Cultivating Practice-based Research: Confidence, Capacity and Capabilities in the Non-statutory Child Protection Sector

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ABSTRACT

Research-informed practice is important for quality outcomes for service users, service provision and for local communities. If social work and welfare workers incorporate research knowledge into their practice, better outcomes are possible. However, practitioners can be ambivalent about undertaking practice-based research – they may lack confidence and skills or be too time-poor – particularly in grassroots non-government child protection services.

This article reports on a small study undertaken with 22 practitioners in the non-statutory child protection sector in North Queensland. This population was chosen due to the complexity of child protection practice, changes proposed after the Queensland Carmody enquiry, and the minimal literature discussing these practitioners' research interests. The study aims were to explore the workers' interest, experience and capacity to undertake research and to support social work research placements. Findings reveal that more confident practitioners were able to perceive the range of research resources available. Research confidence was more evident when workers had prior exposure to research. Further, practitioners with confidence in their ability to undertake research were more likely to take a student on a research placement. Unsurprisingly, available time was a factor impacting on their capacity to undertake research. Increased opportunities for undergraduate students to be involved in research can contribute to graduates' confidence in doing so. Research placements may offer opportunities for practitioners to engage in research with students, confirming the benefits of practice-based research that, in turn, can contribute to organisations' research capacity.

Keywords: *Practitioner research; Child protection; Non-government organisations (NGOs); Research placements; Research capacity; Research partnerships*

BACKGROUND

Social work and welfare practitioners are ideally placed to undertake research that can have an impact on, and deliver outcomes for, service users. The use of research in everyday social work practice can help in expert decision making, build the capacity of the field, ensure continuous quality improvement and add to the evidence for outcome-based practice (Vrentas, Freiwirth, Benatti, Hill, & Yurasek, 2018). Equally, the importance of academics engaging in applied research that has impact and delivers benefits to communities has been consistently called for by industry and governments (Australian Research Council [ARC], 2018; Fouché, 2015; Hughes, 2016). Research impact is "the demonstrable contribution that research makes to the economy, culture, national security, public policy or services, health, the environment, or quality of life, beyond contribution to academia" (ARC, 2018).

Industry-led partnership research can build organisations' capacities to undertake research and implement research findings relevant to their services, and can help practitioners evaluate their practice and inform their service delivery (Harvey, Plummer, Pighills, & Pain, 2013). Practice-based research collaborations often require the establishment of research relationships, settling on the specific research focus, nurturing the research partnership, and building research capacities (Beddoe, Yates, Fouché, & Harington, 2010; Fouché, 2015).

Social welfare research needs to be increasingly sophisticated as researchers embrace the complexity of emerging social problems (Gehlert, Hall, & Palinkas, 2017). Some past research reportedly has delivered limited social benefits for vulnerable populations, and research undertaken in isolation from practice might contribute only minimally to changed practice (Vrentas et al., 2018). However, collaborative social work research can have a significant impact on outcomes for peoples and communities (Tilbury, Hughes, Bigby, Fisher, & Vogel, 2017), including providing benefits for vulnerable populations such as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples who are over-represented in service user populations. Grounding research in collaboration with practice partners and communities increases the probability that the research will be both applied and effective in practice (Gray, Sharland, Heinsch, & Schubert, 2014).

Child protection is a complex and difficult area of practice that is widely critiqued as under significant strain (Smith et al., 2016). Criticism of child protection services includes the need for more evidence-based practice – a fresh approach to service delivery that is more engaged with families and can move beyond the risk discourse dominating decision-making (Carmody, 2013; Child Protection Systems Royal Commission, 2016; Hart, Lee, & Wernham, 2011). Recommendation from the Queensland Carmody (2013) report included early intervention and family support, keeping children outside the system, better rehabilitative and therapeutic family support to build stronger families and ensuring greater safety for children. The recommendations sought to achieve a cultural change within child protection service delivery. Research collaborations between child protection practitioners and university-based researchers, and innovative translation of practice knowledge and research findings, can provide much needed evidence for both government and outsourced non-government organisations (NGOs) child protection services (Hameed, 2018; Tsey et al., 2018). Developing evidence in the child protection field with practitioners is crucial to provide child protection practitioners with a knowledge foundation that can help alleviate an organisational culture of "fear,

blame, helplessness and hopelessness" (Smith et al., 2016, p. 981). Supporting practitioner research in NGO child protection may be particularly important as a bottom-up approach to strengthening evidence-based practice in the sector, including through accessing and including local knowledge (Brun & Lund, 2010; Wessells, 2015). Bottom-up approaches in child protection can lead to more sustainable and effective systems (Wessells, 2015).

