

# What is Research in Practice and how can I use it?

# Research in Practice

- Research in Practice provides a range of resources and learning opportunities based on academic research, practice expertise and evidence from service users.
- We have organisational membership
- With your work email address you can create a free account at **rip.org.uk**
- Once registered, you can access/download every resource on the website
- Hard copies of resources are sent at regular intervals over the year
- The more we use Research in Practice, the better value for money it represents

# Benefits

- Supports evidence-informed decision making
- Access to key research messages in various formats
- Provides evidence for PCF, HCPC, ASYE, CPD etc
- Cutting edge training from expert facilitators
- Represents organisational commitment to supporting evidence-informed practice

# Research in Practice

This presentation will:

- Provide an overview of the resources available
- Explain the events booking process
- Explain the online resources available
- Introduce the tailored-support offer
- Provide instructions on how to create an account

Resources aimed at frontline practitioners and managers who work with children, young people and families.

research  
in practice

/Frontline 



**Emotional abuse and neglect: Identifying and responding in practice with families**

research  
in practice

/Frontline 



**Adult attachment: application in practice with children and families**

research  
in practice

/Frontline 



**The impact of parental substance misuse on child development**

## Adult attachment patterns, Internal Working Models (IWMs) and caregiving styles

Pattern	Characteristics of attachment narrative	Internal Working Model (IWM)	Caregiving / parenting style	Children's attachment pattern
Secure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>&gt; Clear, coherent account, acknowledging imperfections and reasons for difficulties</li> <li>&gt; Aware of how their flaws might affect relationships and manage them accordingly</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>&gt; Positive view of self and others</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>&gt; Provide a secure base and safe haven where feelings can be expressed and managed, and anxieties understood</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>&gt; Secure</li> </ul>
Avoidant – dismissing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>&gt; Avoidance of emotionally-charged topics</li> <li>&gt; Dismiss the impact of losses or painful experiences</li> <li>&gt; Memories full of contradictions, often idealised and lacking in detail</li> <li>&gt; Need, dependency and vulnerability seen as weakness</li> <li>&gt; Distance themselves in discussion and minimise vulnerable feelings</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>&gt; Superficially positive view of self - self-reliant, independent</li> <li>&gt; Negative view of others</li> <li>&gt; Reluctant to seek support</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>&gt; Children's emotional demands cause anxiety, fear and alarm, reducing the capacity to respond to cues for comfort and reassurance</li> <li>&gt; Parenting often controlling and distant</li> <li>&gt; Children expected not to make demands</li> <li>&gt; Child learns that being upset is pointless, as comfort is not forthcoming</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>&gt; Insecure avoidant</li> </ul>
Anxious – preoccupied-entangled	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>&gt; Memories are recounted in a confused, anxious, agitated, angry way</li> <li>&gt; Stories hard to follow and do not hang together</li> <li>&gt; Preoccupied by, and entangled with, past relationships</li> <li>&gt; Find it difficult to reflect or concentrate and seem in a permanently agitated state</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>&gt; See self as unlovable</li> <li>&gt; See others positively but fearful of rejection and abandonment</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>&gt; Over-dependent on children to meet their needs</li> <li>&gt; Discourage independence</li> <li>&gt; Caregiving uncertain</li> <li>&gt; Defensive</li> <li>&gt; Helpless, with little consistency or structure</li> <li>&gt; Power may be exerted by threats of abandonment</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>&gt; Insecure ambivalent</li> </ul>
Fearful – avoidant-unresolved	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>&gt; Preoccupied by painful, unresolved memories and traumas</li> <li>&gt; No insight into the impact of these on the present</li> <li>&gt; Emotions hard to control</li> <li>&gt; Accounts characterised by repetition, contradictions and inconsistencies, with varying levels of concentration</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>&gt; Negative view of self and others</li> <li>&gt; Little capacity for trust</li> <li>&gt; Fear of both closeness and being alone</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>&gt; Caregiving 'disconnected and extremely insensitive', frightened and frightening</li> <li>&gt; Unmanageable feelings in response to children's needs deactivate caregiving</li> <li>&gt; Controlling, angry, harsh, arbitrary discipline and neglect</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>&gt; Disorganised</li> </ul>



### Using adult attachment informed ideas in practice

*Carers who have come to recognise and understand how their experiences have affected them are less likely to continue the cycle.*

(Howe, 2005)

It is not within the scope of child welfare practice to address adult attachment states of mind or patterns per se. However, by exploring what the narrative tells us about IWMs, practitioners can help parents to challenge or disconfirm the impact of an insecure IWM on caregiving and children's attachment (Berlin et al, 2008).

