Emotional Intelligence and Social Work

www.uea.ac.uk/emotionsatwork

Outline

- Welcome Professor Marian Brandon, Director of CRCF
- 13:15 Emotional demands and Emotional Intelligence in social work
  Dr Laura Biggart, University of East Anglia
- 14:30 Refreshments
- 15:00 Coping strategies and Team support
  Dr Emma Ward, Laura Cook, University of East Anglia
- 16:00 Plenary - Stakeholder Panel
  Professor John Carpenter (Bristol University)
  Sam Clayton (Lincolnshire County Council)
  Dr Louise Grant (University of Bedfordshire)
  Professor Gail Kinman (University of Bedfordshire)
  Dr Janet Melville-Wiseman (Canterbury Christ Church University, Joint Universities’ Council Social Work Education Teaching and Learning Committee)
- 17:00 Close
Overview

- Three year research project
- Emotional Demands in social work
- The relative importance of emotional intelligence in predicting stress and burnout
- Does emotional skills training reduce stress and burnout?
Many thanks to…

The participants!
- 209 child and family social workers
- 58 Supervisors
- Workforce development

Thanks also to…

Social work, UEA
Dr Emma Ward  Laura Cook
Peter Jordan  Prof Gillian Schofield
Sue Bailey

Psychology
UEA, Sheffield, UCL, City, Goldsmiths
Dr Jennifer Bowler
Dr Chris Stride  Prof Clive Fletcher
Prof Philip Corr  Dr Dino Petrides
Stress at work

- Stress response
- Natural response to changes in the environment
- Adaptive
- Prepares the body for action

Stress response becomes an issue if experiences of stress are prolonged or frequent with no break (chronic)

Heart rate variability

Heart rate variability

Feeling Positive Emotions

Feeling Stressed
Individual differences in stress appraisal and coping at work

Situation/event

Perceived threat

First appraisal

Emotions inform these appraisals

Second appraisal

Perceived INABILITY to cope

No threat perceived

Perceived ABILITY to cope

Emotional Intelligence helpful for coping

No stress

Negative stress

Positive stress

Lazarus and Folkman 1984

What is Emotional Intelligence?

INTRA - personal factors
Recognising emotions in self
Managing emotions in self

INTER - personal factors
Perceiving emotions in others
Influencing emotions in others

Understanding emotions

INTRA - personal factors
Recognising emotions in self
Managing emotions in self

INTER - personal factors
Perceiving emotions in others
Influencing emotions in others

Understanding emotions
Emotional Intelligence and stress

Quality of relationships
(social & marital)
Schutte et al. 2001
Malouff, Schutte, Thorsteinsson, 2014

Work performance
(academic & occupational)
O’Boyle et al., 2011

Mental health & well-being
Martins, Ramalho & Morin, 2010

Physical health
Less visits to GP/Hosp

Mikolajczak (2015)

Emotional rewards and demands in social work

1. The emotional rewards of social work

2. Demands from service users

3. Demands from the organisation

4. Demands from external organisations and the media

5. Personal demands
Emotionally rewarding parts of the role

- Seeing the change in children and families
- Contributing to change – helping
- Receiving positive feedback
- Working with other professionals
- Sense of achievement
- Continued learning

I like to see families moving on from difficult situations and, in the nicest cases, that’s when children are able to remain at home and you see the improvements for the child or children and their parents are being able to take on new skills or new ways of being able to think about parenting um, that can be really positive and rewarding.

Demands from service users

- Witnessing and containing emotion
- Being on the receiving end of verbal and physical abuse
- Apprehensive of experiencing verbal and physical abuse

I suppose the most stressful thing is coming across the angry person, the frustrated families that then that transfers on to you ..... I find that really difficult because that barrier and that blockage, it’s really difficult to get past that and it’s very, very draining.
Demands from the organisation

• Paperwork
• Meeting deadlines
• IT systems
• Work environments

Not being able to engage with families. That is really, really difficult. Sometimes the pressure of the job, the amount of paperwork you’ve got to do, the amount of things that you’re constantly told we haven’t done yet; get weekly reminders of the visits that we haven’t done, which really means the visits we haven’t put on the system so it’s the pressure of that sort of paperwork and the bureaucracy.”

Demands from external organisations and the media

• Negative perception of profession
• Lack of understanding of the role
• Misunderstanding of thresholds

There are so many things you could do with a social work qualification where you’d probably be able to see young people. You’d probably not be hated by everyone you work with and you would probably actually be able to do the things that would make a difference.
Personal Demands

- Managing one’s own emotional reactions
- Managing boundaries between professional and personal
- ‘Emotional labour’

I think it’s just really important to make sure that you have got balance and you don’t become too sort of involved, too involved in the cases. I think it’s really important to make sure you have got some sort of time, you know, you’ve sort of got strict boundaries where the, perhaps on the weekend or the you know, you’ve something else that you’re focussing on, and make sure that you have that time for yourself.

