

Welcome to our latest newsletter sharing the research that the

Department for Children and Families at the University of Worcester, have been involved in over the last few months.

Take a look at our latest updates on publications, presentations and other research related activity.



## Research Updates

We are about to collect data on the impact that some of our students' independent research is having in settings. If you receive an email from us (it will be from **Nicola Watson** and **Carla Solvason**) we would really appreciate any contributions.

**Janet Harvell** has gained ethical approval for two research projects:

Exploring the impact of the coronavirus on students enrolled on childcare courses and

The effectiveness of Summer School, Induction and Transition Activities in supporting students introduction to, and engagement with, the FdA EY FdL degree

*Watch this space to find out the outcomes of these projects.*

### Conference Presentations

Carla Solvason has recently presented keynote presentations exploring ethical research for the Early Childhood Studies Degree Network (January 21), and The Learning Institute (Cornwall, February, 21).

She also presented a paper on how leaders can access support through collaborative clusters for the British Early Childhood Education Research



We had a successful, online DCF Conference:

### [Signs of Spring: What's awakening in our sector?](#)

This was held w/c 8th February and included presentations by School of Education staff: Janet Harvell, Angela Hodgkins, Nicola Watson, Michelle Malomo, Tracey France and Paul Sheehan, as well as professional partners, specialists, current students and alumni.

This year's conference focused on what our sectors (health, welfare, education, social work, charity) and professionals have done well during the current climate.

We've included links for you to watch some of the presentations from the conference. We will, over the rest of the year, make further presentations available to all partners through our research newsletter as free CPD.

[Janet Harvell](#) celebrates the resilience of children and practitioners, examining **observations during the time of COVID-19** and introduces us to her research.

[Angela Hodgkins](#) highlights the importance of using **empathy** skills with families, both in general and in times of crisis and anxiety. As empathetic practitioners, we are in a good position to make a difference by using the skills which are integral to our profession.

[Victoria Tregear](#) talks about what effective feedback looks like, the benefits of **meaningful feedback** for the child and explores Maslow before Bloom in her power-point presentation.



## Early Years Network

Just two years ago Carla Solvason and Niki Stobbs set up the Early Years Network, based at the University. This was an opportunity for anyone working in the Early Years sector to come together, exchange knowledge and create a supportive wider 'team'. We had a great start but have had to put things on hold over the past year, for obvious reasons. We know we could have gone the Zoom route, but we are a social lot and most value the opportunity to chat and explore ideas that aren't necessarily on our agenda. We hope to start our meetings (held at the University of Worcester) again soon, and would love it if you could join us.

If you are interested then please contact Julie Perry at [j.perry@worc.ac.uk](mailto:j.perry@worc.ac.uk)

We hope to see you there!

## Student Focus – a wide range of topics

Students within the Department for Children and Families research a diverse range of topics for their Independent Studies / Dissertations, focussing on children aged 0-19 and their families, in education, care and health settings. Here are just a few examples of interesting research currently being explored by this year's students:



After studying more about 'hard to reach' parents, **Rachel Andrews** reflected on her own family circumstances and realised that her family may well have been categorised in this way due to their long working hours. Taking a feminist perspective Rachel found that technology such as email and texts and using online platforms such as "Tapestry" can support communication with parents who, for whatever reason, are unable to talk face to face with practitioners on a regular basis. One practitioner participant commented that due to the social distancing requirements of Covid-19, currently every parent could be considered hard to reach, making understanding effective ways of communication even more important.

**Laura Blackman** is looking at the interpersonal skills that are important for paramedics to help them to establish effective dialogue with patients and their families. Paramedics are expected to quickly develop effective communication with patients and their families to ensure that they are able to deliver the best possible clinical and emotional emergency care. The study aims to establish key skills that may be valuable in promoting effective communication between paramedic students and patients to ensure that their holistic wellbeing remains central to their treatment.



**Colette Dunn** is exploring the concept of the 4th trimester with new mothers. The concept of the 4<sup>th</sup> trimester acknowledges that a human baby is born totally dependent on their care giver and considers the first 3 months of life to be an extension of the pregnancy. Colette's research explores the challenges facing mothers in their transition to parenthood and whether, by creating an opportunity for mothers and babies to get to know each other, adjust to the physical and emotional changes of birth and take things slowly, the transition to motherhood can be eased.

**Jazz Pevy** is exploring how childminders can provide activities that meet the needs of a wide ability/ age range of children in a homebased setting. She carried out child observations, a semi-structured interview and online questionnaires and noted some interesting discoveries about childminders' planning and differentiation and about the benefits to children of vertical grouping.



## Staff Focus - Angela Hodgkins



Angela completed her NNEB nursery nurse training in 1984. She has had a varied career working with children in a range of roles, including working as a nanny and a childminder, in special school, preschool and primary school, as a TA and LSA, as manager of a before and after school club, for Sure Start, and as an early years development officer.

She later studied for a BA, then an MA, trained as an assessor, then a teacher of adults, and went on to work as a lecturer at Stourbridge College, then Halesowen College.

She is also a qualified and experienced counsellor, having worked in a GP surgery, for Victim Support and Childline.

Angela joined the University of Worcester as a Senior Lecturer in 2014, which is her dream job. She is the course leader of the BA (Hons) Integrated Working with Children and Families.

Angela's research interests are in empathy, emotional intelligence, and compassion, and she is currently studying for a PhD, researching early years practitioners' perceptions of empathy within their practice.

Angela has published journal articles on empathy and emotion within the early years and, last year, fulfilled another dream of publishing a book with her colleague and excellent friend Alison Prowle

### **Latest publications:**

Solvason, C., Hodgkins, A. & Watson N. (2021). Preparing students for the 'emotion work' of early years practice. *NZ International Research in Early Childhood Education Journal*, 23(1), pp. 14 – 23.

Prowle, A and Hodgkins, A (2020) *Making a Difference with Children and Families - Re-imagining the Role of the Practitioner*, London: Palgrave Macmillan

Hodgkins, A. and Reed, M. (2019) *Navigating Complex Systems* in Gibbs, L. & Gasper, M. (2019) *Challenging the Intersection of Policy with Pedagogy*, Pedagogies in Early Childhood series, London: Routledge.

Hodgkins, A. (2019). Advanced empathy in the early years – a risky strength? *NZ International Research in Early Childhood Education Journal*, 22(1), pp. 46-58



### **Hot off the press, recent publications...**

Cliffe, J. and Solvason, C. (2021), The Messines of Ethics in Education, *Journal of Academic Ethics*, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10805-021-09402-8>

Solvason, C. (2021) Leaders Need Support, Too, <http://www.becera.org.uk/news-and-resources/leaders-need-support-too>

Solvason, C., Hodgkins, A. & Watson N. (2021). Preparing students for the 'emotion work' of early years practice. *NZ International Research in Early Childhood Education Journal*, 23(1), pp. 14 – 23.

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