The focus here, therefore, will be on interventions that seek to achieve this by increasing mentalisation and reflective function and help to 'frame (infants'/children's) behaviour in terms of normal attachment needs' (Berlin et al, 2008). In other words, this can help a parent to see that, when a baby cries, it is not an attack or a criticism but a way of seeking closeness and a reflection of that parent's importance and value. This may then change the way parents see themselves and create a virtuous circle.

In this briefing only a limited range of approaches can be discussed. They have been chosen, however, to illustrate both structured approaches as well as interventions that could be readily adapted to practice, without further training, in order to address parental behaviour affecting caregiving which may be linked to IWMs associated with insecure adult attachment patterns.

A number of characteristics of approaches have been identified as effective:

- > Promoting mentalisation and reflective function
- > Use of focused observation to increase empathy and directly alter parenting behaviour
- > Understanding and addressing unresolved loss and trauma

### Promoting mentalisation and reflective function

Mentalisation, or mind-mindedness, is a significant aspect of the attachment relationship and relates to parents' capacity for empathy – being able to put themselves in their 'children's shoes' and appreciate that they have thoughts, feelings and motivations different from their own (Sharp and Fonagy, 2008).

This is linked to reflective function (RF) – the individual's capacity to think about their own thoughts and feelings and those of others, as well as the ability to speculate about what behaviour might be about (Fonagy, 1999). Low RF and problems with mentalisation lead the parent to attribute to the infant or child feelings and thoughts that they cannot possibly have – a mother might accuse a tiny baby of crying on purpose just to annoy her – or to make assumptions that the baby feels something because the parent does – for example, "I'm not hungry, so he can't be hungry either".

They are also predictive of what Out et al (2009) refer to as 'disconnected and extremely insensitive parenting' and increase the likelihood that parents will be resistant to professional involvement regarding child protection concerns (Shaheed, 2011; Ferguson, 2011).

In contrast, the capacity to reflect is a potential protective factor – with high levels of RF in parents significantly related to secure attachment in children (Slade et al, 2005; Steele and Steele, 2008a; Bick et al, 2012; Bernier and Dozier, 2009).

One well evaluated example of an effective intervention that focuses on mentalisation and reflective function is the **Video-Based Intervention to Promote Positive Parenting (VIPP)**, a preventative attachment-based programme designed in the Netherlands to increase sensitive parenting through the use of video recordings of interaction with parents. Via a meta-analysis, Bakermans-Kranenburg et al (2005) concluded this approach was particularly successful because it focused parents' attention on immediate behaviours and increased sensitivity to children's cues. It is seen as particularly useful in working with resistant parents, where disorganised attachment and unresolved loss and trauma play a part (Shemmings et al, 2012).

### Exploring unresolved loss and trauma

Walker (2008a) offers an approach designed to help practitioners explore the impact of unresolved loss and trauma on parenting by:

- > asking explicitly about painful or traumatic experiences in a safe way
- > exploring addictions and repetitive patterns, which are often a means of managing unresolved experiences
- > finding out what each child in the family means to the parent, with implications for unresolved loss (for example, a child may be replacing a lost parent, partner or previous child taken into care, etc).

Walker identifies two possible, but not mutually exclusive, responses likely to be reflected in the parents' narrative – **hyperarousal** (associated with an ambivalent pattern) and **dissociation** (associated with an avoidant pattern).

