

What Works Centre for Children's Social Care

e-newsletter, no.16

28th March 2019

It's been a busy month here at the What Works Centre, and it feels like we've built some good momentum as we head into the new financial year. We're really excited to now be working with 47 local authorities in England on live research projects, with some authorities even signing up for more than one of these.

For me, the best parts of this month haven't been getting stuck into the equations in parts of our new research protocols, or brainstorming intervention and trial design on our Happier, Healthier Professionals programme; it's been the opportunities I've had to listen and chat to social workers, to get their perspective on what we're doing and what they want and need from us. Whether that's visiting Lambeth a few stops away on the tube, or the town of my birth, Weston-Super-Mare, a lively discussion at Sussex University or last night's deliberative forum on machine learning, there's always something new to learn, a new perspective to get, and an opportunity to refresh our understanding of why we're here.

Michael Sanders, Executive Director

Healthier Happier Professionals

We launched our [Happier, Healthier Professionals programme](#) in January and invited partners to our co-design phase about the specific issues being faced at their organisations to directly inform intervention design. Based on discussions with over 25 partners, and informed by academic research from leading experts, we designed a number of behavioural interventions focused on improving social worker wellbeing and

productivity. These interventions revolve around themes such as work-life balance, burnout, time pressure, opportunities for growth and feeling valued in the workplace.

The deadline for the wider [call for partners](#) to collaborate with us on implementing these interventions has now passed and we are thrilled to see such high levels of interest from local authorities in partnering with us during the second phase of the research programme. This will involve conducting interventions over the next nine months to quickly build evidence around what works to promote social worker wellbeing.

Research Protocols

This month we published our first eight [research protocols](#) - including plans for six Change Projects, a Schwartz Rounds trial, and re-analysis of over 80 Education Endowment Foundation evaluations. These protocols describe the work we're intending to do before we get started. Sounds like an odd thing to do? Read about why we're committed to doing this in [our blog](#) on the topic.

New entry on our [Evidence Store](#): Parent-Child Interaction Therapy

Parent-Child Interaction Therapy (PCIT) was originally developed to help parents respond to disruptive behaviours by their children. It has since been adapted to improve parenting to help tackle abuse or neglect. Evidence from 11 studies has found that PCIT tended to show a positive effect on the recurrence of child abuse, leading to reduced re-referrals. It is effective in cases involving physical abuse but not those involving neglect or violence between parents. PCIT also tended to show a positive effect on the risk of child abuse in families. These findings are based on moderate strength evidence. For the full summary, visit our [Evidence Store](#).

Celebrating World Social Work Day

World Social Work Day was also this month, we made a [short film](#) summarising our research projects and highlighting how they are designed to help social workers and

improve outcomes for children and young people. We made the film with support from our Change Programme partner LAs Lambeth and Hillingdon and it also stars two members of our children and young people's panel - thank you Lewis and Mariah!

Applications open for a new panel

We are looking for members with a wide range of expertise to join our new Evaluation Advisory Panel. This panel will assess and advise on the way the Centre proceeds with our evaluation of evidence in children's social care. Members will meet twice a year and will also provide further recommendations on methodological issues based on their individual expertise.

If you'd like to get involved, please apply by 1st April by sending your CV and a one-page cover letter to wwccsc@nesta.org.uk

Thank you to those who attended

On 27th March we held a deliberative forum on the use of machine learning in children's social care. We heard from speakers Giselle Cory (Data Kind), Dr Joanna Redden (Data Justice Lab) and Claudia Megele (PSW Network Co-Chair) about the benefits, risks and opportunities of using predictive analytics in social work. The rich and helpful discussion that followed highlighted some of the key issues the WWC needs to address through our research; transparency, bias, data quality and co-production. A recording of the event will be available online soon. Many thanks to everyone who took part and we look forward to continuing the conversation as our research project progresses.