Practitioners can hold enthusiasm for research and view research as relevant to their work (Beddoe, 2011; Gray et al., 2014; Harvey et al., 2013). However, they can be ambivalent with regard to undertaking research. Reasons previously identified for this ambivalence include that practitioners may lack research confidence and skills, and may experience significant time constraints and limited organisational support. This means that research can become a low priority for practitioners in the context of increasingly complex and demanding practice settings (Beddoe et al., 2010).

McBeath and Austin (2015, p. 52) argued that, in order to facilitate practitioners' engagement in research, "staff need to be supported with time, resources, and autonomy to cultivate research-based service projects and acquire practice research expertise in ways they find relevant to their professional aspirations". McBeath and Austin (2015) further contended that an organisational environment that encourages and supports research involvement, and implements research-related policies and structures, can develop research-minded practitioners. They concluded that research-minded practitioners have an affinity "… for empirical inquiry, critical thinking, and reflection allied with a commitment to data driven organizational improvement" (McBeath & Austin, 2015, p. 446).

Harvey, Plummer, Nielson, Adams, and Pain (2016) conducted a study to explore how the factors that enable research could be successfully integrated in a clinical work role. They interviewed 15 research-active practitioners in regional Queensland health services and found that pre-exposure to research, personal characteristics and research opportunities at work facilitated increased engagement in research. These practitioners reported that research relationships, a research-friendly workplace culture and quarantined time for research assisted practitioners to implement research projects, build research momentum, develop a track record and become established clinician researchers (Harvey et al., 2016). They further revealed that practitioners' involvement in research can increase job satisfaction and that, for clinicians who progressed to becoming established clinician researchers, research became a core part of their personal and professional identity and it was not be viewed as separate from their everyday work role (Harvey et al., 2016).

It has been identified that practitioner and organisational engagement, in partnership research with university researchers, can help develop the research confidence and research-mindedness of practitioners. Vrentas et al. (2018) stressed the need for new venues and funding for partnership research, access to research findings via open source materials, and increased funding for translating research to practice. They were concerned that practice and research existed in distinct siloes that were not informing each other (Vrentas et al., 2018). Similarly, the Australian Research Council increasingly supports partnership research that can achieve outcomes for end-users and ultimately results in "… mutually beneficial transfer of knowledge, technologies, methods or resources" (ARC, 2017, p. 2).

An additional strategy to increase practitioners' research engagement is bringing practice-informed research into classroom and field-based learning (Vrentas et al., 2018). However, despite students taking research subjects as core curriculum in undergraduate and postgraduate courses, graduates generally do not feel well-equipped and confident to undertake research or apply research skills in practice (Gehlert et al., 2017).

Field education can accommodate increased practical application of research skills, with students engaged with practitioners in practice-based research. As such, Appleton, Rankine, and Hare (2016) argued that social work students could undertake research placements that are either fully focused on research or where research makes up a core part of the student's placement. They further identified, as have other authors, that research placements can comprise small research projects completed in one student placement, or a larger research project that is sequentially implemented from one placement to the next, with the university and organisation taking co-responsibility for the entire project (Appleton et al., 2016; Maidment, Chilvers, Crichton-Hill, & Meadows-Taurua, 2011). Alternatively, organisations could accept students into a field placement that embraces service delivery, agency support and research projects and, in doing so, offer clinical and research experiences for social work students (Poulin, Silver, & Kauffman, 2006). As argued by Appleton et al. (2016, p. 107), through engagement in research in field education that is relevant to social work practice, students engage in "research learning 'by doing'" (Appleton et al., 2016, p. 107).

To take on board the vision and strategies identified in the literature for facilitating practice research collaborations, and to initiate research in the local NGO sector in the first instance, we developed an online survey which was sent to the sector network of practitioners in the non-statutory services in the child protection field in Townsville. We were interested in exploring their research needs and ideas, their capacity to undertake research, and their interest and willingness to support student research placements.