He then goes on to think about the way practitioners can frame questions to explore these states – 'Do you find yourself having intrusive thoughts about the experience?' (hyperarousal); 'Do you have gaps in your memory of any periods in your life?' (dissociation) – and how resolution can be assessed in terms of the balance between arousal and dissociation, with implications for assessing risk. In assessing the impact of unresolved loss and trauma, he highlights the following:

- > Trauma at the hands of an attachment figure is more damaging than from a stranger.
- > Potential damage is increased by early onset, duration and severity.

### Fostering and adoption

Research into the application of adult attachment theory in fostering and adoption is well established, including the use of the AAI in the assessment and recruiting of carers (see, for example, Steele et al, 1999; Steele and Steele, 2008b; Walker, 2008b; Calabiano and Thorpe, 2007). The use of standardised tools reflects the need for an evidence-based approach that minimises individual assessor bias, increases confidence in assessments and has the potential to predict support needs as well as in assisting in the matching process (Walker, 2008b).

More recently, its use in assessing and supporting long term foster carers has been explored (Blazey et al, 2013). This identified advantages to carrying out the AAI at the beginning of the assessment process, as its structured, formal nature could then be kept distinct from the more interactive style of the traditional 'Form F' assessment. It was also an effective, more rigorous way of exploring issues at a deeper level. There are concerns, however, about encouraging discussion of potentially difficult areas without establishing any kind of prior relationship.

Bifulco and colleagues (2008) developed the **'Attachment Style Interview' (ASI)** specifically to address carer support systems, including the current quality of relationships with partners and close family and ability to access support – all crucial for placement stability. The ASI identifies five attachment patterns – **enmeshed, fearful, angry-dismissive, withdrawn and secure** – and determines the degree of attachment insecurity as mild, moderate or marked – see [www.attachmentstyleinterview.com](http://www.attachmentstyleinterview.com) for more information.

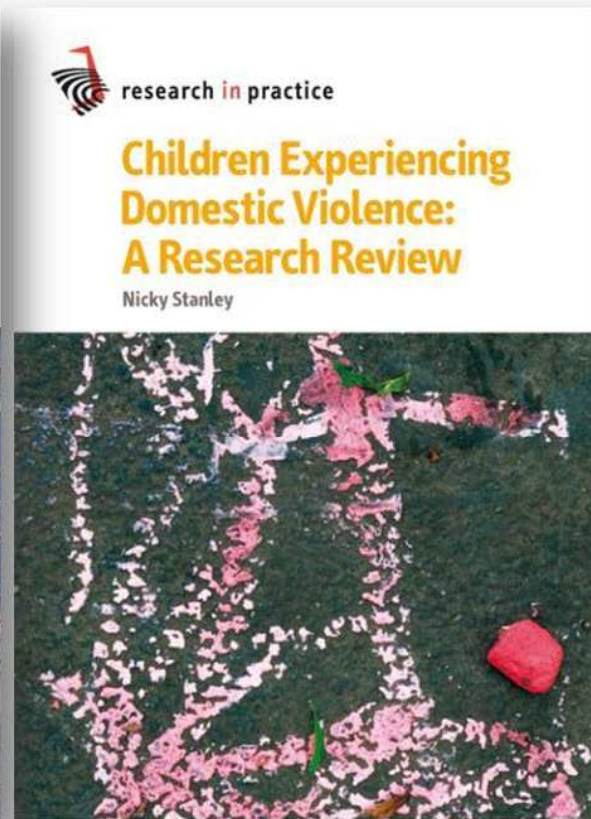
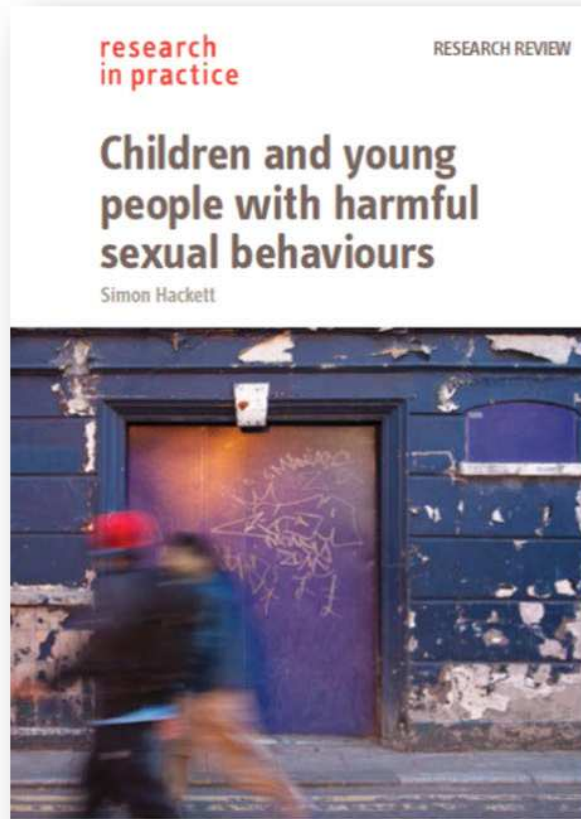
However, as already indicated, the research evidence highlights a number of challenges to using standardised tools. These include the time commitment in terms of training and administration, the expense of transcription and coding, and maintaining a neutral stance in the face of painful material. It is also tempting to assume that such measures will be infallible; commentators note the importance of professional judgement alongside actuarial measures.



