



The prevalence of child maltreatment in the UK

ELLEN FISH discusses a major new study from the United Kingdom that documents the extent and nature of children's experiences of child abuse and neglect, both inside and outside of the family, when they were aged under 16 years.

The National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (NSPCC), has recently published a report of the first major general population study of the prevalence of child maltreatment in the United Kingdom. The study was based on the retrospective reports of a national, randomly selected sample of young people aged from 18 to 24 years (born between 1974 and 1980). The report documents the extent and nature of their experiences of child abuse and neglect, both inside and outside of the family, when they were aged under 16 years.

***Child Maltreatment in the United Kingdom: A Study of the Prevalence of Child Abuse and Neglect*, by P. Cawson, C. Wattam, S. Brooker & G. Kelly, National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children, London, 2000.**

Although previous prevalence studies have typically assessed physical and/or sexual abuse only, this NSPCC study has attempted to determine children and young people's experience of the gamut of maltreatment experiences. The decision was taken to assess childhood experiences of not just physical and sexual abuse, but also emotional abuse and neglect (collectively described as "child maltreatment"), which makes this study one of the few worldwide that addresses the prevalence of maltreatment in such a comprehensive and authoritative way.

Aims of study

Like many prevalence studies, the key aim of this study is the determination of the extent of the various forms of child maltreatment occurring in the general population. This data will enable the establishment of benchmarks "from which it will be possible to monitor future changes and trends in the maltreatment of children, and in public attitudes to child abuse and neglect" (p.1) and enable the monitoring of changes in the treatment of children and young people over the next ten years.

In addition, the study was designed to compensate for deficiencies in existing data through the provision of believable and reliable measures that will stand up "in the context of social and cultural differences due to social class, ethnicity and region" (p.1) Overall, the results of the survey will help agency planning and the provision of child protection services, steering resources to better service the needs of children, in particular "by addressing the under-reporting of the various types of maltreatment" (p.1).

Issues of definition

"Maltreatment occurs along a continuum of ways to treat children and this explains the difficulty of the identification generally of accepted cut-off points at which neat divides from acceptable to unacceptable to abusive may be made." (p.5)

As with all prevalence studies, how child abuse and neglect are defined will affect the determination of the occurrence of maltreatment. Merely including emotional maltreatment and neglect as categories will alter the resultant estimate of prevalence. Such definitional issues identified by the authors included: first, the difficulty in identifying the demarcation between abuse and neglect and other forms of harm, including those that arise from less than adequate parenting or

from social factors such as poverty; second, variations in what is defined as maltreatment because of cultural and intergenerational differences; third, the difficulties associated with the development of "single measures" of abuse or neglect that can minimise the great diversity in harms that children can experience during their childhood; and fourth, the interrelationship or overlapping between the various forms of maltreatment (for example, physical and emotional abuse may co-occur).

Cawson and colleagues have attempted to overcome the definitional problems and limitations that plague prevalence studies by adopting a behavioural approach. Rather than subjectively predefining child abuse and neglect, the authors have asked respondents to identify whether specific acts of commission or omission have occurred, and have attempted to measure the nature, frequency or severity of maltreatment. The authors used this "behaviours" approach for the range of abuse types, from which conclusions have then been drawn about the prevalence of physical neglect, physical abuse, emotional maltreatment and child sexual abuse.

For example, with regard to physical punishment and physical abuse, first, the line between reasonable and unreasonable physical punishment is difficult to define. Second, as Cawson et al. note, there is great variation in the experience of physical abuse and whether it is interpreted as abuse. Further, when assessing physical abuse it is not uncommon for a variety of physically abusive experiences, such as being beaten, kicked or burned to be combined and assessed as a single experience of being "physically abused". Such an approach is problematic in that it can minimise the reality of the abusive experience.