METHODOLOGY

The primary aims of the overall study were: to explore what research needs to be undertaken according to practitioners in the child protection field; to ascertain whether they would be interested in participating in research; to identify what were practitioners' research capacity; and to capture practitioners' willingness and interest to support student research placements.

This article reports on the latter two aims of the overall study. Here we detail the findings with regard to practitioners: 1. assessment of their research capacities; 2. assessment of their own research skills and agency support to undertake research; 3. preparedness and willingness to support student research placements; and 4. suggestions as to what would need to be in place for them to be able to support research placements.

Data were gathered through surveys and structured interviews. Seventeen responses were received from the survey and five practitioners participated in structured interviews. The data were collected in the second half of 2018. The research was approved by the James Cook University Human Ethics Committee.

Design and sample

First, a list of organisational programs that were providing services in the non-statutory child protection field in Townsville was compiled using publicly available information via the community information directory and through well-established practice networks. In this study, we defined the non-government child protection field as comprising all agencies that work with children and/or families where there is a child protection concern.

Second, using the compiled list, email invitations were sent to 36 key contact persons in 20 NGOs to help recruit practitioners who might participate in the study. Seventeen of those organisations delivered child protection programs directly funded by the Queensland Government, one service did not receive any funding and two services were funded through other government sources – however, their programs delivered services to families who were involved with statutory child protection services.

Data collection

Email invitations and two reminders were sent out to the group of identified potential respondents by the university administration team. Respondents had the option of completing a survey anonymously via SurveyMonkey or they were invited to contact the researcher to arrange a time in order to participate in a face-to-face interview. The questions asked in the survey data collection tool and the interview guide were identical. Interviews were conducted strictly following the interview guide and questions and answers were not explored further by the interviewer. The interviewer took notes during the interview and then entered the data into the online survey. A combination of open and closed questions featured in the collection tools.

Data analysis

The quantitative survey data were collated, statistically analysed and presented in tables (Gravetter & Wallnau, 2013). The open-ended questions of the survey were analysed thematically, with the assistance of Nvivo. The qualitative responses to each question were carefully read by the authors for familiarisation with the data and to identify potential coding nodes. Nvivo was used for manually extracting the data and then as a recording tool for the thematic analysis and the emerging themes (Creswell, 2009).

Response rate

In total, 22 practitioners participated in the study. The total number of respondents ($n =$ 22) equals a 56% response rate, given that the survey was sent to 36 practitioners in the non-government child protection field. However, as the email contained an anonymous link, this may have been sent to other practitioners in the organisation, and thus the response rate could be lower. In consideration of the regional location of the surveyed child protection practitioners and the limited number of possible respondents, 22 responses was considered an acceptable response rate for this initial survey.

FINDINGS

A common theme across the complete data set in relation to the research ideas of the practitioners was the changes and challenges occurring in the child protection field,

including an increased complexity of cases they were observing. For example, they suggested a number of emerging areas of practice that should be explored further by research included the complexities of intersecting practice in child protection, domestic violence and the Family Court, exploring culture as a protective factor which is highly relevant for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families, communities and organisations, and the challenges of reunification planning (Zuchowski, 2019).

Reported in more detail here are the findings relating to the practitioners' interest, experience and capacity to undertake research of relevance their practice, and their interests in supporting social work research placements in their organisation. We begin by presenting relevant demographic characteristics: gender; age; participants' prior research experience; their capacities and skills to undertake research; factors influencing their interest in undertaking research; and their ideas of what would make undertaking research possible for them. Further, we explored whether respondents would be interested in taking on student placements to support their own research endeavours and what supports respondents suggested would need to be in place for them to be able to support student research placements.

Characteristics of respondents

Twenty-one women and one man participated in the study. The proportion of women and age distribution generally is in line with the social work and human services workforce, where 87% of the overall Australian welfare workforce are female (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare [AIHW], 2019). In this sample, 17 of the respondents (77%) were 40 years and older, which aligns with available data identifying that, in 2018, the average age in the Australian welfare workforce was 41.2 years, a slight reduction from 41.7 in 2008 (AIHW, 2019). It has been reported elsewhere that the human services workforce sector is an aging sector, with a significant proportion of 55–64-year-olds in this occupational group (Department of Jobs and Small Business, 2019; Healy & Lonne, 2010). Thus, overall, the age spread of the respondents is within the frame of the average workforce in this sector.