These resources bring together knowledge on key topics, practice areas and research issues identified by practitioners, planners and policy makers – as well as evaluating the findings and implications.

# research in practice

## RESEARCH REVIEW





Guidance, ideas and tools for  
developing evidence-informed practice.



### PRACTICE TOOL

## Using research: Tools to support evidence- informed practice

Good professional practice is informed by knowledge of the latest theory and research. (Munro, 2011)



The social work profession evolves through the contribution of its members in activities such as practice research, supervision, assessment of practice, teaching and management.  
PCF: Professional Leadership (Advanced level)

This resource is designed to support Principal Social Workers, Advanced Practitioners and Social Work Managers to:

- > begin a conversation about 'what good looks like' in terms of research use
- > assess your own and your team's attitude to using research
- > reflect on how you can model research mindedness
- > signpost further resources and support.

The use of research in social work practice is a clear expectation.

- > The College of Social Work's Professional Capabilities Framework (PCF) provides a generic framework for supporting this expectation.
- > For child and family social work, the Munro Review identifies core capabilities relating to knowledge, critical reflection and analysis, and intervention and skills (Munro, 2011).
- > 'Research-informed practice' is the explicit attribute of outstanding practice identified by

## Assessing risk of further child maltreatment: *a research-based approach*

### Why use research-based risk assessment?

Assessing the risk of further maltreatment is central to protecting children who have already suffered significant harm, but the Assessment Framework focuses primarily on need and does not explicitly consider risk. There has been criticism of social work assessments as being too descriptive and insufficiently analytical – with a tendency to providing a great deal of background information without addressing the 'so what?' question about what this means for a particular child (for example Turney, 2011; Turney et al., 2011).

'Social workers and managers should always reflect the latest research on the impact of neglect and abuse when analysing the level of need and risk faced by the child.'  
Working Together, 2013, 101

In 2011 Barlow, Fisher and Jones carried out a systematic review of methods of analysing significant harm, with the following conclusions:

- > Clinical judgement often derived on from an individual practitioner's judgement is not a reliable method of assessing risk. The accuracy of such decision-making in the child protection field is poor; research has found the accuracy of assessments being made slightly better than guessing (Stewart et al., 2008, cited in Barlow et al., 2011).

- > Standardised and actuarial based risk assessment tools based on research data and existing research at risk appear more reliable, but 'have the potential to improve the classification of risk of harm by providing practitioners with clear guidance about how to focus the assessment process, and analyse the data collected' (Stewart et al., 2008, cited in Barlow et al., 2011).

- > Structured professional judgement combines the use of research-based tools for analysis with professional judgement to produce assessments that are informed by research and reflect the unique implications for each child of the risk. Last strengths within their family and wider environment.

