

Research Governance Annual Report

1 April 2014 – 31 March 2015

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1. Executive summary

During the year we:

- completed reviews of 22 research projects;
- acted as lead reviewer for 1 multi-site research application to the Midlands Region Research Governance Group;
- advised on 21 questionnaires and interview schedules that had been developed in-house by Directorate for People staff to support evaluation, consultation or engagement activity;
- organised presentations for our Research Governance Advisors on 'Involvement of service users in research' and the 'Use of focus groups in research';
- audited our research governance process using a Research Governance Checklist from an organisation called Reason;
- developed links within children's services to give young people the opportunity to provide feedback on research proposals;
- encouraged sharing of research within the Council by supporting a 'Celebrating Research' mini conference;
- raised awareness of our research governance process externally by developing contacts with staff at Newman University and uploading a copy of last year's research governance annual report to the Internet; and
- responded to the call for comments on a draft UK Policy Framework for Health and Social Care Research.

2. Introduction

Welcome to the ninth Research Governance Annual Report which summarises the work of Research Governance Advisors and operation of the Research Governance Advisory Committee

(RGAC) for the period 1 April 2014 to 31 March 2015. It also compares our performance with what we said we would do in 2014-15, which was to:

- capture from the directorate its priorities for research activity and share this information with local universities;
- work with colleagues in the Council to raise the profile of and 'celebrate' research that has been conducted, hosted or commissioned by the Council;
- monitor and respond to the review of the Department of Health's Research Governance Framework for Health and Social Care;
- consider whether the 'Application Pack for In-house Service Evaluations, Service Quality Audits and Consultations' requires updating; and
- audit ourselves using Reason's Research Governance Checklist to identify areas for improvement.

3. What is research governance?

Research governance is a framework for ensuring research is ethical, safe, of good quality and useful as set out in the Department of Health's 'Research Governance Framework for Health and Social Care' (Department of Health: 2005). Proper governance of research is essential to ensure the public can have confidence in, and benefit from, quality research in health and social care.

In Birmingham City Council research governance approval is required for social care or public health research projects that will involve service users, their carers or staff working in adults' or children's social care services, or public health. These projects may involve collecting information directly from participants through, for example, a questionnaire, interview or focus group, or require access to anonymised or identifiable personal information about them.

4. Management of research governance in Birmingham City Council

The Council's research governance function is based within the Directorate for People and manages reviews of social care and public health research projects that are commissioned, hosted or conducted by the directorate.

Charles Ashton-Gray is the Research Governance Lead and Deborah Towle manages and develops the research governance process.

Birmingham has a RGAC whose membership is voluntary and includes citizens who use services, carers, Council staff and university staff. (Please see Appendix 1 for list of members). The members are known as 'Research Governance Advisors' (RGAs) and they review social care and public health research projects. Much of the work of reviewing and advising on research proposals is carried out electronically.

RGAs bring with them a breadth of experience that means research proposals are viewed from a number of different perspectives to identify their potential benefits and limitations.

RGAs meet as the RGAC twice a year to develop their knowledge of research governance, review work undertaken, and identify ways of improving the research governance process in the Council.

During 2014 we held RGAC meetings in June and November. These meetings were attended, on average, by about half of our RGAs. We continued to use the meetings to provide an overview of our work and as a learning opportunity for RGAs.

We supported RGAs by arranging presentations on:

- Involvement of service users in research; and
- Use of focus groups in research.

5. Overview of research governance activity 2014-15

5.1 Research projects reviewed by Research Governance Advisors

During the year RGAs completed reviews of 22 research projects, compared with 19 in 2013-14. A list of these can be found in Appendix 2.

In a change from the previous year, the majority of the projects we reviewed involved children's social care services (12 projects). However, as with previous years, the majority of the research governance applications were from universities (17 projects). Please see Appendix 4 for further details).

We agreed to support 18 research projects. We decided not to participate in or deferred the remaining four projects because the directorate lacked capacity to support them, they did not match one of the directorate's priority work areas or because further discussion was needed regarding proposed methodology. (Please see Appendix 3 for details).

RGAs identified the following ways in which some applications could be improved:

- Use of version control on documents;
- Use of Plain English for documents and research tools;
- Clear explanation/justification for sample size;
- Clearer participant information sheets and consent forms;
- and
- Proof reading of all documentation and research tools.

