



Welcome to our latest newsletter sharing some of the research that the **Department for Children and Families at the University of Worcester** have been involved in over the last few months.

## Welcome to a new academic year!

It's been an exciting start to the year for us; after a successful research partnership with **Blaenau Gwent** for a number of years (thanks to the wonderful leadership of Alison Prowle and Rosie Walker), we have been asked to lead on two new research projects with them, investigating the impact of changes that we have previously suggested.

One of these will be a longitudinal project looking at the transition of children with specific learning needs from their teenage years into adulthood.

Over the next few updates we plan to share some of the findings from our previous research with this forward-facing authority.

As a continuation from previous newsletters, we have shared further presentations from our conference:

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

This was held w/c 8th February 2021 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.

The conference focussed on what our sectors (health, welfare, education, social work, charity) and professionals have done well during the current climate.

[Johanna Cliffe](#) explores 'Rhizomatic Thinking and Analysis' and [Becky Poulter Jewson with Rebecca Skinner](#) from [Thriving Language](#) discuss in their podcast 'The Early Years Professional as an advocate and a brain scientist.'

**If you're interested in presenting at our next Partnership Conference (Saturday 21st February 2022), please get in touch with Sam: [s.sutton-tsang@worc.ac.uk](mailto:s.sutton-tsang@worc.ac.uk). It provides a great opportunity to present your research/ work/practice and for your own professional development.**



## STAFF PROFILE

My name is Tom Weaver and I am part of the Department for Children and Families team and teach on two of the Courses (Integrated Working for Children & Families and Early Childhood in Society).

As well as teaching we are all actively engaged in research activity and as part of this I am in the early stages of studying for a PhD. My subject area is to look at lecturers' online teaching and consider how

self-efficacy is determined in this context. Self-efficacy is the belief that we can successfully complete a future task and so the higher our self-efficacy the more we are able to convince ourselves that the outcome of the task is going to be positive.

Although this research focus might seem far removed from the content of the Courses in the Department for Children and Families I am actually using an approach to research that is widely used with students and especially so in Independent Studies. Most of our Courses refer at some point to the links between theory and practice and we encourage all of our students to be critically reflective practitioners. (This involves looking at the theoretical or research evidence for an approach or topic and applying it to our practice with children, young people or families). The critical part comes in when you evaluate whether the theory or research explains what you have found in your practical experience. My PhD follows this same line of thought: there are two main models that explain our beliefs about whether we can achieve something. These have both been applied to face to face teaching and the links between these theories and our practice appears to be strong.

For my PhD I want to know if the models (the 'theories') work for online teaching as well. Finding this out will tell us whether we can use the same model that we used for face to face teaching to explain how self-efficacy is formed for online teaching or whether we need to adapt the model (or even propose a completely new one). In the Autumn I am hoping to apply for Ethical Approval and then pilot my first interviews in the Spring of 2022. It is hard working fitting in my study with my other commitments but I am really motivated by the prospect of finding out something new and valuable. If you want to know any more please get in touch.



## Team Publications and Presentations

Solvason, C. and Proctor, S. (2021) 'You have to find the right words to be honest': nurturing relationships between teachers and parents of children with Special Educational Needs. *Support for Learning*, 36(3), pp.470-485.

Solvason (September 2021) Keynote Presentation at Chichester University's Overcoming Prejudice Conference: Reconsidering Images of the 'Good Parent' in Education and Care'. ([Presentation available here](#)).

## DfCF Making An Impact

In September 2021, **Angela Hodgkins** chaired a symposium at the EECERA (European Early Childhood Educational Research Association) conference, which took place online this year and featured 500 speakers from around the world. The symposium, entitled '**Workforce Support and Development**' included three research presentations:

- **Professional development coaching conversations**, by Catriona Elek, University of Melbourne, Australia
- **The empathic and compassionate professional**, by Angela Hodgkins, University of Worcester, UK
- **Workplace conditions in early childhood education and care**, by Samuel Bader, Deutsches Jugendinstitut, Germany.

**Michelle Malomo** (DCF) and Sarah Pittaway (Library Services) continue to share their pearls of wisdom about accessing reading with a wide audience, this time publishing "'So, You Want Me to Read for My Degree?': A Universal Design for Learning Approach to Reading" in *Insights*. It is also great to hear that they now have ethical approval for the next stage of this valuable project. Watch this space!

In our next edition **Stuart Gallagher and Niki Stobbs** will be sharing some of their ideas about Social Pedagogy with you ,following on from their presentations over the summer.

## What studying opportunities do we have for you this year?

The Department For Children and Families offers a range of courses from undergraduate to postgraduate. Click on the links for further information.

### *Undergraduate*

[EARLY YEARS \(0-8\) FOUNDATION DEGREE - FLEXIBLE DISTRIBUTED LEARNING PATHWAY](#)

[EARLY YEARS \(0-8\) FOUNDATION DEGREE](#)

[EARLY CHILDHOOD IN SOCIETY \(GRADUATE PRACTITIONER\) BA \(HONS\)](#)

[INTEGRATED WORKING WITH CHILDREN & FAMILIES BA \(HONS\) TOP-UP DEGREE](#)

### *Postgraduate*

[MA EARLY CHILDHOOD PATHWAY](#)

[LEADING CULTURE CHANGE IN SAFEGUARDING PGCERT](#)

Contact [Admissionsb@worc.ac.uk](mailto:Admissionsb@worc.ac.uk) for further information about applying.



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