'Standardised tools are not a substitute for professional expertise. If the assessment is dependent on the relationships built with child and family and on the quality of the information gathered, Professional

judgement is essential in determining whether what has been observed in a family meets the criteria for inclusion as a risk factor and in making appropriate plans for a child. Risk assessment is not an end in itself – it must be linked to risk management, decision-making and plans for work with the family.

Risk assessment is a continuous process, not a one-off event. Skills for a child care assessor rapidly and sometimes unpredictably. Even the best assessment of risk will not protect every child – risk assessment is not risk prevention. However, the use of research-based tools in combination with professional judgement can improve the quality of risk assessment and improve consistency. Practitioners may appreciate the use of such tools because they help to make the reasons for social work decision-making more explicit and demonstrably justifiable.

The use of structured professional judgement to help reduce the need for experts, avoid delay, improve decision-making and re-engage social workers as experts in their field. The research evidence upon which this tool is built (Stanley, Furnham and Jones, 2010; Jones, Stanley and Furnham, 2010) is particularly useful in this context, as it focuses on the risk that a previously abused or neglected child will suffer further maltreatment.

Dartington

Author: Polly Davison. Reviewed and edited by David Jones and Susannah Sawyer

### PRACTICE TOOL

## Supporting emotional resilience within social workers

This resource explores the concept of emotional resilience and how this can be promoted and supported within social workers in order to improve practice and service delivery.

It discusses:

- > what emotional resilience is
- > social work and emotional resilience
- > how teams can develop emotional resilience
- > the positive role of supervision
- > how organisational context can affect emotional resilience.

The resource also includes three practical exercises:

- 1 Team Supervision Tool
- 2 Individual Supervision Tool
- 3 Managers' Audit Tool.



### Evidence Matters in Family Justice

Jane Lewis and Nicola Erlen



### Analysis and Critical Thinking in Assessment 2nd Edition

Liz Brown, Sarah Moore and Danielle Turney (2012)  
Revised (2014) by Brown L and Turney D

### Do's and don'ts of supervision

*This exercise aims to draw together the key approaches a manager should use in supervision, and the pitfalls they should avoid.*

Do's	Don'ts
Encourage your supervisees to set their own agenda for supervision.	Be too concerned if you don't have all the answers – your role is as facilitator rather than telling practitioners what to do
Ask supervisees to prepare at least one case for discussion at each supervision session.	Focus solely on whether tasks have been completed.
Ask the supervisee to identify their own values and beliefs, and how they might impact on the case in question.	Be negative or dismissive of the approach the practitioner has taken to the case – thinking critically is not the same as criticising a practitioner. It should be a constructive, rather than destructive, process.
Encourage supervisees to talk to other members in the team who might have worked on a similar case, or have expert knowledge on a particular topic.	Talk too much – this should be an opportunity for the practitioner to reflect on their work.

Aimed at senior decision-makers working within children's services.

# research in practice

/Strategic Briefing 

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## Building a business case for investment in edge of care services



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/Strategic Briefing 

## Ensuring effective training Briefing for Local Safeguarding Children Boards (LSCBs)



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/Strategic Briefing 



## Risk-taking adolescents and child protection

*'I would that there were no age between 20 and 23,  
or that youth would sleep out the rest; for there's  
nothing in between but getting wenchas with child,  
wronging the ancientry, stealing, fighting...'*  
Shakespeare, The Winter's Tale Act II

### 1 Introduction and key learning points

Adolescence is a time of change. A powerful combination of biological, psychological and social changes make adolescents more likely to engage in risk-taking behaviours than children or adults, and these changes contribute both to opportunities for healthy growth and the risk of negative outcomes (Calkins, 2010). Experimentation and impulsive behaviour are part of normal teenage experience. With support, most young people navigate these challenges and emerge as healthily functioning adults. However, the interaction of individual, family and environmental factors can greatly increase a young person's vulnerability to risk and the potentially adverse consequences of risk-taking.