Another major issue acknowledged by the authors is the considerable differences that exist between research based on the assessment of maltreatment by professionals as compared to the recipients of abuse. They point out that this is a reflection of the different criteria used. "Professionals judge by what was actually done to the victim, by whether the victim suffered harm or by a mixture of these factors. Victims

take other things into account, such as their relationship with the person harming them, an understanding of the health problems or pressures on that person which might have affected their behaviour, or by comparison of their treatment to that of other children in the family and neighbourhood" (Cawson et al, 2000:5). Thus, as with previous studies, Cawson et al. have utilised the retrospective self-reports of young people, but also provided a professional interpretation and classification of the findings – post hoc.

The problematic nature of definitions of child maltreatment is a recurring theme throughout the report. The methods used by the authors to overcome these problems, will be of great interest to child protection workers and other researchers in terms of developing other prevalence studies and defining maltreatment for other research and practice purposes.

Family life

Despite a focus on the prevalence of child maltreatment experienced by the young people in this community sample, Cawson et al. recognised that it is only a minority of the population who actually experience what is defined by professionals as "child maltreatment". Thus, to put the findings within an overall general population context, the authors provide an overview of family life on a number of dimensions.



"Attitudes are important to understand when measuring the prevalence of abuse since there may be a relationship between attitudes, perceptions, self reporting and experience of abuse."

As expected, approximately 90 per cent of the young people reported that they had been well cared for as children and had a warm and loving family background. Thus, most respondents reported being praised or told they had done something well by their parents, many respected their mother as a role model, and most had freedom to express their views (although a third found it difficult to talk to their parents about sex). In contrast, one third of respondents reported there was "a lot of stress" in their families with the same proportion reporting financial pressures and worries. Nearly a fifth reported having to regularly shoulder responsibilities at an early age because their parents were ill, disabled, had substance abuse problems or needed emotional support because of divorce or bereavement. Overall, less than 10 per cent of the sample reported having suffered from one or more forms of serious maltreatment at home.

Physical discipline

In order to accurately determine respondents' experiences of physical discipline and physical abuse, (ranging from mild physical discipline through to "serious" physical abuse), the authors asked respondents whether they had experienced a range of behaviours broadly defined as "physical treatment/discipline". Their reasoning for doing so was because

of the known variation that exists between what people consider to be reasonable physical punishment versus physical abuse.

According to the young people's responses, it appeared that in most families discipline was reported to be based on reasoning, explanation and non-physical punishment. However, approximately three quarters of respondents reported that they had received physical discipline, which was described mostly as a mild and infrequent slap on the leg, arm or hand or the buttocks with a bare hand.

"Attitudes are important to understand when measuring the prevalence of abuse since there may be a relationship between attitudes, perceptions, self reporting and experience of abuse." (Cawson et al. 2000:21)

Respondents' attitudes to physical punishment or more broadly, acceptable and unacceptable ways of treating and disciplining children, were investigated in this survey. The relationship between attitudes and subsequent behaviour is also important because respondents' views on disciplining will impact on how they subsequently raise their own children.

Most respondents considered that the method of discipline most appropriate was verbal discussion and non-physical punishment, such as giving additional chores, withdrawing privileges and grounding. More than 60 per cent thought it

was never justified to ignore a child or to threaten beatings. Seventy per cent of respondents felt that making a child miss a meal, embarrassing or humili-

ating a child was unacceptable behaviour. About half of the sample (52 per cent) thought an open-handed smack was occasionally justified but only 10 per cent thought this often justified. The use of implements to hit a child or closed-fist hitting was unacceptable to nearly the whole sample (88-95 per cent).

These results are congruent with previous research and assist in the development of a "social consensus which is a reliable and stable feature of values about the treatment of children" and give a foundation from which to judge child maltreatment in the United Kingdom (Cawson et al. 2000:25).

Physical abuse

"Although all physical punishment involves the use of physical force, whether it is defined as 'violence' in the context of the criminal law or of public opinion is culturally determined." (p.31)

In most prevalence studies conducted to date, physical abuse has been measured using the Conflicts Tactics Scale (Straus 1979). In this study however, Cawson et al. used the three levels of physical abuse developed by Bilfulco and Moran (1998) in order to define physical abuse and to identify the points at which the use of physical force towards young people reached

a level that could be considered abusive. These levels were: serious physical abuse, intermediate physical abuse, and cause for concern.

