



UNIVERSITY OF
CHICHESTER

“When Good Enough Parenting is Not Good Enough”

**Is Professional Support and Intervention or Permanent
Removal Best for the Child Long-Term?**



 **for the BA (Hons) Social Work**

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank all the academic staff at the University of Chichester who have guided me along the way over the last three years. I would particularly like to thank Marie, my academic tutor (and lecturer) for always being available to help, support, give advice and remind me of my wellbeing. Also, I would like to thank my other lecturers including David, Helen, Lisa, Denise, Becky and Suzanne, who I have enjoyed learning from and hearing the various journeys they have each been on. Finally, I would like to thank my husband and children for putting up with me often 'being in the office' and for their support, understanding and belief in me retraining to be a part of this extremely worthwhile profession of social work.

7696 words



Abstract

Latest research shows the number of children in care in England continues to rise, a pattern that is also seen in other parts of the world. This is not a new development, the safety and wellbeing of children with birth parents who are unable to provide adequate care, has been an issue provoking much discussion and debate for many years. Legislation provides an overarching framework in which professionals deliver their support to children and families. The child's 'best interests' should always be at the forefront of these decisions. Social workers must decide what is 'good enough' when making choices about children who are at risk of being removed from their birth homes. Children must have their basic needs of food and shelter met but their more emotional needs like affection, respect and esteem cannot be ignored. Written from an international perspective, this paper outlines the place of child removal in the child protection system. Permanence and stability, and the importance of children feeling 'a sense of belonging' when they are removed from birth homes is examined first. Attachment bonds are also explored due to their significance in the context of permanency. The consequences of children's exposure to trauma and Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) are investigated alongside the relevance of a trauma-informed approach. As children removed from birth homes can experience breakdowns and losses (with some experiencing a series of these), the impact of these experiences is also summarised. The focus of this paper is to examine the strengths and weaknesses of child removal and its implications for social work practice.

Keywords: child removal, adoption, fostering, permanence, stability, trauma, ACEs, breakdowns, losses, intervention

Contents

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	II
ABSTRACT.....	III
CONTENTS.....	IV
LIST OF TABLES.....	VI
LIST OF FIGURES	VII
CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION.....	1
1.1 Context.....	1
1.2 Rationale for this Research Topic, Aims and Objectives.....	1
1.3 A Reflective Journey	3
1.4 Structure.....	4
1.5 Further Thoughts.....	4
1.6 Conclusions.....	5
CHAPTER 2: METHODOLOGY	6
2.1 Introduction.....	6
2.2 The Importance of a Literature Review	6
2.3 Sourcing Literature and Results.....	7
2.4 Rationale for Thematic Analysis.....	8
2.5 Limitations and Constraints	9
2.6 Ethical Considerations	13
2.7 Conclusions.....	13
CHAPTER 3: LITERATURE REVIEW	14
3.1. Introduction.....	14
3.2 Theme 1: Permanence and Stability: A Sense of Belonging.....	16
3.3 Strengths and Limitations	16
3.4 The Importance of Attachment	18
3.5 Theme 2: Trauma and Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs).....	19
3.6 Intervention as an Alternative	21
3.7 A Trauma-informed Approach	21
3.8 Theme 3: Breakdowns and Losses: A Double Jeopardy?	23
3.9 Grief and Loss.....	23
3.10 Double Jeopardy	25
3.11 The Future	26
3.12 What About Ethics?	26
3.13 Conclusions.....	27
CHAPTER 4: IMPLICATIONS FOR SOCIAL WORK	28
4.1 Introduction.....	28
4.2 Permanence and Stability.....	29
4.3 Trauma and Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs).....	30

4.4 Breakdowns and Losses	32
4.5 Conclusions	32
CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSIONS	34
5.1 Overall Findings and Key Points	34
5.2 Considerations and Limitations	35
5.3 Gaps in Research.....	35
5.4 The Reflective Practitioner	36
5.5 Moving Forward	36
REFERENCES.....	38
APPENDIX A – MIND MAP	45
APPENDIX B – EXAMPLE OF LITERATURE REVIEW SPREADSHEET.....	46

List of Tables

Table 2.3.1 Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria.....	7
Table 2.4.1 Thematic Analysis Phases	9
Table 2.5.1 Literature for Thematic Analysis	10

List of Figures

Figure 1.3.1 Stages of Reflection (Maclean, 2016)	3
Figure 3.1.1 Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs Theory (Kenrick <i>et al.</i> , 2010).....	15
Figure 3.7.1 Bronfenbrenner’s Ecological Systems Theory (Lopez et al., 2021).	22
Figure 4.3.1 Trauma Recovery Model (adapted from TRM Academy, 2021).....	31

Chapter 1: Introduction

“Children’s social care exists to enable children to grow up in loving, safe and stable families and where this is not possible, for care to provide the same foundations for a good life.”

(MacAlister, 2022, p33)

1.1 Context

As the number of looked after children continues to rise each year in England (NSPCC, 2024; GOV.UK, 2023), it is important to understand the complexities of their lives and keep improving the overarching practices in child protection. Although literature reviews are focused on answering the research question (Machi and McEvoy, 2022), due to the nature of this paper’s question, there would be no ‘right’ or ‘wrong’ answer. This is because everyone is unique and although some children thrive in new families, other children are better being supported in their birth homes. This chapter will explore the rationale for this research topic as well as the aims and objectives. Additionally, the importance of reflection will be outlined, and three key themes identified in the literature review will be explored.

1.2 Rationale for this Research Topic, Aims and Objectives

My motivation for this topic comes from my personal and professional interest in child protection. I feel passionately that children should have a happy childhood and the opportunity to reach their potential as they grow into adulthood. This inspired me to return to university as a mature student to retrain, so I could acquire the skills required to work in frontline child protection. Additionally, I have always been interested in the outcomes of children who are fostered and adopted, and I wanted to gain a greater insight into this area of practice.

This paper aims to present a critical analysis based on a selection of articles relevant to children at risk of being removed or who have been removed from birth homes. The research also gives some insight to relevant practice and theories that relate to this subject. Research is an essential tool for social workers, contributing to evidence-based practice and policy (McLaughlin, 2007). Therefore, the principal objective of this paper is to inform social work practice by presenting an understanding of the issues and complexities involved in the most invasive practice of child removal.

This research process has enabled me to critically reflect on the ‘good enough parenting’ phrase as social workers must interpret this when assessing risk and needs within a family. Parenting may not be ‘good enough’ in extended families if professionals have concerns about their parenting suitability (GOV.UK, 2023), despite this conflicting with policy which favours family (legislation.gov.uk, 1989). Professionals must consider the ecological context of the environment that families live in which may not be ‘good enough’ due to the external factors that are impacting them (Choate and Engstrom, 2014). Differing standards of ‘good enough’ may easily result due to the personal views and the potential personal and systemic biases of professionals (Choate and Engstrom, 2014).

1.3 A Reflective Journey

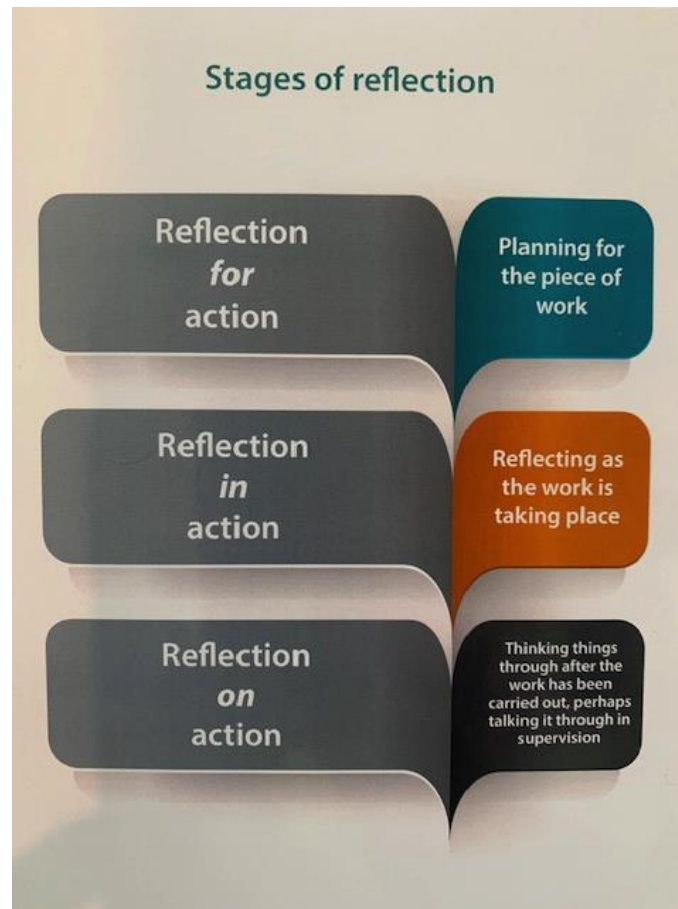


Figure 1.3.1 Stages of Reflection (Maclean, 2016)

I have continually ‘reflected in action’ (see Figure 1.3.1) while writing this dissertation due to the sensitivity of the topic of child removal. This means I have reflected on the issues raised as I have progressed through the stages of writing this paper. Probst and Berenson (2013) propose ‘reflexivity’ is having an awareness of how literature affects the researcher. Donald Schön (2009) developed the reflection-in-action concept that occurs during practice. He believed this was a skilled position where interaction can be altered ‘on the spot’ (Ruch, 2009). This reflective model helped me ‘stop and think’ about how the children and their families must feel

and how professionals make such lasting decisions. Critical reflection is an integral part of social work as it enables us to reflect on our actions and decisions, challenge practices and maintain professional curiosity (Social Work England, 2024; BASW, 2023).