5.2 Our performance in reviewing research proposals

We aim to respond to researchers with the outcome of our review within 20 working days of receiving all requested documentation plus satisfactory answers to any initial concerns we had about the project. In 2014-15 we met this target for 81% of the applications (range 1- 27 working days with an average of 12 working days). Where we did not reach the target it was because discussion was needed within the directorate regarding proposed methodology of studies.

Our good working relationship with the University of Birmingham's Research Governance Team helped us to review applications from the university's students more quickly as the team carried out checks on documentation before they were sent to us.

When we notify researchers of our decision regarding their application, we send them a short questionnaire to collect feedback about their experience of going through the research governance process. During the year we continued to receive positive feedback about the process, including:

"I thought the pack was very clear. The questions followed a logical order and was relatively easy to complete. I appreciated that the process was explained clearly and time frames were given. Questions prompted in depth responses but did not feel over critical or punitive. In my experience the pack mirrored the support I received from the team".

"I was very impressed with the speed of response and that any issues were raised immediately to be addressed. This made the process feel a lot smoother and meant that unnecessary stress was avoided".

However, some researchers reported that the process was time consuming:

"I felt that the process was quite time consuming especially as my research did not involve contact with service users. However, I understand that certain procedures required to be followed and overall I am happy".

"Form was rather lengthy".

Several researchers reported difficulty finding our contact details:

"When starting the process I found it difficult to find contact details of the dept to confirm what forms I needed to complete. I tried calling birmingham.gov switchboard and nobody had a clue where to direct me which was frustrating. Greater visibility of the RG team may have made this easier. However, once I emailed I had a rapid response and was able to progress with ease."

“It would be helpful if the site relating to research was easy to search for on the Council website. I had to get the address from a colleague as I was unable to find it and the contact information given by the council phone line was not correct”.

“As a previous local government manager I was familiar with Council systems. For researchers without this experience negotiating Council systems might be more difficult. Just a thought - for me the procedure was robust, clear and efficient. Thank you.”

In response Deborah Towle provided the manager of the Council’s Contact Centre with contact details for queries and he agreed to brief the Council’s switchboard team and staff within the Contact Centre.

We have been unable to improve access to the research governance webpages on www.birmingham.gov.uk because of the website’s limited search facility. However, we uploaded a copy of last year’s Research Governance Annual Report to the Council’s research blog to provide an alternative source for information on our research governance process:

<https://researchbcc.wordpress.com/2015/01/13/research-governance/>

We also continued to develop contacts within the local universities.

5.3 Completed research reports

We ask for a copy of research findings once projects have been completed. During the year we received results from eight of the projects that we reviewed during 2014-15. (Please see Appendix 5 for further details).

5.4. Supporting research-type activity

During 2014-15 we advised on 21 questionnaires and interview schedules developed within the Directorate for People (Adults) for the purpose of service evaluation, consultation or engagement activities. This compares with 20 in the previous year.

6. Developments 2014-15

6.1 Raising awareness of research governance

We emailed a copy of last year's research governance annual report to staff within the Directorate for People. We also uploaded a copy to the 'Research Community' section of the Council's research blog for wider dissemination:

<https://researchbcc.wordpress.com/2015/01/13/research-governance/>

In October 2014 Deborah Towle met with the directorate's Head of Rights and Participation in children's services to explain the directorate's research governance process and to discuss how to involve children and young people in this. Relevant research governance applications are now forwarded to the Head of Rights and Participation for comments from young people.

In January 2015 Charles Ashton-Gray gave a presentation about the research governance process to students on placement within the directorate.

In March 2015 Charles Ashton-Gray and Deborah Towle met with representatives from Newman University to discuss research governance and research ethics processes.

6.2 Improving research governance processes

During the year we updated our form for 'In-house service evaluations, service quality audits and consultations' in response to feedback from Public Health colleagues.

Members of the RGAC used a Research Governance Checklist developed by an organisation called 'Reason' as an audit tool to identify where improvements could be made to the way the RGAC operates. We found that our research governance process met the key considerations listed in the checklist but recognised that more work could always be done on raising awareness of our research governance process. This will be taken forward as an objective for next year.