Twenty of the respondents (90%) had completed tertiary studies, and of those, 36% (n = 8) had attained a Bachelor degree with honours or higher qualifications. This cohort differs from the overall workforce, particularly in the human services sector, where fewer workers have obtained post-school qualifications as compared to the health or the education sector (see for example, Department of Jobs and Small Business, 2019; Healy & Lonne, 2010). However, it is possible that this increased representation of graduates and, in particular, Honours graduates, in the sample is due to the topic of the study. That is, it could be that people who have undertaken tertiary study, including degrees with a research component might be more interested in research and thus more likely to respond to the survey and interview invitations. Moreover, the email invitations were generally sent to team leaders and managers, and potentially workers in those positions may be more likely to have a tertiary qualification.

Factors influencing interest in undertaking research

General interest in research
Respondents were asked whether they would be interested in working with university staff on research projects of relevance to them. Of the 21 responses to this question, 14

(67%) answered in the affirmative, four (19%) were unsure, and three (14%) answered no. Participants who included qualitative answers to this question provided wide-ranging responses. For example, one respondent illustrated their interest and commitment to research-informed practice by describing a prior experience where their own research findings were not implemented, leading to a disturbing outcome:

> Definitely [interested]. I initiated and conducted independent research for over 4 years and it was considered so well presented and of such a high quality, that it was considered (by the research team) to be eligible for publication. Unfortunately the hospital I worked for realised how it would reflect so poorly on them and they had it quashed before it could be published. 3 deaths in that hospital has since occurred related to issues I had raised in my research.

Somewhat in contrast, three respondents who were unsure about participating in research identified the key factors influencing their interest were time restrictions, benefit, relevance and available organisational support, with one commenting:

> It would depend on the topic, time and requirements, and the benefit of it to the organisation and its client groups.

Time restraints were also nominated by two of the three other respondents who identified they would be unable to participate in research.

Research confidence and prior participation in research
In separate, structured questions, respondents were asked whether they had participated in research previously and what they perceived was their capacity to undertake research. Sixteen respondents indicated that they had previously participated in research as a respondent, and 14 said they had participated in research as part of university coursework. Only two respondents had never participated in research. Ten respondents had undertaken research collaboratively with others, eight had undertaken research independently, and four had led research teams.

The majority of respondents felt confident that they had the skills to participate in research. Of the 21 respondents who answered the question as to whether they were confident that they had the skills to be a collaborator on a joint research project, nine indicated it was possible and nine indicated yes. However, only two out of 16 respondents who answered the question thought they had the skills to lead a research project, with six stating it was a possibility and eight that they did not have sufficient skills.

Time, resources, relevance and workplace support
Overall, time, resources, relevance and workplace support were identified as key factors in terms of perceived ability to participate in research, with lack of time being a key nominated barrier. Of the 20 respondents who answered the question on whether they had the time available to participate in a research project, seven answered maybe and five yes. More respondents thought they had the resources available to participate in a research project, with seven of 21 respondents indicating maybe and nine yes. However, respondents

generally thought the workplace would support them to participate in a research project, with seven out of 21 respondents indicating research support was possible and 12 indicating yes.

A follow-up question asked respondents what would make it possible and/or increase their capacity to participate in research projects of relevance to them. Two key themes emerged in the responses. Not surprisingly, eight respondents listed "time" or the "ability to do research in work hours" or "release from work" as enablers to engagement in research. Seven respondents highlighted that an additional enabler would be the identification of a research study as relevant to practice in their organisation, achievable, and of benefit to practice, the organisations and clients.

Prior research involvement and research capacity
The responses to research participation and research capacity scales were statistically analysed to explore any correlations.

Table 1. Correlation of items on research participation scale with total research capacity score

Item	Spearman Correlation	Significance (2-tailed)
Participated in research as a respondent	.757**	←.001
Participated in research as part of coursework	.392	.071
Participated in research collaboratively with others	.814**	←.001
Participated in research independently	.482*	.023
Participated in research as team leader	.587**	.004

** Correlation is significant at alpha = .01 (2-tailed)
* Correlation is significant at alpha = .05 (2-tailed)

These results show a significant, strong, positive relationship between the amount of experience that respondents had as leaders of research projects and the amount of experience they had both researching collaboratively, r = .626, p = .002, and researching independently, r = .788 p<.001. This suggests that more experience in researching both independently and collaboratively may be associated with more experience leading research projects.