1.4 Structure

Chapter Two analyses the methodology used for the literature review including consideration of thematic analysis. Limitations, constraints and ethical considerations are also explored.

Chapter Three presents the literature review which explores the phrase ‘good enough parenting’ and examines three key themes that evolved from the research: Permanence and Stability, Trauma and ACEs and Breakdowns and Losses.

Chapter Four investigates certain key implications for social work in relation to this controversial area of social work practice.

Chapter Five summarises key findings from the literature review, considering other factors like limitations and gaps in research, validity, reliability and ethical considerations.

1.5 Further Thoughts

Due to word limit constraints, other pertinent areas of interest were not explored in this paper.

One area I believe warrants further research in future is that of ‘resilience’. Research indicates that although looked-after and adopted children are faced with much adversity, some of them demonstrate remarkable resilience (Fisher, 2015). Understanding the reasons for their resilience could be very helpful for future social work practice.

1.6 Conclusions

This chapter gives an overview of the rationale, aims and objectives of this paper. This paper provides a solid basis of insight and knowledge into the complexities and relative merits of intervention and family support versus child removal. It aims to provide useful clarity and understanding to support professionals working with children requiring protection. The next chapter will explore the methodology used in this paper.

Chapter 2: Methodology

“Research is an underused but essential tool for the busy social worker in undertaking their difficult, demanding and often contradictory tasks within society.”

(McLaughlin, 2007, p1)

2.1 Introduction

A methodology can be defined as a set of working methods within a given field (Onwuegbuzie and Frels, 2016). This chapter will explore the methodology I chose for this dissertation. It will highlight the importance of research, the sourcing of the literature and my rationale for the methodology chosen. Limitations, constraints and, importantly, ethical dilemmas and bias will be critically explored and evaluated.

2.2 The Importance of a Literature Review

A comprehensive literature review is a methodology in itself (Snyder, 2019). Machi and McEvoy (2022) suggest it is a written argument supporting a topic, providing context, background knowledge, positioning, and conclusions of a subject. The literature review aims to inform social work practice by exploring intervention versus child removal within families. This research will evaluate arguments for each choice and conclude with a positioning about what is best for the child long-term. There are two central types of literature reviews: systematic and ‘narrative’. Systematic reviews use a more rigorous analytical process than narrative reviews (Kiteley and Stogdon, 2014; Snyder, 2019). Critics of narrative reviews suggest they lack clarity and structure, but using a focused approach, they can be as effective as the more ‘scientific’ systematic review (Carey, 2013). As systematic reviews are more time consuming, I chose a

narrative literature review but used an organised ‘systematic’ approach, to provide flexibility (Kiteley and Stogdon, 2014).

2.3 Sourcing Literature and Results

To identify keywords for my literature search, I created a mind map (see Appendix A), which is a useful tool to develop initial ideas from literature review questions (Aveyard, 2019; Kiteley and Stogdon, 2014). The mind map provided words to search for relevant literature. Before starting my data search, I determined my inclusion and exclusion criteria (shown in Table 2.3.1).

Table 2.3.1 Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

Inclusion Criteria	Exclusion Criteria
• Peer- reviewed journal literature and research • Data published between 2010 and 2024 • Full English text language • Free-access literature • Literature and studies relating to children who have had experience with children's services • Government and policy documents relating to children with experience of children's services	• Literature and research that has not been peer-reviewed • Data prior to 2010 • Non-English text literature and non-English publications • Non-free access literature • Literature and studies relating to children with no experience of children's services

While creating my dissertation poster, I discovered an article specifically relevant to my topic and used it as the starting point for my research (Davidson-Arad, 2010). Applying inclusion criteria, I entered keywords in the search engine of the University of Chichester SocIndex, e-

library, and Google Scholar (which I synced to the university's SocIndex). I used a range of databases to reduce inclusion biases because critics consider relying on one database can give an insufficient range of data (Pascoe, Waterhouse-Bradley and McGinn, 2021). I narrowed down the search by using a combination of keywords and the Boolean operator 'and' and 'or' (Machi and McEvoy, 2022).

Following this, I identified further relevant articles and added them to my database (see Appendix B). I organised my data in a 'systematic' way on a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet and categorised articles using multiple sheets to store supporting research (Onwuegbuzie and Frels, 2016). Although the spreadsheet could not store complete articles, I used hyperlinks to overcome this limitation (Onwuegbuzie and Frels, 2016).

2.4 Rationale for Thematic Analysis

Most of the literature I selected was secondary research that used a variety of methods, known as a 'mixed method' approach (Aveyard, 2019). I used thematic analysis for my research design, to identify and analyse themes within the data (Braun and Clarke, 2006). This simplified method to review literature in social care detects themes in a six-stage process and is known for its flexibility (Nowell et al., 2017; Braun and Clarke, 2006). Critics of thematic analysis believe that its flexibility can lead to lack of coherence and inconsistency (Holloway and Todres, 2003). From my analysis of the literature, similar themes emerged, and I worked through the stages below as shown in Table 2.4.1.

Table 2.4.1 Thematic Analysis Phases

Phase	Condensed explanation of process
1. Data familiarity	I printed out and indexed selected literature, reading it at least twice as Braun and Clarke (2006) suggest full immersion in a topic.
2. Generating codes	I used coloured pens to highlight repeated words and documented them as codes. Braun and Clarke (2006) advise coding themes which might be of interest at later stages.
3. Theme searching	I recorded and analysed codes on my spreadsheet, identifying different overarching themes (Braun and Clarke, 2006; Aveyard, 2019).
4. Reviewing themes	I colour-coded themes to help me review and refine, seeking to minimise bias while considering validity.
5. Naming themes	I defined and refined “concise and punchy” theme names that indicated their nature (Braun and Clarke, 2006).
6. Writing review	I evaluated and wrote the literature review, being mindful that it is not descriptive writing but should highlight omissions of data and concepts such as power and bias (Whittaker, 2012).

2.5 Limitations and Constraints

While selecting a broad range of literature (shown in Table 2.5.1), I was constantly aware of my researcher bias. To minimise potential bias, I examined my own values and the opinions I had formed about child removal during my research. Reflexivity suggests an awareness of the influence the researcher has on a research topic (Probst and Berenson, 2013). I drew on this self-awareness to consider articles that challenged my views. I was also mindful of validity and reliability. Using thematic analysis and a research plan to record coding and themes resulted in a comprehensive and reliable table of results (Mackieson, Shlonsky and Connolly, 2018).

Limitations in sourcing literature included only considering articles written in English and, owing to time restraints, only drawing on free access and full-text articles.

Table 2.5.1 Literature for Thematic Analysis

No	Source	Author	Methodology	Codes	Theme 1	Theme 2	Theme 3
1	Psychology, Public Policy, and Law Journal	Palacios et al. (2019)	Article	adoption, permanence, child protection, interventions	Permanence and stability important for children	ACEs and negative effects of staying in home	Breakdowns are losses
2	British Journal of Social Work	Featherstone et al. (2014)	Literature review	intervention, child protection, trajectories, adoption, support	Support for families at risk of losing children	Trajectories / outcomes	Positive interventions and strengths-based approach
3	British Journal of Social Work	Beckett et al. (2014)	Case files	adoption, fostering, stability, breakdowns, permanence	Permanence and stability; sense of belonging	Breakdowns and double jeopardy	Outcomes
4	British Journal of Social Work	Bilha Davidson- (2010)	Assessments and questionnaires	QOL*, removal, family home, interventions, care	Positive outcomes for children removed	QOL* of children removed better than those kept in biological homes	Interventions
5	Child and Adolescent Social Work Journal	Soares et al. (2019)	Mixed methods	adoption, gains, losses, communication, difficulties	Permanence; sense of belonging	Gains for adopted children	Losses for adopted children
6	Child & Family Social Work	Thulin (2019)	Semi-structured interview guide	trauma, CBT*, treatment, intervention	Trauma	Changes within the family and treatments	Interventions

7	Child & Family Social Work	Atwool (2019)	Literature review	Intensive, intervention, trauma, child removal, ecological, multi-agency, child protection	Trauma and ACEs	Intensive intervention strategies	Ecological model / trauma-informed approach
8	Department of Education	Ward et al. (2010)	Mixed methods	adoption, separation, significant harm, neglect, permanence, interventions, delays	Permanence	Double jeopardy	Interventions
9	Child and Adolescent Mental Health	Fisher, P (2015)	Literature review	adoption, fostering, looked after children, trajectories, outcomes, adversity, resilience	Resilience	Outcomes/trajectories	Interventions
10	GOV.UK	Department of Education	Mixed methods	Adoption, LAC*, stability, statistics, England	LAC* statistics	Care leavers	Children adopted
11	The independent review of children's social care – Final report	MacAlister, J (2022)	Mixed methods	adoption, permanence, stability, trauma, looked after, foster, best interests, good enough, outcomes,	Permanence and stability	Wider family networks	Intensive support for families

				intervention, support			
12	GOV.UK	Department of Education	Mixed methods	adoption, permanence, foster, outcomes, best interest, good enough	Permanence and stability	Avoidance of delays	Quality of care

Table Glossary*

CBT	Cognitive Behavioural Therapy
LAC	Looked After Children
QOL	Quality of Life

Table Colour Codes

	Permanence and Stability
	Trauma and ACEs
	Outcomes and Trajectories
	Interventions
	Resilience
	Breakdowns and Double Jeopardy

2.6 Ethical Considerations

As ethics permeate a literature review, I was careful not to misrepresent the research findings (Onwuegbuzie and Frels, 2016). I followed the professional social work code of ethics (BASW, 2023a), by upholding good values and principles, while developing my professional knowledge.

