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Children not heard in domestic violence cases

Academic research presented at a conference held at Northumbria University last week (11 September) shows that children and young people are not being heard during child protection enquiries.

The research has also revealed that there is often an over-focus on the mother in terms of accountability during such cases.

The findings show that multi-agency investigations into child abuse and neglect often have an exaggerated focus on the role of the mother without

fully exploring the reasons behind her implied failings. Only when the child and father or partner are encouraged to take a fuller part in proceedings, can a deeper picture emerge. Often, the domestic violence or abuse that takes place between the adults in the household is a background factor that significantly contributes to the suffering or neglect of the child.

The conference, entitled Hearing the Voice of the Child, Creating Safe Spaces for Children and Young People, also concluded that more timely and widespread access to academic research could aid practitioners in shaping their services for children and young people.

Professor Peter Francis, Pro Vice-Chancellor, Northumbria University, said: “Practitioners with access to academic research will be better equipped to tailor their services to the individual needs of users. An enriched understanding of the nature and extent of the issues can help services re-focus prevention and support strategies and, for those affected, co-ordinate the relevant areas of support for each individual case.”

The event, held on Northumbria’s city campus, brought together academic researchers, policy-makers and practitioners to share best practice. In partnership with the High Sheriff of Tyne & Wear, Ruth Thompson OBE, and with the support of the Police and Crime Commissioner and Northumbria Honorary Graduate, Vera Baird QC, the full-day event featured speeches from recognised experts including Dr Maggie Atkinson, Children’s Commissioner for England and Vera Baird QC herself.

Delegates included stakeholders from across the country who already play a key role in safeguarding children including the judiciary, magistrates, senior police, probation officers, GPs, housing providers, charities and community groups.

Professor Francis continued: “All of our research is fed back into our teaching, ensuring that our students graduate with relevant, up-to-date expertise in their chosen area of study. It was therefore interesting to see several Northumbria graduates as part of the delegation, now working out in the sector to make a difference to the lives of children and young people.

“The conference showed us that we are already working well collaboratively, but that there is no room for complacency. We will continue to work together to ensure that research, policy and practice are underpinned by one another

to create effective, tailored services for those in need.”

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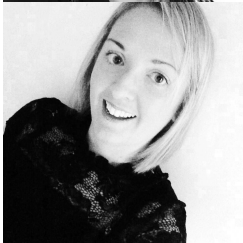


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