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# Rethinking Child Protection Strategy

Grant Reference: ES/M000990/1

ESRC Workshop

Key interim findings & impact from transformative research

Dr Lauren Devine, February 2016



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# What is the research?

- **Investigating:** how we 'do' child protection in England. It's a complex mix of law, policy and practice. We identify and have created a new term to describe a systemic problem, the '**welfare/policing dichotomy**' (Devine, 2015)
- **Analysing** : secondary data to gain a strategic overview of how policy has led to an unsustainable position.
- **Creating:** the foundation for a global model enabling a new system and new thinking.

# Key findings

- **Trend analysis:**
  - We have created **a new database of trends** in child protection & safeguarding referrals & assessments
  - Analysis shows that despite a 311% increase in referrals **the proportion of referrals where abuse is found has dropped from 24% to 7%**.
  - In its desire to detect more abuse, increased reporting has led to proportionately less detected abuse, and a corresponding drop in efficiency.
- **Public Inquiries and Serious Case Reviews:**
  - We have created **a new database of all available PI and SCR reports**, and identified gaps in available data.
  - We are analysing the key characteristics and recommendations of each report using **Nvivo10**
  - Our analysis shows these reports almost invariably **advocate increased reporting**. This is **contributing to the efficiency problem** we have identified from the trend analysis
- **Risk:**
  - We have conducted a **systematic literature review** of risk theory and practice in child protection.
  - We have identified the foundational research in risk assessment in CP. Our analysis shows **a 97% false positive rate**. We are investigating whether this may be the likely error rate in modern risk prediction systems, driving unnecessary referrals.

# Impact

- Ministerial **evidence briefing** issued (3 more briefings planned)
- Invitations to present keynote speeches at national conferences
- Key figures in child protection have read and publicly commented on our work
- Our research **quoted by BASW** and used to underpin the theme of their national conference 2016.
- Working paper published, **commented on by Chief Social Worker** for England
- 1<sup>st</sup> published article relation to the project is the **most read article** in the journal's records (Devine, 2015, JSWFL).
- **Public lectures** (held at London South Bank University and UWE)
- **Media engagement** (BBC, Guardian, social media & online)
- Formation of the **SAFER Initiative**, and **Safeguarding Solutions CIC** with **national roll-out & media launch** to coincide with our symposia
- New **multi-disciplinary collaborations** formed
- Leading to a further large funding bid to enable development of the new model of intervention. This will have **global significance for process of child protection and other systems of state welfare interventions** (e.g. care of the elderly and the disabled).