I remained objective by assessing the quality of the writing and credibility of the writers. Using peer-reviewed journals, I considered how the writers conducted their research. To ensure high reliability and validity, I only used data ‘directly’ relating to the topic and Government documents, which are considered highly trustworthy (Mackieson, Shlonsky and Connolly, 2018). Some literature used in this literature review had received ethics committee approval, but as this dissertation is secondary research, I did not require approval from the University Research Ethics Committee (Research Ethics Committee, 2022).

2.7 Conclusions

This chapter has explained the literature review as a methodology, and its importance in social work. It describes how the data was sourced, the thematic analysis process used, and the limitations and ethical considerations studied. The high volume of literature on this topic and time restraints made an organised ‘systematic’ approach the most suitable option. Significant themes that emerged from the literature will be reviewed and analysed in the next chapter.

Chapter 3: Literature Review

“Childhood experiences have a lifelong influence.”

(Department of Education, 2016, p5)

3.1. Introduction

Research questions provide a focused framework for interpreting data (Onwuegbuzie and Frels, 2016). This chapter is a critical review of relevant literature addressing the research question: “Is professional support and intervention or permanent removal best for the child long-term?”

The question poses two outcomes, intervention or removal, therefore thematic analysis was used to explore diverse perspectives (Nowell et al., 2017; Braun and Clarke, 2006). A literature review provides background subject knowledge pertaining to a research question (Machi and McEvoy, 2022). It is a methodology in its own right and helps social workers keep abreast of the latest developments to adapt current practice (Aveyard, 2019).

‘Good enough’ is a familiar term in child protection. The title “When good enough parenting is not good enough” has been included because social workers evaluate parental capacity and decide if a parent is ‘good enough’. Guidance on implementing what is considered ‘good enough’ is scarce and the term feels ambiguous, yet social workers must use their judgement to assess potential risk in families (Choate and Engstrom, 2014). The ‘good enough’ concept originated from Donald Winnicott (2021), and is based on what is sufficient to raise a child successfully. It is recognised that mothering must be ‘good enough’ for children to flourish

(Winnicott, 2021; Howe, 2011). However, this is a notion that parents can fail and try again, rather than strive for perfection (Choate and Engstrom, 2014).

Maslow's 'Hierarchy of Needs' theory describes people's needs in stages, ranging from basic needs such as food and water through to complex needs including security, love and a need for belonging (O'Brien, 2020). Using this model for children in 'at risk' birth families, 'good enough parenting' could indicate that their basic needs are met but that higher stages may not be achieved. Research suggests that maltreated children who have been removed from birth families can feel loved and have a sense of belonging in a new family (Palacios et al., 2019). When children's basic needs are met, together with safety and love, children can advance to higher levels and feel a sense of self-respect and esteem (illustrated in Figure 3.1.1). Critics of Maslow's framework believe that it has limitations owing to people's unique individual needs and because some people may not progress through the stages in a 'neat hierarchical' order (O'Brien, 2020).

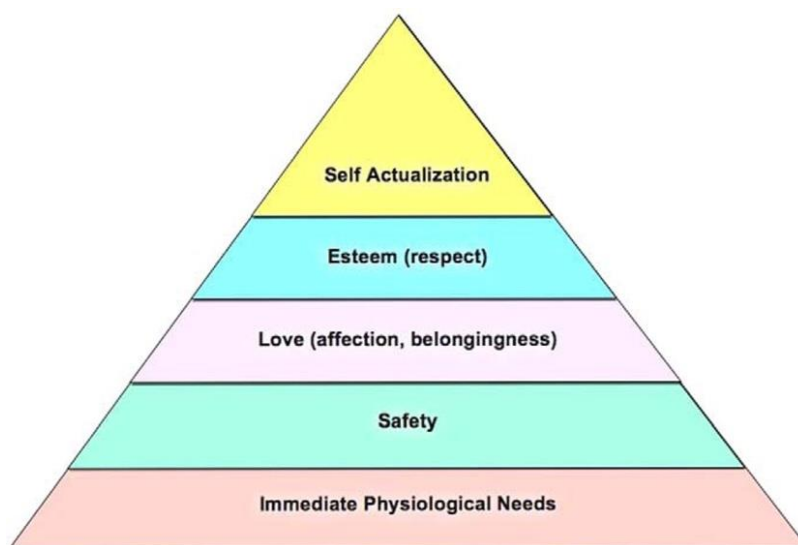


Figure 3.1.1 Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs Theory (Kenrick *et al.*, 2010)

This literature review critically analyses three key themes that emerged from the analysis of the selected data summarised in Chapter 2. These themes are:

- Permanence and Stability
- Trauma and ACEs
- Breakdowns and Losses

3.2 Theme 1: Permanence and Stability: A Sense of Belonging

Permanence, stability and a ‘sense of belonging’ are key benefits for children who are removed from their biological homes (Palacios et al., 2019; Beckett, Pinchen and McKeique, 2014).

Research shows that permanence and stability can promote children’s emotional wellbeing following maltreatment and trauma (Palacios et al., 2019; Davidson-Arad, 2010). Social workers must balance these gains with legislation that favours children remaining in their families where they are ‘best looked after’, which is a key principle of the Children Acts 1989 and 2004.

3.3 Strengths and Limitations

Children are placed out-of-home when they are at risk of ‘significant harm’ or have been ‘significantly harmed’ within their families. When children are removed from their birth home, they are placed with extended family, friends or relatives, foster carers, residential children’s homes or they are adopted. The most appropriate option depends on the child’s background and circumstances (Palacios et al., 2019). For some children, adoption can offer life-long stability and a feeling of permanence within a new family (Palacios et al., 2019; Soares et al., 2019; Department of Education, 2016). Although adoption offers many benefits, research indicates that some children wait too long in temporary placements before finding a permanent home (Beckett,

Pinchen and McKeique, 2014). Evidence highlights that delays in securing permanence can be damaging to children (Ward et al., 2010 ; Ward, Dearden and Munro, 2006).

Although there is substantial research on the impact of child removal and out-of-home care, there is less research available that monitors outcomes of removed children in later years. Beckett, Pinchen and McKeique (2014) explored this by following 59 children, four to six years after care proceedings, finding that 66% had remained in permanent placements. Half of the remaining children moved back to their birth family or extended family and half experienced a placement breakdown.

Although MacAlister (2022) suggests that adoption can provide a loving permanent home in which to thrive, for some children, staying in their birth family is the best choice. This aligns with legislation affirming that children are ‘best looked after in their own families’ (Department of Education, 2021; Spratt and Callan, 2004). Research suggests that family intervention benefits older children and those with sibling bonds (Beckett, Pinchen and McKeique, 2014).

Intervention programmes offer parents an opportunity to make the changes needed to keep their children at home (MacAlister, 2022). Literature highlights the importance of early help and intervention through programmes that show improvements in negative parenting practices (NSPCC, 2023; Demeusy et al., 2022).

Although there is significant literature concerning children in out-of-care placements, there is less data on the long-term outcome of ‘at risk’ families who received specialist intervention. Ward et al., (2010) addressed this lack of evidence by following 43 high-risk children until their

third birthday. The research found interventions were kept to a minimum to reduce dependency on services. The small sample size in this study means that further findings should be verified with larger groups to achieve greater validity and reliability. The lack of research makes it difficult to understand the outcomes of children who were at risk of removal but remained with their families due to support and intervention.

3.4 The Importance of Attachment

Family support and intervention can be best for the child because it retains parental attachment. Bowlby's attachment theory recognised a psychological bond between mother and infant as fundamental to the child's development (Abbott and Burkitt, 2015; Bowlby, 2005; Holmes, 1993). Bowlby suggested that the type of attachment established by a child in infancy is unchangeable and will determine the quality of their relationships throughout life (Karakaş and Dağlı, 2019). However, later evidence suggests that attachment can be built with other carers and attachment styles can change and improve throughout a person's life (Payne, 2021).

Based on each child's unique circumstances and experiences, social workers must decide what out-of-home care is best for each child. Adopters and carers can provide important bonding and commitment, making children feel unconditionally loved. Evidence suggests that it is important for children to form new bonds and connections to attachment figures (Palacios et al., 2019).

Permanence helps adopted children form secure connections with attachment figures (Palacios et al., 2019). Contrasting research indicates that some children may be better suited to remaining in long-term foster placements, where strong attachments have been formed (Beckett, Pinchen and McKeigue, 2014). This includes older children entering care who could be best placed in long-

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED] health,

cognitive functioning, attachment, academic and behavioural aspects of their lives (Palacios et al., 2019; Soares et al., 2019; Fisher, 2015; Ward et al., 2010).