Table 2. Correlation between the research capacity scale with the total score on the scale

Item	Spearman Correlation	Significance (2-tailed)
Capacity to undertake research as collaborator	.770**	←.001
Capacity to undertake research as leader	.587**	.004
Time	.752**	←.001
Resources	.713**	←.001
Workplace Support	.421	.051

** Correlation is significant at alpha = .01 (2-tailed)

These results showed a significant, moderate positive relationship between respondents' confidence in their ability to participate in research as a collaborator and their perceptions of the time available for research, r = .495, p = .019. There also was a significant, strong positive relationship between respondents' confidence in their ability to participate in research as a collaborator and their perceptions of the resources available for research, r = .720, p<.001.

This respondent's qualitative response appears to support the notion identified earlier, that prior experience in research, in turn, increased practitioners' confidence, willingness and interest in participation in future research, including research mentorship:

> I've been around so long, I'm beginning to see the 1st [first] seat of the health/care ferris wheel come back into view, if not stopped again at my feet! As such I believe I have a lot to offer in mentorship and research.

Student research placements – value-adding to research capacity

Respondents were asked whether they would consider taking students on research placements to assist them in undertaking research that would be relevant to them. Of the 19 respondents who responded to this question, 13 (68%) responded in the affirmative, four (21%) indicated that they potentially would, and two (11%) advised that they would not. Respondents provided further explanations for supporting or not supporting student research placements. Reasons for considering student research placements included the ability to "share the research workload", "enjoying working with students and imparting knowledge", "keeping the organisation established as a professional service", "building the workforce capacity", "adding to the placement experience" and "keeping students actively involved in a range of relevant professional tasks".

Of the respondents who were unsure, or would not take students on placement, two respondents listed time as inhibiting issues. In outlining what would need to happen or be in place for them to work with students on a research project of relevance to them and their organisation in response to a follow-up question, four (*n* = 4) other respondents similarly pointed out they would need time. Others identified workplace support (*n* = 4). Four respondents suggested that the "students needed to be capable of undertaking the research", and three of these respondents linked the research activity to the student's own capacity or capacity provided by someone other than themselves, as exemplified in the following comments by two of the respondents:

> Would not be the research leader, would be relying on the university to support the research as well.

> If they are capable of performing the majority of the research unsupervised.

A further statistical analysis was undertaken exploring the correlation between: the research capacity score; capacity score to undertake research as a collaborator; the capacity score to undertake research as a leader; the available time; available resources and workplace support available; and the willingness to support student research placements. These results do not

show any significant relationships between the variables examined. However, all relationships measured suggested a negative relationship (meaning as one score went up, the other one went down). As scores for research capacity increased, respondents' confidence in their ability to perform in the various aspects of the research process increased. Therefore these results, while not significant, suggest that the higher the respondents scored on confidence to perform research, the more likely they were to agree to taking on student research placements.

DISCUSSION

The small study discussed here set out to explore the needs, willingness and research interests and ideas of practitioners in the non-statutory services in the child protection in North Queensland and their capacity to undertake research that would be of relevance to their field of practice. The practitioners' research ideas included increasing knowledge between the intersection of domestic violence and the family, practice understandings about culture as a protective factor and policy explorations (Zuchowski, 2019). It was pertinent to examine whether the respondents felt they had the capacity, skills and agency support to undertake research themselves, and whether they were prepared, and willing, to support student research placements. This is important as social work research and literature can help child protection practitioners to make sense of their roles and to take initiatives.

What the findings of this study highlight is that practitioners' prior exposure to research and opportunity to gain research skills impact their perceptions about capacity and ability to undertake research, and their openness to take on students on research placements. Similar results were shown in Harvey et al.'s (2016) North Queensland study with health practitioners. Harvey et al. (2016) highlighted that becoming a practitioner-researcher involved four phases: "(1) a research debut; (2) building momentum; (3) developing a track record; and (4) becoming an established clinician researcher" (p. 562). A sense of self as a researcher is thus something that needs to be fostered and mentored through exposure to, and participation in, research. Harvey et al. (2016) prefaced these phases with an additional step: exposure to quality tertiary research studies. The implication for social work education is that social work students need to be offered opportunities for a research debut in a practical way. This can be achieved through building opportunities for students to undertake research in a range of subjects throughout their degree, and, specifically, encouraging and strengthening students' participation in research placements. Honours is another research opportunity that social work students could be encouraged to take up, and Honours could strategically fit with topics explored in research placements. Moreover, it could be argued that investment in research partnerships between practitioners and university researchers has the potential to incorporate research placements and Honours projects with larger research projects that, in turn, value-add to practitioner skills and capacities to undertake practice-based research.