Serious physical abuse was defined as having experienced behaviours ranging from being hit with an object, being shaken/thrown, being punched/kicked or threatened with a weapon such that physical injury was caused, or there was a high risk of injury if the abuse continued. *Intermediate physical abuse* by parents/carers was said to occur if the "violent treatment" occurred irregularly, without causing injury, or where it occurred regularly and left physical effects lasting at least 24 hours. *Cause for concern* was defined as injury or potential harm that was not immediately serious but where a lower level of physical treatment/discipline occurred regularly indicating a problem that could escalate or lead to continued distress for a child. "Mild" physical discipline, such as infrequent smacking with an open hand that caused no lasting effect was excluded from the physical abuse rating.

One quarter of the population reported suffering at least one physically violent experience as a child at the hands of family, peers or others, an experience reported by slightly more men (27 per cent) than women (23 per cent). Overall, with regard to the physical abuse experienced at the hands of parents or other caregivers, (combining the three physical abuse categories), 21 per cent of the sample were assessed as having experienced physical abuse.

Specifically, 7 per cent of the population experienced serious physical abuse as children at the hands of parents and carers, which included being beaten up, being hit with a fist or

implement, burned and scalded. Most violence occurred at home (78 per cent) with mothers being primarily responsible in 49 per cent of cases and fathers in 40 per cent of cases. Fourteen per cent of respondents were assessed as having experienced some degree of physical abuse by parents and carers, that is "intermediate physical abuse". Three per cent experienced aspects of childrearing that gave "cause for concern".

Therefore, Cawson et al. concluded that one quarter of families had at some point, however infrequently, breached the standards of behaviour that appeared to be accepted by 90 per cent of the population. These findings could be usefully compared with other prevalence studies of physical abuse, which the authors included in an appendix to the report. Prevalence rates in these studies ranged from between one per cent and 31 per cent.

Neglect

It is often noted that the investigation of neglect has often not been the focus of professionals and the wider community, despite the fact that it can have a greater negative impact in the longer term than the other forms of maltreatment (Tomison 1995). Similarly, most population-based prevalence studies have not attempted to incorporate an assessment of the nature and extent of neglect. It has been pointed out that "there is no agreed definition of neglect by which to measure prevalence" (Dubowitz et al. 1998, as cited in Cawson et al. 2000).

The other difficulty defining neglect, noted by Stevenson, is that "neglect is not a unitary concept but an administrative category covering a range of behaviours which are

RURAL-REMOTE TALKS

Are you working in rural or remote regions of Australia?

Are you planning a training or professional education conference?

Have you considered requesting a Clearinghouse presentation?

Networking and Outreach is one of the main functions of the National Child Protection Clearinghouse. In order to fulfill aspects of this role, over the past six years Clearinghouse staff have maintained a visible presence at conferences and seminars, and have made numerous presentations at conferences, seminars and workshops across the nation.

This is a free service provided by the National Child Protection Clearinghouse.

In general, such conferences, seminars and workshops have taken place in the capital cities, although a number of presentations have been made in regional capitals, such as Geelong, Ballarat, Newcastle, Tamworth and Townsville. Past topics have included:

- child abuse and domestic violence;
- program evaluation and research methods;
- child protection systems, especially professional decision making;
- interagency collaboration and communication; and

- child abuse prevention – frameworks for action, prevention programs that work, future directions.

At a recent speaking opportunity in Townsville, Adam Tomison, of the National Child Protection Clearinghouse, was reminded of the lack of training and professional education opportunities for workers and community agencies operating in rural and remote areas of Australia. Partly as a result of this experience, the Clearinghouse has moved to prioritise opportunities to develop and present materials in areas outside of the capital cities, right across the nation.

Therefore, if you or your agency are planning a regional or local conference, seminar or workshop with a focus on aspects of child abuse prevention, child protection, or associated areas, you are invited to contact us in order to discuss the possibility of a Clearinghouse visit and/or presentation.