Out-of-home care can provide a healing space for children to recover from trauma (MacAlister, 2022). However, Soares et al. (2019) states that adopted children experience challenges and difficulties too. The timescale between being removed from a birth home and moving to a new family can be lengthy. Minimal delays for children being adopted lessens the impact of trauma and early adverse experiences (Palacios et al., 2019). It also allows additional time for children to get used to their new family.

Positive relationships are a buffer to adversity for children who have ACEs (MacAlister, 2022). In contrast, Neil (2012) finds that children who have experienced pre-placement adversities can have challenges when making new attachments. Although withdrawing children from birth families can be the right decision for some children, for others, removing them from their birth family can increase their risk of triggering separate ACEs (Vinnerljung and Sallnas, 2008).

Developmental trauma can develop from early childhood experiences when basic needs are not met (Beacon House, 2024). Children removed from their birth mother can also develop disorders including Complex Developmental Trauma (Complex PTSD), which can advance after a child has experienced repeated trauma including abuse, neglect, abandonment or loss (Beacon House, 2024).

Fisher (2015) states that some fostered and adopted children are susceptible to disorders including anxiety and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). This correlates with research

conducted by Palacios et al., (2019) and Thulin, Kjellgren and Nilsson (2019) which identified that abused children can suffer from PTSD which links to avoidant behaviour. Avoidant attachment behaviour indicates that parents are unresponsive to their child's needs (Howe, 2009). Complex Posttraumatic Stress Disorder (C-PTSD) can be the effect of childhood trauma through the experience of unavailable carers. This early exposure to harm can continue into adulthood (Beacon House, 2024a).

3.6 Intervention as an Alternative

Cognitive therapy can be a positive intervention for children who have experienced PTSD or development traumas (UK Trauma Council, 2024). Research indicates intervention and support for children suffering ACEs and trauma can be successful. Thulin, Kjellgren and Nilsson (2019) suggest that Combined Parent Child Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CPC-CBT) for families at risk of physical child abuse achieves positive results. This study states that CBT can help traumatised children process trauma and create cognitive distance from abuse. Intervention results show decreased violence but the study's small sample size of 20 children, must be considered as a limitation. MacAlister (2022) agrees that family intervention can make a positive impact. However, owing to the lack of resources it is often not possible to tackle complex family issues, (Atwool, 2021).

3.7 A Trauma-informed Approach

An overarching ecological framework and trauma-informed approach enables intensive intervention which has the potential to stabilise and positively transform families in crisis (Atwool, 2021).

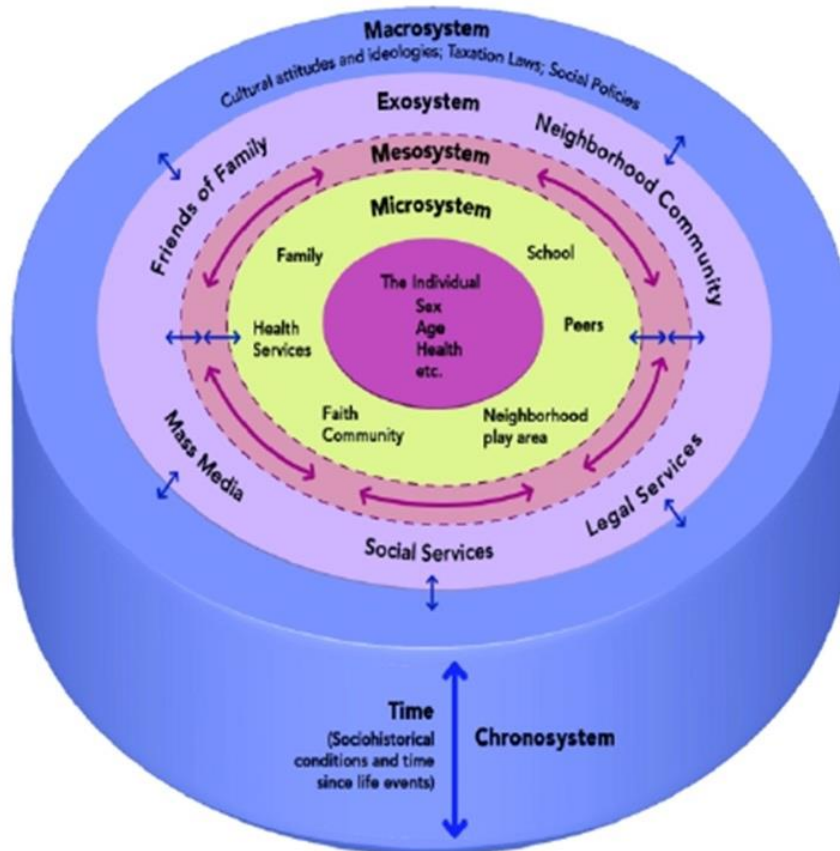


Figure 3.7.1 Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory (Lopez et al., 2021).

Bronfenbrenner's model (shown in Figure 3.7.1) illustrates the four levels (microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem and macrosystem) in which children grow (Lopez et al., 2021; Beckett and Taylor, 2016). The development of children affected by ACEs is shaped in all areas, with interplay between different layers, individuals and environments. Negative and abusive family environments within the microsystem affect children's mental and physical health. Parental traumatic experiences have a detrimental effect on their parenting and their child's development and attachment (Lopez et al., 2021).

3.8 Theme 3: Breakdowns and Losses: A Double Jeopardy?

Although foster and adoption placements often provide much needed stability, breakdowns occur for some children. Research by Palacios et al., (2019) reports that adoption breakdowns range between 1% and 27% internationally. Factors attributed to this wide variation include children's age, special needs, time span considered and data quality. These factors must be considered when measuring the reliability and validity of research. Adoption breakdowns are another loss and continued trauma for the child (Beckett, Pinchen and McKeique, 2014). Adoptees experience losses throughout their life including relationships, their status, identity and ethnic connections (Smith and Brodzinsky, 2002). Factors affecting breakdowns include the child's age and their background adversity. Placement breakdowns are considered harmful for a child's sense of value unless the placement has been an unhappy one. This can also reinforce a belief that they are difficult to manage and love (Beckett, Pinchen and McKeique, 2014).

3.9 Grief and Loss

When reflecting on child removals, the loss felt by everyone involved in the process should be considered. The 'adoption triad' highlights that loss is experienced by birth parents who have lost a child, adoptees who feel the loss of their parents and adopters who may mourn the loss of a child they could not have (Javier et al., 2006). Children moving placements can experience a series of losses which impacts their ability to form relationships and trust others. Research shows that placement moves are stressful and often experienced as losses and rejections for children, which can leave lasting effects carried into adulthood (Palacios et al., 2019).

Literature recognises grief and loss is experienced by children who are removed from birth homes and when they transition from interim foster carers to adopted parents. One article described an adoptive placement that broke down for one child after three years, because he was thought to be grieving for his preceding foster carers (Beckett, Pinchen and McKeique, 2014). Research indicates that adoption breakdowns occur less often than foster-care breakdowns. Considerations for this include the fact that children are often adopted at a young age, while older children are fostered. Studies show that younger children have more stability (Beckett, Pinchen and McKeique, 2014).

Beckett, Pinchen and McKeique (2014) studied 59 children who were subject to care proceedings between 1 April 2004 and 31 March 2005 and found that 18% of cases resulted in breakdowns. Challenging behaviour and attachment issues led to the breakdowns (Beckett, Pinchen and McKeique, 2014). It is important to note the children studied experienced their interventions ten years earlier, so reliability and validity must be considered. However, due to a lack of recent data following children several years after removal, this article is included. Social workers must continually advance professional development and keep up to date with relevant research (BASW, 2023). Tensions within social work research include the prolonged time between research and practice (Lamont, Allen and Geoghegan, 2020). Additionally, social workers identify time pressures as a main barrier for not engaging in research (Finne, Ekeland and Malmberg-Heimonen, 2022).

Research by Soares et al., (2019) examines 102 children, adopted from care. The researcher discovered a lack of research on the middle part of childhood, where feelings of loss can be felt

more strongly at this growing stage. This middle ‘mini cycle of development’ stage of life is labelled the latency period, which is an important stage because it focuses on learning (Jacobs, 2006). This study is unique because it analyses children aged eight to ten who were adopted between two months and eight years old. Adoptees expressed feeling birth family, relationship and ‘status’ losses. ‘Status loss’ occurs when adoptees experience a negative attitude from people who know they are adopted, affecting their self-esteem and identity (Soares et al., 2019). Interestingly, this article highlighted that more than half the children in the study could not express their worst adoption-related experience. This brings into question the validity of the findings as children might not feel able to express grieving their losses (Soares et al., 2019; Brodzinsky, 2011). This was considered as a limitation of the research and may indicate that these children were not expressing their true thoughts to avoid hurting their adoptive parent’s feelings.

3.10 Double Jeopardy

Research conducted in a study of 57 children before their first birthday by Ward et al., (2010) identified that 60% suffered a ‘double jeopardy’. This means that they separated from their birth families and separated again from temporary carers before a permanent placement was found. This ‘double jeopardy’ generates further loss for the child (Beckett, Pinchen and McKeigue, 2014; Ward et al., 2010). The study followed 43 of these children until they were three years old. Limitations with the small sample size are considered but as ‘double jeopardy’ affected over half of the children, this article was considered pertinent (Ward et al., 2010). A further limitation of this research is the use of recorded data, as the study relies on a social worker’s own views which include their biases.