The Health Research Authority is responsible for publishing policy and guidance on how to manage and carry out health and social care research in England. In February 2015 it published a draft UK Policy Framework for Health and Social Care Research for comments. The finalised version of this document will replace existing research governance frameworks for health and social care. This will have implications for health and social care research and for research governance processes in councils. More information on the framework is available at:

<http://www.hra.nhs.uk/about-the-hra/consultations-calls/closed-consultations/uk-policy-framework-health-social-care-research-comment-active/>

We responded to the call for comments and submitted our response to the framework by the deadline of 1 May 2015. We will continue to monitor and respond to proposed changes to ensure the Council complies with the framework.

6.3 Providing support for research and research-type activity

We encouraged the sharing of research within the Council by supporting a 'Celebrating Research' mini conference held in October 2014. Deborah Towle worked with Council colleagues to organise this event which included a variety of presentations and research posters promoting research carried out within the Council. Over 50 staff from across the Council attended the event to network and share good practice. More information about the mini conference is available at:

<https://researchbcc.wordpress.com/2014/10/17/celebrating-research-mini-conference-16th-october-2014/>

The mini-conference was followed by a series of lunchtime research seminars for Council staff to raise their awareness of different research methodologies. Deborah Towle worked with colleagues in the Public Health Team to organise these sessions and one of the Research Governance Advisors, Maureen Oakley, gave a presentation on participatory research. Copies of presentations from the sessions are available at:

<https://researchbcc.wordpress.com/category/bcc-research-community/>

We asked senior managers from within adults' and children's social care to provide us with research topics of interest to their areas. We then shared these with local universities to raise their awareness of the directorate's priorities but did not receive any research governance applications during the year that matched the suggested topics.

7. Midlands Region Research Governance Group

Birmingham is a member of the Midlands Region Research Governance Group. This consists of 15 authorities that support each other to have in place high quality, robust and compatible research governance systems. The group has been in existence since 2005; however, it did not formally meet during 2014-15.

The Group has a reciprocal arrangement between its members for when a researcher wishes to carry out a project in more than one council within the Midlands (called a 'multi-site research governance application'). Under this arrangement one council becomes the 'lead' for that project, reviews the research and then shares this review with the Midlands Group. It means that researchers do not have to make separate applications to different local authorities for research governance clearance. This saves the researcher's time and also the time of research governance leads in the Midlands. During 2014-15 Birmingham reviewed, within timescale, 1 multi-site research governance application for the 'Evaluation of Independent Specialist Advocates for Children who are Trafficked' on behalf of the Group.

8. Conclusions

During the year we continued to raise awareness of our research governance process; improve the quality of research and research-type activity; and develop our research governance advisors by:

- completing reviews of 22 research projects;
- acting as lead reviewer for 1 multi-site research application to the Midlands Region Research Governance Group;

- advising on 21 questionnaires and interview schedules developed in-house by Directorate for People staff to support evaluation, consultation or engagement activity;
- organising presentations for our Research Governance Advisors on 'Involvement of service users in research' and the 'Use of focus groups in research';
- auditing our research governance process using a Research Governance Checklist from an organisation called Reason;
- developing links within children's services to give young people the opportunity to provide feedback from young people on research proposals;
- encouraging sharing of research within the Council by supporting a 'Celebrating Research' mini conference;
- raising awareness of our research governance process externally by developing contacts with Newman University and uploading a copy of last year's annual report onto the Internet; and
- responding to the call for comments on a draft UK Policy Framework for Health and Social Care Research.

9. Looking forward

We will continue to raise awareness of our research governance process both inside and outside the Council, and continue to support quality improvements in social care and public health research activity.

In addition in 2015-2016 we will:

- continue to monitor and respond to changes to the national framework for health and social care research;
- recruit additional research governance advisors from amongst staff in children's services; and

- identify additional ways of raising awareness, both internally and externally, of our research governance processes.

If you would like to be involved in reviewing research proposals or would like more information about research governance, please contact:

Deborah Towle
Performance Management Officer
Continuous Improvement Team
Birmingham City Council Directorate for People
Email: SCHResearchGovernance@birmingham.gov.uk

Appendix 1. List of Research Governance Advisors 2014-2015

Meanaz Akhtar
Charles Ashton-Gray
Melanie Gray
Donna Greatorex
Wayne Harrison
Aysha Islam
Ian Jenkins
Rosemary Littlechild
Barbara Ann Marshall
Michelle Moore
Parvez Muzaffar
Louise Niblett
Maureen Oakley
Janet Parkes
Christine Ransome-Wallis
Bernie Redmond
Jackie Robinson
Margaret Stratton
Heather Thompson
Deborah Towle

They include:

- staff from adults' social care services (8);
- staff from Public Health Team (1);
- staff from children's social care services (3);
- university staff (1);
- citizens with experience of services (4); and
- citizens with experience as carers (3).

