forums) we don't know as much as we'd like to about their experiences of day to day direct work.

I was interested in learning more about experiences of Home Supervision from the perspectives of children, practitioners and team managers and was given permission to speak to children and social work professionals in one Scottish local authority. The aim of the research is to contribute to the knowledge base and inform practice. The full details will be contained in my PhD, but I wanted to send a summary to children, young people, their parent(s) and social work professionals.

**2** children, plus **8** social workers, and **6** managers helped me to develop questions which were the basis for semi-structured interviews.

Then, between January 2011 and May 2012 I talked to **6** children and young people (aged 6-15 years) who were on Home Supervision Orders under s70 Children (Scotland) Act 1995. I also spoke to **2** social work assistants, **6** social workers and **3** team managers (**11** in total).

Everyone I spoke to was given a pseudonym when I transcribed interviews so that when I wrote up what they told me, no-one would know who said what.

Since completing the interviews, the Children's Hearing (Scotland) Act 2011 came in to force, and Home Supervision is now called Compulsory Supervision Order.



Helen Whincup  
Teaching Fellow  
Department of Applied Social Science  
University of Stirling  
Stirling  
FK9 4LA

[helen.whincup@stir.ac.uk](mailto:helen.whincup@stir.ac.uk)

The Department of Applied Social Science of the University of Stirling Research Ethics Committee reviewed and approved this research study.



## INFORMATION SHEET

**Children and young people who are on Home Supervision Orders (now called Compulsory Supervision Order)**

What are their experiences of social work contact?

RESEARCHER:  
Helen Whincup

## WHAT DID CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE and SOCIAL WORKERS SAY?

- ◆ A key message from children and young people is that it is important to know that your social worker *“cares about you”* and that this care is authentic. The way particular children know their social worker cares varied, but one child said that their worker would *“never say she’s too busy”*. The relationship between a child and their social worker is central, and is both a precursor to direct work, and a result of it.
- ◆ Although most children and young people said they value having someone who they can *“talk to”* and who will help with things they are worried about, several also wanted to *“do”* more things with their worker outside the house, including going for a walk or having a meal together.
- ◆ Direct work is a process. The children, young people and professionals who participated in the research gave examples of thoughtful direct work which was meaningful for those involved.
  - ◆ Sometimes social workers use *“big words”* when they are with children which can make it difficult to understand what they are saying.

- ◆ Professionals talked about the value of spending one to one time with children and young people. One social worker said that this was *“where my heart is”*. They said the amount of ‘paperwork’ gets in the way of being with children and young people, particularly as this aspect of practice is more easily audited and measured by the organisation, whereas direct work is less tangible. What seems to help them to prioritise working with children is their sense of commitment, their view that it makes a difference, and being part of a team where there is a culture of direct work and where this is valued and facilitated by their team manager. Some also highlighted the role of pre- and post-qualifying teaching and learning.
- ◆ Although the Children’s Services Plan notes that children are at the centre of the service, what I noticed as a visitor is that the buildings in which social work professionals are based did not seem designed with children and young people or direct work in mind.

## WHAT AM I GOING TO DO WITH THE FINDINGS?

The full results of the research will be in my PhD thesis. You might not want to read all of this so this summary will be made available to social work professionals. A similar summary is available to give to children and young people and their parents.

I have agreed to speak to social work professionals about themes coming up from the research so that any implications for practice can be considered.

As well as writing up my research for my PhD, as part of a process of dissemination, I will write up the research for relevant social work journals/conferences and share key messages with social workers and managers undertaking courses at the University of Stirling.

## THANK YOU

Thank you to all the children, young people and professionals who participated. I am very grateful for your time and hope that the research will be of benefit to others.



Helen Whincup  
Teaching Fellow  
Department of Applied Social Science  
University of Stirling  
Stirling  
FK9 4LA

[helen.whincup@stir.ac.uk](mailto:helen.whincup@stir.ac.uk)

The Department of Applied Social Science of the University of Stirling Research Ethics Committee has reviewed and approved this research study.