3.11 The Future

Research suggests that many families with adopted children stay together, but experience relationship difficulties. (Palacios et al., 2019; Livingston Smith, 2014). While researching this topic, I noticed a lack of literature on the long-term outcomes of children who were long-term fostered and adopted. Follow up research on adults who were removed from birth homes as children would be extremely beneficial. Palacios et al., (2019) observes that more adopted adults are sharing their experience of adoption providing important lived experiences from which professionals can learn. Palacios et al., (2019) acknowledges the loss experienced by birth parents when a child is permanently removed. This research is especially interesting because it was the only article from the selected literature that recognised the birth parent's experiences. Further research about birth parents' thoughts and feelings would be valuable.

3.12 What About Ethics?

A study by Thulin, Kjellgren and Nilsson (2019) interviews children who have been physically abused. Interviewees may be uncomfortable in discussing sensitive topics and researchers need to be sensitive to this (McLaughlin, 2007). Ethical implications should be considered before asking questions which could be retraumatising (Castro Batic and Hayes, 2020). Additionally, working with people suffering trauma may trigger different emotions in professionals and could potentially cause vicarious trauma (Ruiz-Fernández et al., 2021).

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED] implications.

Chapter 4: Implications for Social Work

“The world is a dangerous place to live; not because of the people who are evil, but because of the people who don't do anything about it.”

Albert Einstein (Egan, 2015, p37)

4.1 Introduction

In a recently published survey of more than 3,500 people, 74% of respondents believed that social workers want the best for people (Social Work England, 2024). However, social workers are frequently portrayed negatively in the media (Leedham, 2022). Social workers are often under pressure with heavy workloads and require clear guidelines when working with children and their families.

While researching this topic, I found that the phrase ‘good enough parenting’ requires further clarification to ensure that social workers are not left to determine individually what is ‘good enough’ for the child (Choate and Engstrom, 2014). This is important for making decisions about the risk to the child and parenting capacity. To support decision making, Munro (2008) proposes a framework that assesses risk in five stages: what is or has happened; what might happen; how likely are these outcomes; how desirable are they; and what is the general judgement of risk. This chapter will focus on informing social work practice in the areas of permanence, stability, trauma, ACEs, breakdowns and losses. This will include timescales and relationships with birth families; interventive practices and support, and the application of appropriate theories and practice frameworks.

4.2 Permanence and Stability

Legislation favours caring for children in their birth homes, requiring social workers to consider the best option for the child in light of their age and circumstances (legislation.gov.uk, 1989).

Research indicates that some children stay too long in temporary placements before being permanently placed. Social workers must be mindful of evidence which shows that early placement enables easier integration into new families and balance this with issues including legal and statutory timeframes, and finding suitable carers (Department of Education, 2016).

Literature suggests that adoption is a superior option to foster care for stability and permanence (Hjern, Vinnerljung and Brännström, 2019). However, social workers need to consider children's pre-adoption relationships as adoptees may express feelings of loss relating to their birth parents, siblings and friends (Soares et al., 2019; Brodzinsky, 2011). This suggests that professionals may require more specific training to work with children in an empathetic way and to help them adapt to new placements after separating from previous relationships (Soares et al., 2019). By using empathy and respect, social workers can empower an individual's self-efficacy (Pan Sussex, 2022; Department of Education, 2018).

Findings also indicate that it is important for adoption professionals to help children adapt and bond in the first months of a new placement. This includes creative and collaborative working with teachers, school staff and parents to help the socialisation of adopted children in their new environments (Soares et al., 2019). It is helpful that adoption services have become more attuned with family contact options, including life-story work and letterbox contact (MacAlister, 2022).

4.3 Trauma and Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs)

Literature highlights the importance of being more curious and compassionate when working with children with ACEs. This includes reflecting on the child's early development and adversities. Practitioners must consider these issues in a more detailed, holistic way when completing assessments for individuals who have experienced adversity (UK Trauma Council, 2021).

Research suggests focusing on the capabilities in families using a strengths-based approach (Featherstone, Morris and White, 2014). Strengths-based practice draws on a person's strengths with the underlying belief that, with support, people can be enabled to make positive changes in their lives (SCIE, 2024). The Munro Review of Child Protection (2011) emphasises the importance of strengths within a family.

Evidence indicates that professionals must reframe their understanding of childhood trauma to appreciate the importance of preventative help, intervention and support for at risk children (Thulin, Kjellgren and Nilsson, 2019). Trauma-focused CBT appears to be the best-evidenced mental health intervention for young people with PTSD and other traumas (UK Trauma Council, 2024a). Neuroscience research on changes in the brain indicates that the deepest damage occurs before birth and in the first 18 months of a child's life (Trauma Council, 2024; Munro, 2011; The Royal Society, 2011).

Trauma-informed practice is built on the understanding that exposure to trauma can impact biological, neurological, psychological and social development. For social workers, this means

being aware of the negative effect of trauma on individuals. Models such as the Trauma Recovery Model (illustrated in Figure 4.3.1) are useful when working with people affected by trauma to empower them to make positive choices (GOV.UK, 2022).

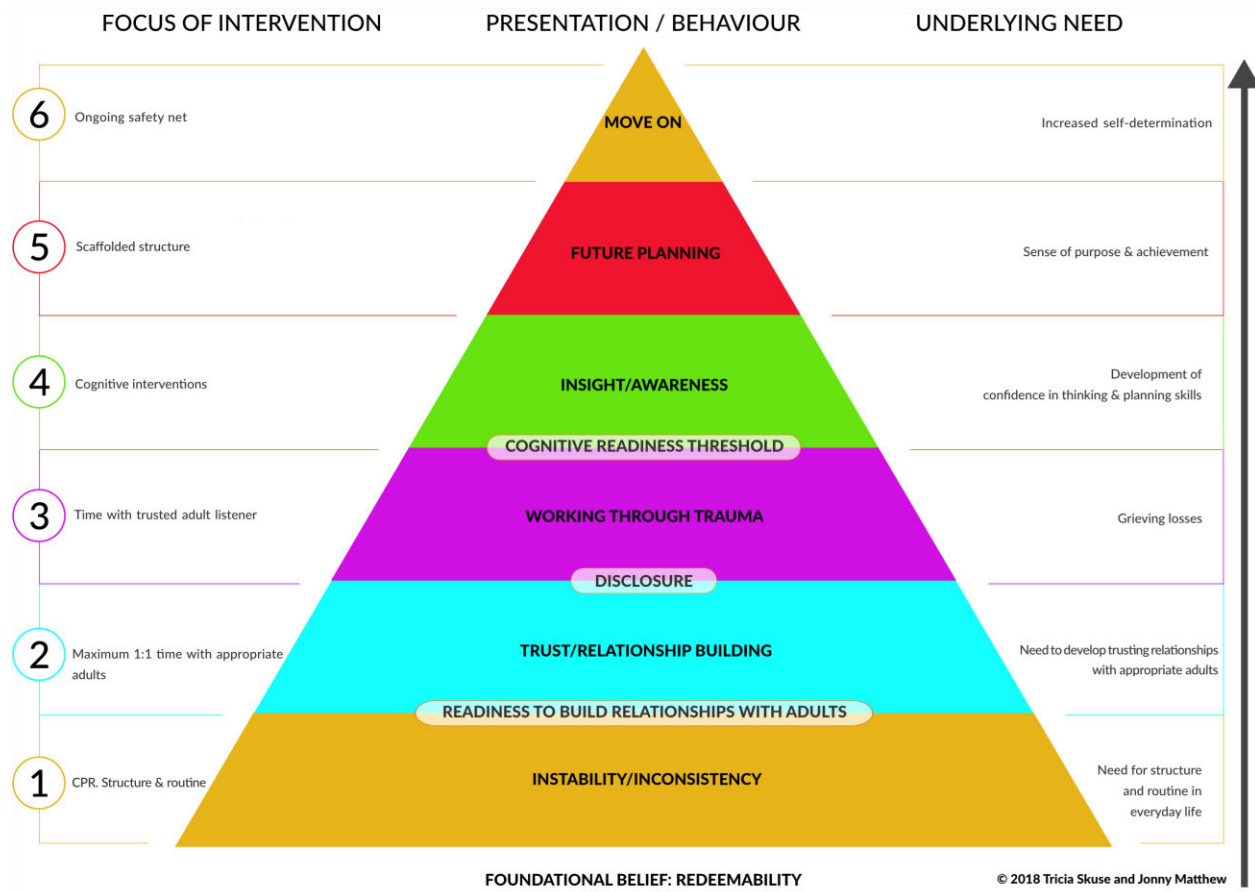


Figure 4.3.1 Trauma Recovery Model (adapted from TRM Academy, 2021)

Social workers are encouraged to use Motivational Interviewing (MI) to promote change in individuals by using open-ended questions and active listening (Bischof, Bischof and Rumpf, 2021). Research by Sypniewski (2016) suggests that MI is a successful intervention for trauma-informed care and because it reduces negative health behaviours, its use is expected to be expanded in schools (Sypniewski, 2016).

4.4 Breakdowns and Losses

Families seeking post adoption support can face challenges, especially within mental health services (Palacios et al., 2019). Evidence suggests practitioners should provide pre-and post-adoption support and services to ensure that placement stability with support is seen as a strength, not a parenting failure (Palacios et al., 2019). Professionals can support children removed from birth homes by talking about their losses and gains to give positive meaning to their experience. Acknowledgement of adoptees' losses can help parents, teachers and health professionals to interpret children's behaviour and empower them to support children through the loss and grieving process (Soares et al., 2019).