Vrentas et al.'s (2018) study highlighted the importance of increasing practitioner interest in practice-informed research and research-based practice. What the findings of the study reported here highlight is that, while participants were interested in pursuing research, they did not always feel they have the capacity to lead research. So, again it may be important to invite practitioners to take up opportunities for research through collaborative research

partnerships. While the need for evidence-informed practice has been stressed in general social work practice, and in child protection practice in particular (Hameed, 2018; Vrentas et al. 2018), such research in practice will not just happen. Not only are resources, time and agency support important, but also the exposure to a research debut and invitation for research participation and collaboration may be needed.

In the over-burdened child protection system and, as recommended by the Carmody (2013) Report, programs and services continue to be outsourced to the NGO sector in order to support families through early intervention and redirecting children and families out of the child protection system. As noted earlier, child protection NGOs are very well placed to engage in bottom-up approaches to research that will inform evidence-based practice in the sector, including through engagement with, and inclusion of, local and Indigenous knowledges and needs (Brun & Lund, 2010; Wessells, 2015). While interest in research was clearly evident, time constraints were a common factor identified by respondents. Other studies also have highlighted the importance of time available for practitioners to undertake research. McBeath and Austin (2016) highlighted the value of professional development, sabbaticals and rotations, and organizing staff into learning communities as strategies to develop practice research expertise. They argued that it is important to support practitioners with the time, resources and autonomy to undertake research. Harvey et al.'s (2016) findings also underscored the importance of quarantined time for research. Respondents in their study shared the dilemma of balancing research with workload demands and pointed to the usefulness of funding and resources for their position to be backfilled or for them to move into research-dedicated positions. While some of the above supports may be less available in the non-government sector, other strategies are evident.

Key enablers to participate in research identified by respondents in this study included research projects that could be conducted within work hours, work release for research, and research that had explicit links to the service focus of the organisation. Thus, highlighting the relevance of research, and focusing on research in undergraduate and postgraduate social work training, including within field placement, may have the potential to maintain the practitioners' interest, confidence and willingness to contribute to the practice-research agenda. Furthermore, supervising future practitioners in research field placements during the degree could create a cyclical process. That is, practitioners interested in conducting research would provide mentorship to students on research placements who then graduate, maintain their interest in research, and mentor the next cohort of students, thereby cultivating enduring research capacity in the sector. However, social work education needs to provide increased research leadership in order to support research placements. While research placements may offer an opportunity to teach students about research as part of social work education and increase the research capacity of an agency, field educators need to be supported in supervising research placements and projects. Overall, the findings highlight the influence that levels of research confidence can have on field educators' willingness to support research placements and this confidence needs to be nurtured through experience and support. Further research is needed to extend these findings to a larger cohort.

LIMITATIONS

A limitation of this study is that the child protection sector is comprised of government and NGO services and practitioners; however, NGO practitioners were the focus of this small study. The NGO child protection sector is very well placed to conduct meaningful practice-based research. It is acknowledged that this sample may differ from the average NGO sector workforce with regard to their research interest and capacities.

CONCLUSION

This study identified child protection practitioners' interest in undertaking or participating in research as workers in NGO services in North Queensland. The findings highlight that prior participation in research has an impact on practitioners' perceived capacity to undertake research. Available time and resources are decisive considerations about whether they could undertake research. However, there is a significant, strong positive relationship between the amount of experience that respondents had as leaders of research projects or research collaborators and their perceptions of the resources available for them to be able to undertake future research. Prior exposure to research and research experience can be a crucial factor in encouraging practitioner research that, in turn, can inform the evidence base of child protection work. Specifically, the NGO child protection sector are well placed to generate practice-based research that can inform future child protection practice. Social work education can provide increased opportunities for students and practitioners to undertake research. Research placements can enable students and practitioners to gain research experience supported by university–practitioner research relationships and collaborations.

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