Appendix 2. List of projects reviewed by Research Governance Advisors 2014-15

Adults' social care projects

Autonomy vs protection? Investigation into social work practitioners' experiences and perceptions of the ethical dilemmas involved when intervening within the lives of vulnerable adults who have capacity

Master's Social Work Student, University of Birmingham

-This study aims to explore social work practitioners' and front line managers' perceptions and practice experiences of intervening within the lives of 'vulnerable' adults who have capacity. It will use semi-structured interviews to explore views about potential ethical dilemmas such as tensions between balancing 'protection' and 'autonomy', and 'care' and 'control'.

ADASS Personalisation Survey 2014

Association of Directors Adults Social Services (ADASS)

- This online survey will provide ADASS with key figures on the progress made by councils towards personalising adult social care for 2013-14. It collects data on the proportion of people supported by Personal Budgets and on Direct Payments, and also asks for self-assessments in areas such as improving people's experience of personalisation.

ASB (Anti-social behaviour) and social housing tenants with mental health issues

PhD Society and Health Student, University of Buckinghamshire

- The research aims to study the impact of complaints of anti-social behaviour on social housing tenants who have mental health issues and may be at risk of losing their homes, and the experiences of housing and mental health professionals who attempt to manage the antisocial behaviour.

Decision on risk and mental health hospital admission by Approved Mental Health Professionals (AMHPs)

PhD Policy Studies Student, University of Bristol

- This study will interview non-social work AMHPs to investigate how they make decisions relating to risk and admission to psychiatric hospital when undertaking assessments under the Mental Health Act 1983 (2007).

Communicator Guide project SENSE

- The project aims to measure the impact of access to communicator guide services on the lives of deafblind people by interviewing people before and after they begin receiving the service. Communicator Guides offer support to people who have developed sight and hearing impairments.

Survey of adult carers in England 2014-15 Directorate for People (Adults)

- This national survey, administered on behalf of the Department of Health, explores the experiences and needs of carers.

A care worker-led cognitive behavioural therapy intervention for anxiety among adults with intellectual disabilities: a feasibility study

Funded project, University of Birmingham

- This project will evaluate a programme, based upon the Cognitive Behavioural Therapy approach, to help adults with learning disabilities who have problems with anxiety. The programme will be evaluated using observations of therapy sessions; interviews with lay therapists, clients and carers; and measuring a number of key outcomes including irritability, anxiety, depression, and coping skills.

Adult social care survey 2014-15 Directorate for People (Adults)

- A national survey, administered on behalf of the Department of Health, which collects information on service users' experiences of adult social care.

Children's social care projects

Exploring the interplay between social workers' personal and professional experiences when discussing the competence of parents with intellectual disabilities

PhD Clinical Psychology Student, University of Birmingham

- In this research a sample of social workers in children's services will be shown a short video of a couple with intellectual disabilities (learning disabilities) and given a short description of the family. They will then be asked to pause the video when they see or hear something interesting. The social workers will be asked to reflect and comment on what they have seen in order to explore how their knowledge and experience influence their opinions of parents.

How can health services effectively improve the health and wellbeing of young people leaving public care? The LYNC study

Funded research, Birmingham and Solihull Mental Health Foundation Trust and Warwick University

- This study aims to explore the mental health of young people leaving the care system in Birmingham, what support is available to them, and how to improve transition services to promote the mental health of care leavers. This will be done through examination of case notes to identify problems in transition to adult services, and interviews with care leavers and staff involved with looked after young people.

What are women's views on home birth? A study to inform the development of practical strategies that will promote birth at home as a choice for low-risk, multiparous women

Master's Research Student, University of Birmingham

- Focus groups will be held with mothers to look at how they feel about giving birth at home and what issues are involved in making that decision. The aim is to identify practical strategies that can be used to improve information about home birth.