Contact: Dr Adam Tomison, Research Advisor for the National Child Protection Clearinghouse, at the Australian Institute of Family Studies. Phone: (03) 9214 7888.

characterised by omission of care” (1998:14, as cited in Cawson et al. 2000:39). Thus, one of the significant benefits of this study has been the inclusion of measures of the prevalence of child neglect.

Neglect for the purposes of this study was conceived in terms of a failure to provide basic parental care and supervision and divided into the following categories: absence of care and absence of supervision. Within these two categories varying levels of severity were measured; that is, serious absence of care, intermediate absence of care and cause for concern (Cawson et al. 2000:43-46); and serious absence of supervision, intermediate absence of supervision and cause for concern about supervision. (Cawson et al. 2000:49-50

prevalence of emotional abuse has been plagued with disagreements about how to define it, measure it and treat it” (Tomison & Tucci 1997:1). These difficulties have been exacerbated by the inter-relationship between emotional abuse and other forms of maltreatment (Tomison and Tucci 1997).

As Cawson et al. note, other studies that have attempted to assess and categorise this type of abuse use a variety of terms: emotional maltreatment, emotional abuse, psychological maltreatment or abuse, psychological attack, emotional or psychological neglect. For the purposes of this prevalence study, Cawson et al. adopted the term *emotional maltreatment* which was operationalised along the following seven dimensions: psychological control and domination; psycho/physical

“If a parent inadvertently or deliberately engages in a pattern of inappropriate emotional responses, the child can be said to have experienced emotional abuse.”



The most common forms of neglect (serious absence of care) experienced were by six percent of the sample and included children frequently going hungry, not being taken to the doctor when ill, regularly having to look after themselves because of parental absence, being abandoned and/or living with dangerous physical conditions at home. The next most experienced form of neglect was a “serious absence of supervision”, experienced by 5 per cent of the sample. This included children being placed at risk by being left alone at home overnight or where children had been overnight – whereabouts unknown – at a young age. Further, Cawson et al. determined that 12 per cent of respondents had been affected by an intermediate absence of supervision. This included less serious levels of risk and involved parentification, with the onus on the child to care for themselves, to care for younger siblings and at times, her/his parents, at a very young age (that is, under 12 years).

Emotional abuse

“If a parent inadvertently or deliberately engages in a pattern of inappropriate emotional responses, the child can be said to have experienced emotional abuse.” (Tomison & Tucci 1997:1)

There is an increasing amount of evidence from child protection and research and practice suggesting that emotional abuse is a core element in the understanding of all maltreatment. Researchers who write on this subject consider that, because emotional abuse leaves no physical injuries and rarely precipitates a crisis, it the “most hidden and underestimated form of child maltreatment” (Cawson et al. 2000:54).

Yet like neglect, the prevalence of emotional abuse has rarely been measured, which again makes this UK study a valuable addition to the literature. Despite emotional abuse appearing to be the most prevalent form of child maltreatment, and one which many professionals believe produces the most destructive consequences (Garbarino & Vondra 1987 as cited in Tomison & Tucci 1997), “research into the impact and

control and domination; humiliation/degradation; withdrawal; antipathy; terrorising; and proxy attacks (that is, harming someone or something the child loves or values).

The authors noted the need for emotional maltreatment to be assessed along a continuum rather than as a dichotomous phenomenon, taking into account the whole range of emotionally abusive experiences (and varying levels of severity) that a child may encounter in a range of contexts over time. Thus, the measurement of emotional maltreatment was based on the assignment of rankings from 0 to 14 for each of the seven dimensions items. A score of 7 (the mid point) was deemed by the authors as indicating the existence of emotional maltreatment.

Overall, 6 per cent of respondents were defined as having suffered emotional maltreatment, having scores of 7 or more on at least four of the seven dimensions. Most respondents reported having experienced emotional maltreatment in each of the dimensions, mostly at the hands of parents or substitute parents. The most common form of emotional maltreatment reported was being terrorised, which was reported by over one third of the sample, with “psychological control and domination” reported by nearly one quarter of the sample.

