ESRC Project (RES-360-25-0062)

**Governing ‘New Social Risks’: The Case of Recent Child Policies in European Welfare States**

Children and parents have become a focal point of debates on ‘new social risks’ and ‘new public policies’ in Europe and beyond. Policymakers and experts, at both national and cross-national levels, have converged in making policy to cover such risks. As part of this process, we witness a new or renewed interest in parenting as a way of tackling risks of exclusion and poor parenting. In the process, the boundaries between what has been seen as ‘family’ or ‘private’ versus ‘public’ are being redrawn by discourses and ‘evidence based’ measures to fight child-related risks and especially to focus on the practices and behaviour of parents in this context.

The central interest of the research project is to identify and characterise the kind of social policy measures that are involved in parenting support. The project explores the type of interventions and programmes that have been put in place over the last decade or so. A second objective is to identify the factors that are driving the move to parenting support. The project is interested especially in examining how views around good parenting are translated into policy and how the relevant policy developments are related to other domains of policy (e.g., child welfare, family policy and so forth) and other ideas about children’s and parents’ welfare.

To explore these issues, empirical research will be undertaken using a combination of methods and a variety of data. This research will focus especially on a number of programmes in operation for children and their families. Some of these will be in Northern Ireland and some in England. As well as examining programmes, the project will interview a range of people associated with parenting support, including national experts, practitioners and decision makers.

The study uses Oxford University’s protocol for elite interviewing, has been granted ethical approval and is guided by the usual ethical conventions relating to confidentiality and anonymity. We will ask participants’ permission to record the interviews and will use the information only for the purpose of reporting our findings to the funder and for the academic and policy communities. We will ensure confidentiality by avoiding the use of personal names or positions of those we interview. Instead we will use anonymous general descriptions (for example ‘senior policy maker’, ‘expert adviser’, ‘member of an advocacy organisation’). The information provided will be made anonymous in this way, then stored in a secure place and deleted once we no longer need to use it.

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