PROTECT (Provider Responses, Treatment and Care for Trafficked people)

Department of Health funded research, King's College London

- Trafficked adolescents in contact with health and support services in England will be surveyed to explore their health risks and health problems. The project aims to develop evidence to inform the care of trafficked adolescents.

Transracial adoption. Is love enough?

Master's Social Work Student, University of Birmingham student project

- A sample of social workers from the Adoption Team will be given a case scenario and questioned about it to explore how social workers are putting in place guidance regarding promoting transracial adoption.

The needs of Black Minority Ethnic children in a transracial placement

Master's Social Work Student, University of Wolverhampton

- The student proposes to interview social workers on their views of transracial placement and adoption.

Evaluation of Independent Specialist Advocates for Children who are Trafficked

Home Office funded study, University of Bedfordshire

- This will evaluate a trial of Independent Specialist Advocates for children identified as trafficked, using randomisation to allocate participants to either an 'Advocacy' or a 'Comparator' group. The trial will be evaluated using a range of data collection methods including: case file analyses, interviews with trafficked children, interviews with social workers and managers, and focus groups with independent advocates.

An evaluation of Birmingham Youth Offending Service's Sexually Harmful Behaviour Project

Staff research, University of Birmingham

- The project aims to evaluate the effectiveness of Birmingham Youth Offending Service's specialist Sexually Harmful Behaviour Team using a range of methods including information from data returns, assessment tools and interviews. The Team offers preventative and therapeutic services to children and young

people aged 7-17 years old who display sexually harmful behaviour.

The effectiveness and inefficiencies of inter-agency communication

Undergraduate Childhood Education and Society Student,
University of Warwick

- This will survey professionals involved in safeguarding to identify the facilitators and challenges of inter-agency communication.

Personality and morality in juvenile violent offenders, juvenile non-violent offenders and juvenile non-offenders

Master's Forensic Psychology Student, Coventry University

- Self-report questionnaires will be used to examine the personality traits and moral development of young offenders and non-offenders, aged 13-17 years old.

The role of corporate parenting in shaping education outcomes of Children in Care

PhD student, University of Birmingham

- This study seeks to understand what influences the poor educational outcomes of adolescent Children in Care, with particular interest in the impact of Corporate Parenting on shaping education outcomes. It will interview a group of policy makers and social care practitioners about policies, practices and views on factors affecting educational outcomes.

Is the Strengthening Families Framework Model suitable for use within Child Protection practice?

Master's Social Work Student, Wolverhampton University

- The aim of this study is to identify the issues and benefits of the Strengthening Families Framework Model in child protection practice. It will interview a sample of social workers who attend child protection conferences on their views and opinions of the model.

Public Health projects

Evaluation of a text supported weight maintenance programme - 'Lighten Up Plus' - following a weight reduction programme: a randomised controlled trial

Funded research, University of Birmingham, Birmingham Public Health and Gateway Family Services

- This project aims to evaluate the effectiveness and cost effectiveness of a brief behavioural intervention to promote regular self-weighing to prevent weight gain after weight loss. Participants will be randomly allocated to either an intervention or control group (usual care) and compared on weight change and occurrence of any adverse effects.

General

The impact of cuts

Corporate Strategic Research Team, Birmingham City Council

- The research sets out to explore the impact on vulnerable residents of cuts to Birmingham City Council's budget. It will use a series of focus groups to discuss the impact of service changes and to identify services that residents value most.

Appendix 3. Progress of research governance applications 2014-15

Project title	Service area	Lead organisation	Approved/ Not approved	Status	Research summary received
Autonomy vs protection? Investigation into social work practitioners' experiences and perceptions of the ethical dilemmas involved when intervening within the lives of vulnerable adults who have capacity	Adults'	Master's Degree Social Work Student, University of Birmingham	Approved	Completed	Yes
ADASS Personalisation Survey 2014	Adults'	Association of Directors Adults Social Services	Approved	Completed	Yes
ASB and Social Housing Tenants with Mental Health issues	Adults'	PhD Society and Health Student, University of Buckinghamshire	No capacity to support	N/A	