Sexual abuse

As with all types of child maltreatment, there are considerable differences of opinion as to how to define child sexual abuse. Most studies agree that sexual acts occurring against the child’s wishes are abusive, but problems arise in deciding when a child is competent to give “informed consent”.

Sexual abuse for the purposes of this study was divided into three categories. Category A is “abuse involving physical contact with genital, anal or other private parts of the body”,

Category B is “abuse involving physical contact with other parts of the body” and Category C is “abuse not involving physical contact” (Cawson et al. 2000:84).

In this study respondents were asked to report on specific sexual acts they had experienced when they were under 16 years old. Those who had such experiences were then asked more questions in order to develop a better description of the incident(s), such as who was involved, whether the respondent had consented and their age at the time the incident took place.

Overall, the authors classified 11 per cent of the sample as having experienced sexual abuse, although only 6 per cent of the sample assessed themselves as having been sexually abused. In addition, only one quarter of respondents who had had unwanted sexual experiences, or experiences with a person aged more than five years older, had confided in anyone about it at the time.

Not surprisingly, most respondents identified a family member or someone known to them as the perpetrator of their abuse. One per cent of respondents reported experiencing non-consensual sexual contact with a parent, and 3 per cent experienced non-consensual sexual contact with another relative. Of particular interest was the high number of instances involving a male sibling perpetrator (brother/stepbrother) (ranging from 20-43 per cent across the types of sexual abuse; accounting for 38 per cent of penetrative/oral acts) which was much higher than that committed by natural fathers (11-23 per cent of all sexual abuse was committed by natural fathers; they accounted for 23 per cent of penetrative/oral acts), and for stepfathers (accounting for 9-19 per cent of all sexual abuse; 13 per cent of penetrative/oral acts). Only in the “indecent exposure” category was the perpetrator more likely to be identified as a stranger. Of the 7 per cent of respondents experiencing this form of abuse, one third identified the perpetrator as a stranger.

Book note

Demystifying sexual abuse counselling for children

Visiting a counselling service can be a daunting and quite frightening experience for some children, particularly when they have not previously experienced a therapeutic environment.

Rosie's Place, a community based sexual abuse counselling service for children, young people, and their non-offending family members, has attempted to demystify the counselling experience for abused or neglected young children (and their caregivers) by releasing the booklet, *I Have a Place*, written by Catherine Want, and illustrated by Jennifer Pitty.

Based upon children's responses in a series of focus groups run with children who have been Rosie's Place clients, who were asked to voice their concerns and fears about attending counselling, the booklet is intended to demystify the counselling process and to identify counsellors as people to whom children can safely confide their worries, problems or hurts.

I Have a Place is written for children in the language of children. “When children are hurt or not looked after, it can hurt really badly in lots of ways. It can hurt your feelings, your thoughts, your body and your family. No one should be hurt like this” (p. 4)

The booklet is interspersed with pages of activities intended to help children work through their concerns about attending counselling, the role of the counsellor, making disclosures, and the importance of having a parent/caregiver in support. For example, there is a page entitled “My bag of worries” which encourages children to note their concerns: “draw or write any worries you may have on this page”.



The booklet includes: various questions a child may have when he or she is going to see a counsellor; a child's story about her/his visit to a counsellor, thus helping to normalise the counselling process for other children; and pointers or tips that may be useful for children who are about to attend counselling.

I Have a Place sends out a strong message to children that they are not alone, that counselling will provide them with a safe place from which to talk about their fears and hurts. As such, it is a valuable tool for all those working with, or counselling, children who have been abused or neglected. The booklet would also be useful in assisting parents new to the child counselling process to support their child.

I Have a Place is available from Rosie's Place Publications, PO Box 40, Rooty Hill, New South Wales 2776.

– Ellen Fish
Clearinghouse Project Officer

Examining both attitudes and behaviours associated with child maltreatment, the authors have demonstrated that most young people had had a positive family experience.



