

Poster presentation

Your Shout Too! A survey of children's views on court processes and the decisions made in complex residence and contact cases

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The poster will present the methodology and progress at the mid-way stage of a research study which is relevant to the conference themes: children's involvement in family/legal decision making and methodological issues in researching children and divorce. There is a growing number of research studies involving interviews with children- usually seeking their views on the impact that divorce has had on them, but more recently also seeking their views about the ways, if any, in which their views have been sought and used in the decision-making processes. The 'Your Shout Too' research (which follows on from a similar national survey of young people in care¹) seeks to learn what the children themselves think is important, but also focuses on their views of the professional and other support provided to them and the ways in which their views were sought. Most available studies involve a small sample of children interviewed in depth. These have both the strengths and weaknesses of qualitative studies. They have provided rich data on sensitive issues but, despite attempts to find random or purposive samples, because of data protection requirements and the high refusal rates (from the parents or the children themselves) it is hard to know to what extent the views provided can be considered to be representative. Funded by the NSPCC, and with the collaboration and much practical assistance of CAFCASS England (the government body which employs the family court welfare reporters) this national study is attempting to reach a larger group of (non-identifiable) children by using a survey methodology. Explanatory leaflets for parents and children as well as the children's questionnaire have been discussed with researchers and professionals and with resident and non-resident parents, and piloted with resident parents and young people. Copies will be available of the materials which, by the time of the poster presentation, will have been sent out to over 2000 resident parents with a request to pass them to those of their children who were aged at least ten when a court report was completed on them. This is very much 'work in progress' and the researchers will welcome the opportunity of discussing methodological and ethical issues as well as themes that have emerged in the piloting and planning stages.

¹ Timms, J. and Thoburn, J. (2002) *Your Shout: A Survey of the Views of 706 Children in Care*. London: NSPCC