Project title	Service area	Lead organisation	Approved/ Not approved	Status	Research summary received
Decision on risk and mental health hospital admission by Approved Mental Health Professionals (AMHPs)	Adults'	PhD Policy Studies Student, University of Bristol	Approved	Unable to recruit to study	
Communicator Guide project	Adults'	SENSE	Deferred	N/A	
Survey of adult carers in England 2014-15	Adults'	Directorate for People (Adults), on behalf of the Department of Health	Approved	Completed	
A care-worker led cognitive behaviour therapy intervention for anxiety among adults with intellectual disability: a feasibility study	Adults'	Funded project, University of Birmingham	Approved	Ongoing	
Adult social care survey 2014-15	Adults'	Directorate for People (Adults), on behalf of the Department of Health	Approved	Completed	

Project title	Service area	Lead organisation	Approved/ Not approved	Status	Research summary received
Exploring the interplay between social workers' personal and professional experiences when discussing the competence of parents with intellectual disabilities	Children's	PhD Clinical Psychology Student, University of Birmingham	Approved	Completed	Yes
How can health services effectively improve the health and wellbeing of young people leaving public care? The LYNC study	Children's	Birmingham and Solihull Mental Health Foundation Trust and Warwick University	Approved	No response to request for update on project	
What are women's views on home birth? A study to inform the development of practical strategies that will promote birth at home as a choice for low-risk, multiparous women	Children's	Master's Research Student, University of Birmingham	Approved	No response to request for update on project	

Project title	Service area	Lead organisation	Approved/ Not approved	Status	Research summary received
PROTECT (Provider Responses, Treatment and care for trafficked people)	Children's	King's College London, Department of Health funded research	Approved	Ongoing	
Transracial adoption. Is love enough?	Children's	Master's Social Work Student, University of Birmingham	Approved	Completed	Yes
The needs of Black Minority Ethnic children in a transracial placement	Children's	Master's Social Work Student, University of Wolverhampton	No capacity to support	N/A	
Evaluation of Independent Specialist Advocates for Children who are Trafficked	Children's	University of Bedfordshire, Home Office funded study	Approved	Ongoing	Yes - Interim findings
An evaluation of Birmingham Youth Offending Service's Sexually Harmful Behaviour Project	Children's	University of Birmingham	Deferred	N/A	

Project title	Service area	Lead organisation	Approved/ Not approved	Status	Research summary received
The effectiveness and inefficiencies of inter-agency communication	Children's	Undergraduate Childhood Education and Society Student, University of Warwick	Approved	No response to request for update on project	
Personality and morality in juvenile violent offenders, juvenile non-violent offenders and juvenile non-offenders	Children's	Master's Forensic Psychology Student, Coventry University	Approved	Completed	Yes
The role of corporate parenting in shaping education outcomes of Children in Care	Children's	PhD student, University of Birmingham	Approved	Ongoing	
Is the Strengthening Families Framework Model suitable for use within Child Protection practice?	Children's	Master's Social Work Student, Wolverhampton University	Approved	No response to request for update on project	

Project title	Service area	Lead organisation	Approved/ Not approved	Status	Research summary received
Evaluation of a text supported weight maintenance programme 'Lighten Up Plus' following a weight reduction programme: a randomised controlled trial	Public Health	University of Birmingham, Birmingham Public Health and Gateway Family Services	Approved	Completed	Yes
Impact of cuts	General	Corporate Strategic Research Team, Birmingham City Council	Approved	Completed	Yes

Appendix 4. Statistical overview of research governance applications 2014-15

Number of projects reviewed:

Adults' social care	Public health	Children's social care	General
8	1	12	1

Outcome of reviews:

Approved/no objection	Not approved/ Not wish to participate/ No capacity to support/Deferred
18	4

Lead organisation:

Directorate for People	Other Birmingham City Council Directorate	Research organisations/ Other organisations	University research projects	University student projects
2	1	2	6	11

Progress of research projects:

Completed	Ongoing	Unable to recruit	No information on progress	Did not participate in study
9	4	1	4	4

Appendix 5: Overview of completed research projects

Autonomy vs protection? Investigation into social work practitioners' experiences and perceptions of the ethical dilemmas involved when intervening within the lives of vulnerable adults who have capacity

Master's Social Work Student, University of Birmingham

The researcher interviewed five social work practitioners to explore their perceptions and practice experiences of intervening in the lives of 'vulnerable' adults who have capacity. The practitioners felt that social workers had an ethical duty to ensure those who had been identified as being, or potentially being, subject to abuse were aware of their available options and choices. Practitioners identified there was a gap within English adult social care legislation that limits their social work role in terms of ensuring/enhancing an individual's decision making capacity and their autonomy.