Issues

In addition to the definitional and methodological issues, two points are worth emphasising. First, Cawson et al. acknowledge that the study is likely to underestimate the total extent of maltreatment in the general population. With regard to their sampling procedures, the authors used a household base which they have acknowledged would not have included the socially excluded, that is the homeless, prisoners, or people in hospital or in institutionalised care. In addition, the authors acknowledge the impact of relying on the retrospective self-reports of young people. However, consideration should also be given to the impact of carrying out the surveys in the home, given that over half (56 per cent) of the young respondents were still living with their caregivers. Despite being able to complete the materials confidentially, continued residence in the family home may also have led to biases and under-reporting.

Second, on a related point, with regard to definition and perspective of maltreatment, the authors acknowledge the difference between professional assessment of abuse and self-assessed maltreatment, noting that those who have been brought up in a “culture of violence” may not recognise their experience as abusive and therefore not report it. “The present survey demonstrates, as has other research in this country and elsewhere, that people can suffer extremes of abusive and neglectful treatment in childhood and yet not consider themselves abused or neglected” (Cawson et al. 2000:102).

Some of the specific findings challenge conventional wisdom. The authors have produced a useful summary of common maltreatment stereotypes contrasted with the relevant findings from this study. One example of this is that there were not many respondents who were physically, sexually or emotionally abused by step-parents; “and very few were sexually abused by strangers or in public places” (p.101)

Conclusions

Overall, this study makes a valuable contribution to knowledge of the prevention of child maltreatment as well as to research practice. The study is the first general population prevalence study to be completed in the United Kingdom. It is also the first to have attempted to estimate the prevalence of child maltreatment in all its forms on such a large and representative scale.

Examining both attitudes and behaviours associated with child maltreatment, the authors have demonstrated that most young people had had a positive family experience. Identifying a small but significant proportion of young people who reported less than satisfying or abusive childhood experiences, Cawson et al. were able to create a baseline of the

prevalence of child maltreatment in the population, providing a benchmark for future assessments.

One of the study’s big advantages was its methodology. The report provides an excellent prototype for others carrying out similar research because of the methods used. First, the study was one of only a few that has examined the prevalence of child maltreatment in the wider community rather than only focusing on maltreatment that has come to the notice of child welfare and protection services (child protection reports or notifications). Most previous studies on prevalence have either utilised child protection registers or patient records from hospitals.

Second, as part of the methodological process, the authors devised a framework within which child maltreatment occurring both inside and outside the family could be better understood. Third, Cawson et al. reviewed the problematic nature of arriving at consistent definitions of child maltreatment and describe their proposed solutions. These have implications for researchers and those in the community who work in the child protection field. Finally, this study successfully highlights the problems of interpreting professional and community judgements of definitions of maltreatment – how they may differ and their impact on developing the best practice in child protection and other child and family support services.

Thus, the results of this survey will be of value to agencies planning and providing child protection services, enabling better targeting of resources to meet the needs of children. The findings of this study will, according to the authors, also assist in monitoring of change in the treatment of children who have been maltreated, over the next ten years. Furthermore, the authors have proposed a number of recommendations which will facilitate policy, practice and research.

Later reports are planned by the authors to build on the current findings, and to go beyond descriptive work into more detailed analysis, exploring the causes and consequences of child maltreatment. The authors intend to examine the inter-relationships between the various forms of maltreatment, maltreatment outside the family, and the longer term consequences of child abuse and neglect. Further, they intend to examine more closely the differences between professional interpretation and self-assessed abuse and neglect.

In Australia, there has been no general population survey of the prevalence of child maltreatment, only a few attempts to estimate the prevalence of child sexual abuse experienced by university student samples (for example, Goldman & Goldman 1988; Goldman and Padayachi 1997), and the regular compilations of national child protection statistics developed and produced by the Australian Institute of Health Welfare (for example, Johnstone, Moyle, Kelly & Dowling 2000). Thus, this study, its conclusions and recommendations, will be of great value not only to agencies and those conducting research into child abuse prevention in the United Kingdom, but will also serve as an aid to policy-makers, researchers and practitioners in Australia and worldwide.