In view of time pressures, it may be beneficial to consider other health professionals who could support families in overcoming potential risks (Ward et al., 2010). Working with children who have been maltreated is emotionally challenging, therefore adequate time must be found to allow social workers critical reflection and supervision (Munro, 2011). Critical reflection allows social workers to challenge themselves, maintain professional curiosity and analyse complex situations (BASW, 2022).

4.5 Conclusions

The social work profession has a responsibility to protect children from harm (BASW, 2023). This benefits society because instability in childhood has been associated with criminal behaviour in adulthood (Lindner and Hanlon, 2024). This chapter highlighted areas of practice where social workers can consider different approaches when working with children who are at

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED] examined.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

Chapter 5: Conclusions

“Not all of us can do great things. But we can do small things with great love.”

Mother Teresa (Hall, 2022)

5.1 Overall Findings and Key Points

This research has highlighted several key factors relevant to child removal. Permanence, stability and a ‘sense of belonging’ are crucial for children who have been removed from their birth families (Palacios et al., 2019). When deciding whether parenting is ‘good enough’, practitioners must consider established family relationships, support and intervention and balance these with the safety and the ‘best interests’ of the child.

When a decision has been made to permanently remove a child, adoption and fostering are likely outcomes. Adoption appears to provide the best outcomes for children removed from birth homes, but factors including the younger age of children who tend to be adopted, must be acknowledged (Beckett, Pinchen and McKeique, 2014; Hjern; Vinnerljung and Brännströ, 2019). Research suggests delays in finding placements is damaging for children, impacting them negatively in their future bonding and attachment in new families (Beckett, Pinchen and McKeique, 2014).

Children who are removed from birth homes are affected by ACEs, but they can recover and heal in a safe family environment. Interventions and trauma-informed practice can make a positive impact in families, but more of this is needed (Thulin, Kjellgren and Nilsson, 2019).

Breakdowns are an inevitable aspect of out-of-home placement care and are considered another loss for children (Beckett, Pinchen and McKeique, 2014). Children who are placed in foster care and then placed with a new family experience ‘double jeopardy’, so consideration of the child’s feelings is essential (Ward et al., 2010).

5.2 Considerations and Limitations

I believe I have achieved what I set out to accomplish through this project. I was not expecting to find a ‘right’ answer to my research question, which has been proved correct due to each individual’s unique circumstances. I can see there are strengths and weaknesses in ‘keeping’ and ‘removing’ children from their birth families. There is an abundance of literature on children who are being cared for outside their biological homes, which did not surprise me. Because of this, I concentrated on long-term fostered and adopted children (not kinship, special guardianship), to keep my study focussed and make the best use of my time. As well as constraints on time available, I encountered other limitations, including the maximum word count of this paper and the pressures of a busy placement. I have considered my own researcher bias whilst giving the subject of child protection and child removal a great deal of thought. I managed this by reflecting ‘in-action’ while writing the paper, seeking to mitigate any potential bias (Ruch, 2009). I also used literature that presented both the strengths and weaknesses of removing children versus keeping them in their birth homes.

5.3 Gaps in Research

Although there is considerable literature on child removal and out-of-family care options, I noticed a lack of research that examines outcomes of children who have been in some form of

care. Additionally, there appears to be little research monitoring children removed in later years, and those who stayed in ‘at risk’ homes who may have been on the cusp of removal.

5.4 The Reflective Practitioner

As a researcher, I have learnt that being inquisitive and having a questioning perspective is crucial (Kumar, 2019). Working independently to read and evaluate literature has made me think in a more critical way. Instead of just accepting an article (as I have done previously), I now look more closely at the sample size of the study, assessing the validity and reliability (Kumar, 2019). This attention to detail is essential as evidence from Serious Case Reviews shows the importance of professional curiosity and critical thinking (Samuel, 2024; NSPCC, 2022). As much of the information I have read has been of a sensitive nature, I have reflected on how the research has affected me, practicing the concept of reflexivity (Probst and Berenson, 2013). I have taken a reflective ‘in action’ stance, aligning with reflexivity, which is considered important in the methodology of qualitative research (Ide and Beddoe, 2019).

5.5 Moving Forward

There is scope for future work to concentrate on larger sample sizes as much of the literature I reviewed covered small numbers of children. Ward et al., (2010) suggests there are difficulties in accessing large numbers of children who meet the criteria. I recommend future exploratory studies covering children who are grieving losses, as research shows not enough attention has been paid to this area (Soares et al., 2019). I would also like to see more studies of adoptee adults and those who have experienced care ‘telling their stories’, which would provide insightful, holistic evidence of their lived experience. This could provide inspiring reading for children

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED] practice.

References

Abbott, R. and Burkitt, E. (2015) *Child Development and the Brain: An Introduction*. Bristol: The Policy Press.

Atwool, N. (2021) 'Intensive Intervention with Families Experiencing Multiple and Complex Challenges: An Alternative to Child Removal in a Bi- and Multi-Cultural Context?', *Child & Family Social Work*, 26(4), pp. 550–558.

Aveyard, H. (2019) *Doing a Literature Review in Health and Social Care*. Fourth Edition. Maidenhead: Open University Press.

BASW (2022) *Professional Capabilities Framework (PCF)*, <https://www.basw.co.uk/social-work-training/professional-capabilities-framework-pcf> (Accessed: 10 January 2022).

BASW (2023a) *Code of Ethics*, BASW. Available at: <https://new.basw.co.uk/policy-practice/standards/code-ethics> (Accessed: 1 May 2024).

BASW (2023b) *Readiness for practice*, BASW. Available at: <https://new.basw.co.uk/training-cpd/professional-capabilities-framework/readiness-practice> (Accessed: 27 May 2024).

BASW (2023c) *What social workers do*, BASW. Available at: <https://new.basw.co.uk/about-social-work/what-social-work/what-social-workers-do> (Accessed: 25 May 2024).

Beacon House (2024a) *Adult Trauma Clinic*, Beacon House. Available at: <https://beaconhouse.org.uk/specialist-clinics/adult-trauma-clinic/> (Accessed: 16 May 2024).

Beacon House (2024b) *Child and Family Trauma Clinic*, Beacon House. Available at: <https://beaconhouse.org.uk/specialist-clinics/child-and-family-trauma-clinic/> (Accessed: 18 May 2024).

Beckett, C. (2007) *Child Protection: An Introduction*. Second Edition. London: SAGE.

Beckett, C., Pinchen, I. and McKeigue, B. (2014) 'Permanence and "Permanence": Outcomes of Family Placements: Discovery Service for University of Chichester', *British Journal of Social Work*, 44(5), pp. 1162–1179. Available at: <https://eds.p.ebscohost.com/eds/pdfviewer/pdfviewer?vid=2&sid=fd5e914c-2489-4c50-a984-d3c01a353ea2%40redis> (Accessed: 9 April 2024).

Beckett, C. and Taylor, H. (2016) *Human Growth and Development*. 3rd Edition. Edited by K. Wharton. London: Sage Publications Ltd.

Bischof, G., Bischof, A. and Rumpf, H.J. (2021) 'Motivational Interviewing: An Evidence-Based Approach for Use in Medical Practice', *Deutsches Ärzteblatt International*, 118(7), p. 115. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.3238/ARZTEBL.M2021.0014>.

Bowlby, J. (2005) *A Secure Base: Clinical Applications of Attachment Theory*. London: Routledge (Routledge classics).

Brammer, A. (2020) *Social Work Law*. Fifth Edition. Upper Saddle River: Pearson.

Braun, V. and Clarke, V. (2006) 'Using Thematic Analysis in Psychology', *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 3(2), pp. 77–101. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1191/1478088706QP063OA>.

Carey, M. (2013) *The Social Work Dissertation*. Second Edition. Maidenhead: Open University Press.

Castro Batic, B. and Hayes, D. (2020) 'Exploring Harm in Psychotherapy: Perspectives of Clinicians Working with Children and Young People', *Counselling and Psychotherapy Research*, 20(4), pp. 647–656. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1002/CAPR.12347>.

Children Act 2004 (2004) *legislation.gov.uk*. The National Archives. Available at: <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2004/31/contents> (Accessed: 16 December 2022).

Choate, P.W. and Engstrom, S. (2014) 'The "Good Enough" Parent: Implications for Child Protection', *Child Care in Practice*, 20(4), pp. 368–382. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1080/13575279.2014.915794>.

Davidson-Arad, B. (2010) 'Four Perspectives on the Quality of Life of Children at Risk Kept at Home and Removed from Home in Israel', *The British Journal of Social Work*, 40(6), pp. 1719–1735. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1093/BJSW/BCP099>.

Demeusy, E.M. *et al.* (2022) 'Building Healthy Children: A Preventive Intervention for High-Risk Young Families', *Dev Psychopathol*, 33(2), pp. 598–613. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0954579420001625>.

Department of Education (2016) *Adoption: A Vision for Change*. London.

Department of Education (2018) *Working Together to Safeguard Children, HM Government*. UK Government.

Department of Education (2021) *Children looked after in England including adoptions, GOV.UK*. Available at: <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/children-looked-after-in-england-including-adoptions/2021> (Accessed: 27 March 2022).