ADASS Personalisation Survey 2014

Association of Directors Adults Social Services (ADASS)

132 councils (87% of all eligible councils) completed an online survey for ADASS on their progress towards personalising adult social care in 2013-14. The first part of the survey focused on the number of people benefiting from personalisation changes and also looked at related expenditure. It found that 81% of people receiving community-based services were supported by personal budgets and 24% of these were taking a direct payment. The second part of the survey asked councils to assess their progress in personalisation against 63 quality statements. Councils reported that progress was being made in many of the areas covered by the quality statements. A copy of the report is available at:

<http://www.adass.org.uk/PersonalisationSurvey2014/Report/>

Transracial adoption. Is love enough?

Master's Social Work Student, University of Birmingham

Five social workers from the Adoption Team were given a case scenario and questioned about it, to explore how social workers were putting in place guidance regarding promoting transracial adoption. All participants strongly acknowledged their professional duties and felt confident in supporting a transracial adoption. The

researcher reports the lack of minority ethnic adopters as a recurring theme in the research.

Personality and morality in juvenile violent offenders, juvenile non-violent offenders and juvenile non-offenders

Masters Forensic Psychology Student, Coventry University

This study used two self-report questionnaires to examine the personality traits and moral development of a small number of young offenders and non-offenders, aged 13-17 years old. A total of 29 participants completed the questionnaires. The study found significant differences between juvenile violent offenders, non-violent offenders and non-offenders with regard to moral maturity. Non-violent offenders were found to be the least morally mature offending group. No differences were found between the groups for personality, except for perfectionism and aesthetic appreciation. The researcher argues that more research is needed to compare the groups in terms of moral development as this could lead to more offence-specific treatment.

Evaluation of a text supported weight maintenance programme 'Lighten Up Plus' following a weight reduction programme: a randomised controlled trial

University of Birmingham, Birmingham Public Health and Gateway Family Services.

This study examined the effectiveness of using text messaging to encourage regular self-weighing by adults who had completed a weight loss programme. 390 obese or overweight men and women took part in a randomised control trial. Those in the intervention group received a single maintenance phone call and text based weight maintenance messages for 12 weeks to encourage regular self-weighing. The study found no evidence that a text based weight maintenance intervention encouraging adults to weigh themselves prevented weight regain at 3 or 9 months after completing a commercial weight loss programme.

The impact of cuts

Corporate Strategic Research Team, Birmingham City Council

This research used focus groups to explore the impact on vulnerable residents of cuts to Birmingham City Council's budget.

Over 120 residents participated in the study; discussing the impact of service changes and identifying the services they valued most. The research found that most participants were not suffering as a result of the Council's cuts to date, as critical services were still being delivered. However, some had experienced a decrease in their quality of life and an increased level of stress and frustration where services had been reduced or closed. A copy of the results is available at:

<https://researchbcc.wordpress.com/2015/02/10/exploring-the-impact-of-local-government-budget-cuts-on-vulnerable-residents/>

Evaluation of Independent Specialist Advocates for Children who are Trafficked

Home Office funded study, University of Bedfordshire

This study is evaluating a trial of Independent Child Trafficking Advocates (CTA). A report of the interim findings has focused on the number and characteristics of children allocated to the trial so far, lessons learned about the early implementation of the CTA service and the role of the advocate as seen by stakeholders. A copy of the interim findings is available at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/evaluation-of-child-trafficking-advocates-trial-interim-findings-march-2015>

Exploring the interplay between social workers' personal and professional experiences when discussing the competence of parents with intellectual disabilities

PhD Clinical Psychology Student, University of Birmingham

The research literature suggests that judgements made by professionals working with parents with intellectual disabilities (learning disabilities) may be influenced by personal and professional factors. The present study aimed to explore how social workers draw upon past personal and professional experiences when observing parents with intellectual disabilities.

Ten qualified social workers viewed a video of parents with intellectual disabilities and were asked to imagine they were working with the family. Participants were interviewed about their reaction to the video and how their previous experiences may influence this. The study's findings were consistent with previous research which suggested that professionals' assessments are informed by a wide range of experience and knowledge. The

researcher discusses potential advantages and disadvantages of this in practice and the importance of being aware of the role personal experiences play in the way parents with intellectual disabilities are perceived by social workers.