References

Dubowitz, H., Klockner, A., Starr, R.H. and Black, M. (1998), "Community and professional definitions of child neglect", *Child Maltreatment*, vol. 3, no. 3, pp. 235-243.

Goldman, J.D.G. & Padayachi, U.K. (1997), "The prevalence and nature of child sexual abuse in Queensland, Australia", *Child Abuse & Neglect*, vol. 21, no. 5, pp. 489-498.

Goldman, R.J. & Goldman, J.D.G. (1998), "The prevalence and nature of child sexual abuse in Australia", *Australian Journal of Sex, Marriage and Family*, vol. 9, no. 5, pp. 94-106.

Johnstone, H., Moyle, H., Kelly, S., Dowling, P. (2000), *Child Protection Australia 1998-99*, Child welfare series no. 25, Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, Canberra.

Stevenson, O. (1998), *Neglected Children: Issues and Dilemmas*, Blackwell Science, Oxford.

Straus, M.A. (1979), "Measuring intrafamily conflict and violence: the Conflicts Tactics (CT) Scales", *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, vol. 41, pp. 75-88.

Tomison, A.M. (1995), *Spotlight on Child Neglect*, Issues Paper no. 4, National Child Protection Clearinghouse, Australian Institute of Family Studies, Melbourne.

Tomison, A.M. & Tucci, J. (1997), *Emotional Abuse: The Hidden Form of Maltreatment*, Issues Paper no. 8, National Child Protection Clearinghouse, Australian Institute of Family Studies, Melbourne.

Ellen Fish is a Project Officer working in the National Child Protection Clearinghouse at the Australian Institute of Family Studies.



We welcome your contributions to this Newsletter

The Child Abuse Prevention Newsletter is published twice a year, in April/June and October/November. If you think you have articles or other items of relevance which would interest our readership, we would like to hear from you.

Readership and contents

The Newsletter is designed to provide information to service providers, policy officers, researchers, and students in the area of child abuse prevention.

The contents of each Newsletter comprise a mix of contributions from Clearinghouse staff at the Australian Institute of Family Studies and writers in the child abuse prevention area generally. Contributions are concerned with practice, training, research, policy, and legislation, and news or reviews of recent relevant publications are also published. Regular Newsletter features include a literature highlights section on recently published material received by Clearinghouse, and a comprehensive listing of forthcoming conferences and workshops.

Writing guidelines for authors

We prefer clearly written, jargon-free, accessible articles of interest to the broad range of Clearinghouse clients and Newsletter subscribers.

Length: items may range from very short contributions such as notices or news items, to essays and research articles ranging from 2500–4000 words.

Graphic material: graphs and tables should be used sparingly and should be uncomplicated and accessible; photographs are welcomed.

Title and headings: a short abstract of the main emphasis of the article should follow the title, and succinct headings throughout are required for the purpose of guiding the reader.

Referencing: the Harvard (author–date) style of referencing is used.

Biographical note: items should be accompanied by the author's name and affiliation.

Presentation: the electronic provision of material, while not essential, is much appreciated.

Copyright

The Australian Institute of Family Studies through the National Child Protection Clearinghouse holds copyright to all articles published in the Child Abuse Prevention Newsletter.

Review process

Acceptance of all material is subject to a review process. Consideration will be given to whether articles are relevant, clearly written, jargon-free and accessible. Consideration will also be given to the following criteria: timeliness of article; significance of the topic; factual accuracy; clear presentation and logical organisation of material; conclusions substantiated by convincing analytical argument; argument supported by references; quality and balance of the argument or information presented; and balance and relevance of any policy implications drawn.

Please contact: Ellen Fish, Project Officer, National Child Protection Clearinghouse, Australian Institute of Family Studies, 300 Queen Street, Melbourne, Victoria 3000, Australia. Phone (03) 9214 7811. Fax (03) 9214 7839. Email: ellenf@aifs.org.au