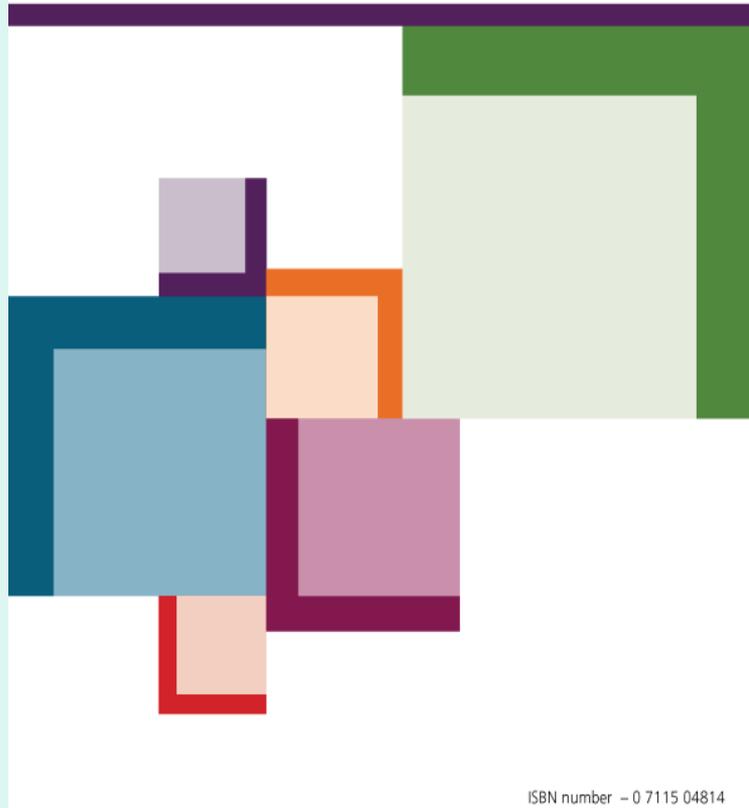


'Think Family' : Reflections for the ESRC seminar series

Professor Kate Morris
University of Nottingham

Think Family: A literature review of whole family approaches



Since the 'Think Family' review.....

- Evaluations of LA and Third Sector programmes concerned with services to families (www.improvingfutures.org)
- Work with 'Your Family Your Voice' Alliance and Lankelly Chase (www.frg.org.uk)
- A study of family experiences of SCRs (www.baspcan.org.uk)
- BA funded study of social workers applied understanding of 'family'
- Nuffield funded study of Child Welfare Inequalities (www.nuffieldfoundation.org/inequalities-child-welfare-intervention-rates)
- 'Re Imagining Child Protection' Featherstone, White and Morris (www.policypress.co.uk)

Family experiences

- The social and economic context for practices and services (child welfare inequalities, demographics, social care and austerity)
- The changing settlement between the family and the state (help vs. wrong choices)
- Temporal concerns have become increasingly evident and are drivers of interventions in childrens services, evident also in adult
- Family experiences have a rich set of suggestions for how we might work together better
- Family narratives describe the value of demonstrated care, respectful practice, practical help and avoidance of fresh starts, the limits of targeted interventions

Theorising Family

- Across the studies household is the working boundary of practitioner notions of family
- Family understood in the context of risk, resourcefulness and (dys)functionality (Murray and Barnes analysis still holds value)
- A professional hierarchy of relationships remains strong, mother / child dyad dominant, grandparents as kin carers and fathers still often absent
- Instrumental view evident, for example grandparents recognised for the help they may offer
- Family practices and family care practices in adversity still under researched and therefore little understood
- Relational nature of family life is poorly represented and respected, so critical relationships are missed, broken or responded to by function (see our earlier 2009 work on categories)

Service design

- Family rarely means family – a decade on we still see ‘family’ covering a multitude of services and targeted groups
- Still limited evidence of family minded services capable of working with needs across the life course – is this an impossible aspiration?
- The demise of informal open ended help – ‘too little too long, too much too late’ (D. Conway)
- With increased specialism comes increased fragmentation, the old adage that family problems won’t fit professional silos remains critical in planning
- Strength based models are difficult in risk saturated services
- Location, location, location