This briefing is intended to support strategic managers, frontline teams and practitioners. It begins by looking at the concept of 'risk taking' and goes on to outline some recent research on developmental aspects of adolescence – in particular, emerging knowledge relating to the adolescent brain. It considers research and policy material on the impact of maltreatment on adolescents, the effective safeguarding of young people (including messages from Serious Case Reviews), and managing risk and promoting resilience. The briefing then looks at key messages from two strong practice approaches – Social Pedagogy and Multisystemic Therapy (MST). Practice points and emerging practice examples are highlighted for service development and frontline practice, and links provided for relevant papers and other sources of information and support.

These resources provide councillors and trustees with succinct headline messages for elected representatives.



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**Child poverty: The role  
of children's services**

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# /Leaders' Briefing

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**Making the right  
choices for children  
in care**

# Events

Learning and development opportunities at venues across the country.

# Examples of previous events

- Contact: Making good decisions for children in public law
- Management development programme for leaders of 0 – 19 integrated early intervention teams
- Children and young people with harmful sexual behaviours
- Young people vulnerable to sexual exploitation - safeguarding adolescents
- Understanding and Promoting Resilience in Adolescents

# Events feedback

## **Emotional abuse and neglect**

“I found the content provided excellent reflection, underpinned by research, which could clearly be utilised in practice. Different examples and experiences brought by trainers added to the impact and quality.”

## **Contact: Making good decisions for children in public law**

“Given me the confidence to assert and suggest contact plans in the best interests of children. I now know where to look to find research and evidence to back this up.”


# Webinars

Assessing Parental Capacity to Change webinar Full Screen Video

research  
in practice

## Assessing Capacity to Change

Jane Barlow  
Professor of Public Health  
in the Early Years



THE UNIVERSITY OF  
WARWICK

research  
in practice

# Previous webinars

- Adult attachment
- Assessing risk of further child maltreatment
- An Introduction to Personalisation in Children's Services
- Assessing Parental Capacity To Change
- Attachment in Children and Young People
- Communicating Effectively with Children Under 5

# e-learning

Online learning modules which include quizzes, exercises and videos.

# e-learning

Online learning modules which include quizzes, exercises and videos.

Play in Outdoor Spaces Resources References Attachments

research  
in practice

ask@rip.org.uk email

- Introduction
- Defining Play
- Types of Play
- Encouraging Play**
- Where Children Play
- Inclusive Play

### Encouraging Play

We saw this video earlier as an example of **communication play**.

**Which other type of play do you think is represented in the film?**


Click the Play button to watch the film again.

- social play
- mastery play



0:00:00 / 00:29

SUBMIT



# Current e-learning modules

- Play in Outdoor Spaces
- Neglect
- Domestic Violence
- Finding research
- Evaluating research
- Under Age Drinking and offending
- Safeguarding
- Conduct Disorder

# Tailored Support

Two days of tailored support from Research in Practice each year.

Can be used on:

- **In-house workshops** RiP facilitators will come to our authority and deliver training.
- **Strategy development** Support to develop and implement an evidence-informed practice strategy.
- **Evidence scopes** A broad overview of research and practice evidence on a specific topic.
- **Evaluation** tailored evaluation support to help measure the impact of programmes, initiatives and services.

# Tailored Support – workshops (selected)

- Finding, appraising and applying research in practice
- Using analysis and critical thinking in assessment
- Using research in report writing, assessment and family court
- Children experiencing domestic violence
- Communication with Children under 5
- Relationship-based practice in intensive family support
- Integrated working in family mental health

# E-bulletin & Research & Policy Updates

- Keep up to date with what's new from Research in Practice with monthly e-bulletins.
- Subscribe to the Research and Policy Updates (RPU) for detailed summaries of research and a highly accessible monthly policy round up.

Click [VIEW SUBSCRIPTIONS](#) anywhere on the site to subscribe.

# Creating an account

- Go to [www.rip.org.uk](http://www.rip.org.uk)
- Click 
- Follow on-screen instructions to start using Research in Practice today

“RiP is an amazing resource, particularly with regards to HCPC registration.

The need to demonstrate learning from different sources is met by RiP – through their hard-copy publications, their research and policy updates, their online support and their face-to-face learning events.

I find it an invaluable service.”

Yvonne Headley, Learning & Development Officer, Solihull