Egan, J. (2015) *3,000 Astounding Quotes*. Morrisville, North Carolina: Lulu Publishing Services.
Featherstone, B., Morris, K. and White, S. (2014) 'A Marriage Made in Hell: Early Intervention Meets Child Protection.: EBSCOhost', *British Journal of Social Work*, 44(7), pp. 1735–1749. Available at: <https://web.p.ebscohost.com/ehost/pdfviewer/pdfviewer?vid=5&sid=2c8b86cc-a962-451c-a06b-e3b6eeae2a31%40redis> (Accessed: 9 April 2024).

Finne, J., Ekeland, T.J. and Malmberg-Heimonen, I. (2022) 'Social workers Use of Knowledge in an Evidence-Based Framework: A Mixed Methods Study', *European Journal of Social Work*, 25(3), pp. 443–456. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1080/13691457.2020.1783214>.

Fisher, P.A. (2015) 'Review: Adoption, Fostering, and the Needs of Looked-After and Adopted Children', *Child and Adolescent Mental Health*, 20(1), pp. 5–12. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1111/CAMH.12084>.

GOV.UK (2022) *Working Definition of Trauma-Informed Practice*, GOV.UK. Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/working-definition-of-trauma-informed-practice/working-definition-of-trauma-informed-practice> (Accessed: 25 May 2024).

GOV.UK (2023) *Children Looked After in England Including Adoptions*, GOV.UK. Available at: <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/children-looked-after-in-england-including-adoptions#releaseHeadlines-summary> (Accessed: 25 November 2023).

Hall, L. (2022) *54 Inspiring Mother Teresa Quotes That Inspire Love, Faith, and Hope, Country Living*. Available at: <https://www.countryliving.com/life/a39155616/mother-teresa-quotes/> (Accessed: 29 May 2024).

Hjern, A., Vinnerljung, B. and Brännström, L. (2019) 'Outcomes in Adulthood of Adoption After Long-Term Foster Care: A Sibling Study', *Developmental Child Welfare*, 1(1), pp. 61–75. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1177/2516103218815702>.

Holloway, I. and Todres, L. (2003) 'The Status of Method: Flexibility, Consistency and Coherence | Enhanced Reader', *Qualitative Research*, 3(3), pp. 345–357.

Holmes, J. (1993) *John Bowlby & Attachment Theory*. London: Routledge.

Howe, D. (2009) *A Brief Introduction to Social Work Theory*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

Howe, D. (2011) *Attachment Across the Lifecourse*. London: Palgrave.

Ide, Y. and Beddoe, L. (2019) 'Challenging Perspectives: Reflexivity as a Critical Approach to Qualitative Social Work Research', *Qualitative Social Work*, 0(0), pp. 1–16. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1177/14733250231173522>.

Jacobs, M. (2006) *The Presenting Past: The Core of Psychodynamic Counselling and Therapy*. Maidenhead: Open University Press.

Javier, R.A. et al. (2006) *Handbook of Adoption: Implications for Researchers, Practitioners, and Families*. Thousand Oaks: SAGE Publications.

Karakaş, N.M. and Dağlı, F.Ş. (2019) 'The Importance of Attachment in Infant and Influencing Factors', *Turkish Archives of Paediatrics*, 54(2), p. 81. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.14744/TURKPEDIATRIARS.2018.80269>.

Kenrick, D.T. *et al.* (2010) ‘Renovating the Pyramid of Needs: Contemporary Extensions Built Upon Ancient Foundations’, *Perspectives on Psychological Science*, 5(3), pp. 292–314. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1177/1745691610369469>.

Kiteley, R. and Stogdon, C. (2014) *Literature reviews in social work*. London: SAGE Publications Ltd.

Kumar, R. (2019) *Research Methodology: A Step-by-Step Guide for Beginners*. Fifth Edition. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications. Available at: <http://prism.librarymanagementcloud.co.uk/chi-ac/items/538523>.

Lamont, T., Allen, R. and Geoghegan, L. (2020) *Enabling Better Use of Evidence in Social Work Policy and Practice: A BASW/NIHR Roundtable Discussion*. Birmingham.

Leedham, M. (2022) “‘Social Workers Failed to Heed Warnings’: A Text-Based Study of How a Profession is Portrayed in UK Newspapers”, *The British Journal of Social Work*, 52(2), pp. 1110–1128. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1093/BJSW/BCAB096>.

legislation.gov.uk (1989) *Children Act 1989*, *legislation.gov.uk*. National Archives. Available at: <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1989/41/contents> (Accessed: 9 December 2023).

legislation.gov.uk (no date) *Adoption and Children Act 2002*. Available at: <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2002/38/contents> (Accessed: 28 March 2022).

Lindner, A.R. and Hanlon, R. (2024) ‘Outcomes of Youth with Foster Care Experiences Based on Permanency Outcome – Adoption, Aging Out, Long-Term Foster Care, and Reunification: A Systematic Review’, *Children and Youth Services Review*, 156, p. 107366. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1016/J.CHILDYOUTH.2023.107366>.

Livingston Smith, S. (2014) *Keeping the Promise: The case for Adoption Support and Preservation*. New York.

Lopez, M. *et al.* (2021) ‘The Social Ecology of Childhood and Early Life Adversity’, *Paediatric Research*, 89(2), p. 367. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1038/S41390-020-01264-X>.

MacAlister, J. (2022) *The Independent Review of Children’s Social Care Final Report*. London.
Macdonald, M. (2017) *CONNECTING OR DISCONNECTING? Adoptive Parents’ Experiences of Post Adoption Contact and their Support Needs*. Belfast.

Machi, L.A. and McEvoy, B.T. (2022) *The Literature Review: Six Steps to Success*. Fourth Edition. Thousand Oaks: Corwin.

Mackieson, P., Shlonsky, A. and Connolly, M. (2018) ‘Increasing Rigor and Reducing Bias in Qualitative Research: A Document Analysis of Parliamentary Debates Using Applied Thematic Analysis’, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1473325018786996>, 18(6), pp. 965–980. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1177/1473325018786996>.

Maclean, S. (2016) 'Reflective Practice Cards: A Guide to Using the Cards', *Reflective Practice Cards*. Staffordshire: Kirwin Maclean Associates, pp. 1–38.

Manchester University NHA Foundation Trust (2024) *Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) and Attachment - Royal Manchester Children's Hospital, Manchester University NHS Foundation Trust*. Available at: <https://mft.nhs.uk/rmch/services/camhs/young-people/adverse-childhood-experiences-aces-and-attachment/> (Accessed: 23 May 2024).

McLaughlin, H. (2007) *Understanding Social Work Research*. London: SAGE Publications Ltd. Available at: <http://www.loc.gov/catdir/enhancements/fy0712/2006903773-t.html>.

Munro, E. (2008) *Effective Child Protection*. Second Edition. London: SAGE Publications Ltd.

Munro, E. (2011) *The Munro Review of Child Protection: Final Report - A child-centred system*. London. Available at: www.official-documents.gov.uk (Accessed: 25 May 2024).

Neil, E. (2012) 'Making Sense of Adoption: Integration and Differentiation from the Perspective of Adopted Children in Middle Childhood', *Children and Youth Services Review*, 34(2), pp. 409–416. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1016/J.CHILDYOUTH.2011.11.011>.

Nowell, L.S. *et al.* (2017) 'Thematic Analysis: Striving to Meet the Trustworthiness Criteria', *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, 16, pp. 1–13. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1177/1609406917733847>.

NSPCC (2022) *Unseen Men: Learning from Case Reviews*, NSPCC. Available at: <https://learning.nspcc.org.uk/research-resources/learning-from-case-reviews/unseen-men> (Accessed: 28 May 2024).

NSPCC (2024) *Statistics Briefing: Children in Care*. London.

O'Brien, E.Z. (2020) *Psychology, Human Growth and Development for Social Work - A Comprehensive Guide*. 2nd Edition. Red Globe Press.

Onwuegbuzie, A.J. and Frels, R. (2016) *7 Steps to a Comprehensive Literature Review*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications.

Palacios, J. *et al.* (2019) 'Adoption in the Service of Child Protection: An International Interdisciplinary Perspective', *Psychology, Public Policy, and Law*, 25(2), pp. 57–72. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1037/LAW0000192>.

Pan Sussex (2022) *1.2 Underlying Policy, Principles and Values*. Available at: <https://sussexchildprotection.procedures.org.uk/ykylsl/working-with-children-and-families/underlying-policy-principles-and-values> (Accessed: 14 December 2022).

Pascoe, K.M., Waterhouse-Bradley, B. and McGinn, T. (2021) 'Systematic Literature Searching in Social Work: A Practical Guide With Database Appraisal', *Research on Social Work Practice*, 31(5), pp. 542–551. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1177/1049731520986857>.

Payne, M. (2021) *Modern Social Work Theory*. London: Red Globe Press.

Probst, B. and Berenson, L. (2013) 'The Double Arrow: How Qualitative Social Work Researchers Use Reflexivity', *Qualitative Social Work*, 13(6), pp. 813–827. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1177/1473325013506248>.

Research Ethics Committee (2022) *Research Ethics Policy*, University of Chichester.

Ruch, G. (2009) *Post-Qualifying Child Care Social Work: Developing Reflective Practice*. London: Sage Publications Ltd.

Ruiz-Fernández, M.D. *et al.* (2021) 'Emotions, Feelings, and Experiences of Social Workers While Attending to Vulnerable Groups: A Qualitative Approach', *Healthcare*, 9(1). Available at: <https://doi.org/10.3390/HEALTHCARE9010087>.

SCIE (2024) *Strengths-Based Social Care for Children, Young People and their Families - SCIE*, SCIE. Available at: <https://www.scie.org.uk/strengths-based-approaches/young-people/> (Accessed: 25 May 2024).

Smith, D.W. and Brodzinsky, D.M. (2002) 'Coping with Birthparent Loss in Adopted Children', *Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry and Allied Disciplines*, 43(2), pp. 213–223. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1111/1469-7610.00014>.

Snyder, H. (2019) 'Literature Review as a Research Methodology: An Overview and Guidelines', *Journal of Business Research*, 104, pp. 333–339. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2019.07.039>.

Soares, J. *et al.* (2019) 'Adoption-Related Gains, Losses and Difficulties: The Adopted Child's Perspective', *Child and Adolescent Social Work Journal*, 36(3), pp. 259–268. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1007/S10560-018-0582-0>.

Social Work England (2024) *Public Perceptions of the Social Work Profession*, *Social Work England*. Available at: <https://www.socialworkengland.org.uk/about/publications/public-perceptions-of-the-social-work-profession/#summary> (Accessed: 25 May 2024).

Spratt, T. and Callan, J. (2004) 'Parents' Views on Social Work Interventions in Child Welfare Cases', *British Journal of Social Work*, 34(2), pp. 199–224. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1093/bjsw/bch022>.

Sypniewski, R. (2016) 'Motivational Interviewing: A Practical Intervention for School Nurses to Engage in Trauma Informed Care', *NASN School Nurse*, 31(1), pp. 40–44. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1177/1942602X15576777/ASSET/IMAGES/LARGE/10.1177_1942602X15576777-IMG1.JPEG.

The Royal Society (2011) *Brain Waves Module 2: Neuroscience: Implications for Education and Lifelong Learning*. London.

Thulin, J., Kjellgren, C. and Nilsson, D. (2019) 'Children's Experiences with an Intervention Aimed to Prevent Further Physical Abuse', *Child and Family Social Work*, 24(1), pp. 17–24. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1111/CFS.12476>.

TRM Academy (2021) *TRM Academy Resources*, TRM Academy. Available at: <https://trmacademy.com/trmlms/mod/page/view.php?id=140> (Accessed: 25 May 2024).

UK Trauma Council (2021) *Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) Research: Implications for practitioners - UK Trauma Council*, UK Trauma Council. Available at: https://uktraumacouncil.org/research_practice/aces-research (Accessed: 25 May 2024).

UK Trauma Council (2024a) *Childhood Trauma and PTSD*, UK Trauma Council. Available at: <https://uktraumacouncil.org/resources/trauma-and-ptsd-working-with-children-and-young-people> (Accessed: 18 May 2024).

UK Trauma Council (2024b) *Childhood Trauma and PTSD*, UK Trauma Council. Available at: <https://uktraumacouncil.org/resources/trauma-and-ptsd-working-with-children-and-young-people> (Accessed: 25 May 2024).

Vinnerljung, B. and Sallnas, M. (2008) 'Into Adulthood: A Follow-up Study of 718 Young People Who Were Placed in Out-of-Home Care During Their Teens', *Child & Family Social Work*, 13(2), pp. 144–155.

Ward, H. *et al.* (2010) *Infants Suffering, or Likely to Suffer, Significant Harm: A Prospective Longitudinal Study*. London.

Ward, H., Dearden, C. and Munro, E. (2006) *Babies and Young Children in Care: Life Pathways, Decision-Making and Practice*. London: Jessica Kingsley.

Whittaker, A. (2012) *Research Skills for Social Work*. Los Angeles: SAGE.

Winnicott, D.W. (2021) *The Child, the Family, and the Outside World*. London: Penguin Books (Penguin modern classics).

Young Minds (2024) *Understanding Trauma and Adversity*, Young Minds. Available at: <https://www.youngminds.org.uk/professional/resources/understanding-trauma-and-adversity/> (Accessed: 20 May 2024).

Appendix A – Mind Map



Appendix B – Example of Literature Review Spreadsheet

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M
1	Title	Author	Year	Research Design/method	Country	Sample size	Complete Citation	Codes	Theme 1	Theme 2	Theme 3	Theme 4	Theme 5
2	Adoption in the service of child protection: An international interdisciplinary perspective	Palacios, Jesús, Adroher, Salomé, Brodzinsky, David M, Grotevant, Harold D, Johnson, Dana E, Juffer, Femmie, Martinez-Mora, Laura, Muhamedrahimov, Rifkat J, Selwyn, Julie, Simmonds, John, Tarren-Sweeney, Michael	2019	Article	International perspective	no number	https://web.p.ebscohost.com/ehost/pdfviewer/pdfviewer?vid=1&sid=b5542919-fd19-4728-9a32-6c2b26dd758b%40redis	adoption, permanence, child protection, interventions, ethics, law	permanence and stability important for children	ACES = negative effects of staying in at risk biological home, early adversities	interventions	placement moves and breakdowns = losses	post-adoption outcomes/trajectories - positives
3	A Marriage Made in Hell: Early Intervention Meets Child Protection	Featherstone, Brid; Morris, Kate; White, Sue	2014	Review	UK perspective	no number	https://research.ebsco.com/c/fd4oxv/search/details/775dfmcybz7db=ukh	intervention, child protection, trajectories, adoption, support	positive interventions and strengths-based approach	support for families at risk of losing children	trajectories /outcomes	looking at families positives and capabilities, not their	resilience
4	Permanence and 'Permanence': Outcomes of Family Placement	Chris Beckett, Ian Pinchen, and Bridget McKeigue	2014	Main source of data was the routine recording kept by social workers in the children's electronic case files	England	59 children	https://eds.p.ebscohost.com/eds/pdfviewer/pdfviewer?vid=9&sid=4c7f3c61-d542-45a9-b9a3-57585acb24b4%40redis	adoption, fostering, stability, breakdowns, permanence	permanence and stability important for children	sense of belonging	breakdowns and losses - double jeopardy	Trajectories/outcomes	wishes and feelings of children
5	Four Perspectives on the Quality of Life of Children at Risk Kept at Home and Removed from Home in Israel,	Bilha Davidson-Arad	2010	Assessments and questionnaires	Israel	30 children	https://academic.oup.com/bisw/article/40/6/1719/1625423?login=true#no-access-message&fno-access-message	quality of life (QOL), biological families and homes, care, removal from home, interventions	outcomes for children removed	interventions	Quality of Life (QOL) children removed had better QOL than those kept in biological homes	Outcomes	
6	Adoption-Related Gains, Losses and Difficulties: The Adopted Child's Perspective	Joana Soares, Sara Ralha, Maria Barbosa-Ducharme, Jesús Palacios	2019	Mixed-methods	Portugal	102 children	https://eds.p.ebscohost.com/eds/pdfviewer/pdfviewer?vid=18&sid=73a463c2-d875-4941-9b14-211e3ed09f4a%40redis	adoption, gains, losses, communication, difficulties, adversity	gains for adopted children	losses and difficulties for adopted children	permanence, stability and sense of belonging	communication helps post adoption	Difficulties
7	Children's experiences with an intervention aimed to prevent further physical abuse	Johanna Thulin, Cecilia Kjellgren, Doris Nilsson		Semi-structured interview guide / qualitative	Sweden	20 children	https://eds.p.ebscohost.com/eds/pdfviewer/pdfviewer?vid=1&sid=69976c96-3fe3-43ed-b5e3-40a839f16d22%40redis	trauma, CBT, treatment, intervention	Trauma	Interventions	changes within the family - treatments	Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT)	
8	Intensive intervention with families experiencing multiple and complex challenges: An alternative to child removal in a bi- and multi-cultural context?	Atwool, Nicola	2021	Literature Review	NZ	no number	https://eds.p.ebscohost.com/eds/detail/detail?vid=1&sid=c9ce1728-e988-4fcc-aa5d-bf2ace126894%40redis&data=JnNpdGU9ZWRLWxpdmU%3d#AN=152970133&db=rzh	Intensive, intensive intervention, trauma, child removal, ecological, multi-agency, child protection	Trauma = ACE	Intensive intervention strategies	Ecological model informed by trauma-informed approach, brofenbrenner and maslow	Bi & Multi-cultural environment	Multi-agency working
9	Infants suffering, or likely to suffer, significant harm: a prospective longitudinal study	Harriet Ward, Rebecca brown, david Westlake, Emily Munro	2010	Mixed-methods	UK	57 children	https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/5a7a41feed9151fb3cd6933/DFE-RB053.pdf	adoption, separation, significant harm, neglect, permanence, interventions, delays	permanence	developmental and behavioural difficulties for children staying in bio homes	interventions	significant harm	breakdowns - double jeopardy
10	Review: Adoption, fostering, and the needs of looked-after and adopted children	Philip A. Fisher	2015	Lit Review	USA	no number	https://acamh.onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/epdf/10.1111/camh.12084	adoption, fostering, looked after children, trajectories, outcomes, adversity, resilience	trajectories / outcomes for adopted and looked after children	adversity	resilience in looked after and adopted children	interventions	