Research questions

- If people with high Emotional Intelligence tend to suffer from less stress, can it be trained?
- How important is Emotional Intelligence in predicting stress and burnout over and above other known stressors?
- Does Emotional Intelligence training reduce stress and burnout?
Randomised Control Trial

- Random allocation of participants to groups
- Without randomisation, we could have more high stressed people in one group and low stressed people in another
- Helps control for lots of differences which could affect stress
- A design that helps establish cause and effect

**Sample**
- 209 child and family social workers
- 8 Local Authorities - England

**Participants**
- Randomly selected to be in first or second training group
- 52% n109
- 48% n100

**Timeline**
- Every 6-8 weeks
- 12 months

**Activities**
- Receive training
- Complete questionnaires
- Work as usual
- Complete questionnaires

**Follow-up**
- Complete questionnaires
- Receive training
- Complete questionnaires
### Methods - Sample

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Local authority type</th>
<th>Size (Total children’s social workforce) at 30 Sept 2014 - Headcount</th>
<th>Participant Total</th>
<th>% of participants to social workforce total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Shire</td>
<td>538</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shire</td>
<td>341</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shire</td>
<td>275</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shire</td>
<td>199</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Large unitary</td>
<td>192</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Small unitary</td>
<td>130</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Small unitary</td>
<td>94</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outer London Borough</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>1857</strong></td>
<td><strong>209</strong></td>
<td><strong>11%</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Withdrawal rates

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Intervention group</th>
<th>Control group</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Started</td>
<td>109</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>withdrew</td>
<td>18 (17%)</td>
<td>27 (27%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total sample</td>
<td>209 started</td>
<td>45 (21.5%) withdrew</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Participants by local authority

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Local Authority</th>
<th>Participants started</th>
<th>Participants withdrawn</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Shire 1</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shire 2</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Metropolitan 1</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Metropolitan 2</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shire 3</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shire 4</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>London Borough 1</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>London Borough 2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Type of child and family social work

Number of participants by area of social work

- Safeguarding: 119
- Fosterling/Adoption: 45
- LAC: 35
- Disability: 5
- CAHMS: 1
Time 1 – Baseline demographic characteristics by intervention group

**Control Group**
- Male: 11%
- Female: 89%
- Average age: 59 yrs

**Intervention Group**
- Male: 15%
- Female: 85%
- Average age: 61 yrs

No sig differences between control and intervention group at baseline

Participants’ years experience

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Years Experience</th>
<th>Control Group</th>
<th>Intervention Group</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 month - 2 years</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 - 4 years</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 - 8 years</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More than 8 years</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Percentage of participants by years experience
Participants’ Caseload

Percentage of participants by number of cases

- 1-10 cases: 19
- 11-20 cases: 58
- 21-30 cases: 18
- 31-40 cases: 4
- 40+ cases: 1.5

Percentage of participants working extra hours per week

- 1 extra day per week: 62
- 2 extra days per week: 23
- 3 extra days per week: 5
- 4+ extra days per week: 10

Only 50% take Time off in Lieu
How can someone work an extra 4 days a week?

- Completing reports

- Some tasks are 24hr:
  - Looked after children – residential work
  - Accompanying a child to a new placement out of area

Research questions

- How important is Emotional Intelligence in predicting stress and burnout over and above other known stressors?

- Does Emotional Intelligence training reduce stress and burnout?
Known stressors at work

- **Demands** (caseload, work patterns, work pace, working hours and the working environment).
- **Control** (how much say the person has in the way they do their work).
- **Support** (the encouragement, sponsorship and resources provided by the organization, line management and colleagues).
- **Relationships at work** (promoting positive working practices to avoid conflict and dealing with unacceptable behaviour).
- **Role** (understanding of role within the organization and whether the organization ensures that people do not have conflicting roles).

*Health and Safety Executive 2007*

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Common stressors

### Life
- Death in family
- Time in prison
- Debt
- Divorce
- Serious illness
- Unemployment
- Plus 46 others

### Work
- Work demands
- Working hours
- Caseload
- Lack of influence over work
- Inadequate resources/staff
- Lack of role clarity
- Role conflict
- Lack of training/development
- Lack of support
## Methods - Measures

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Predictors</th>
<th>Strain</th>
<th>Outcomes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Work context</td>
<td>Psychological</td>
<td>Burnout:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work experience</td>
<td>Physiological</td>
<td>Emotion Exhaustion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Life stressors</td>
<td></td>
<td>Depersonalisation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work stressors</td>
<td></td>
<td>Personal Accomplishment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Caseload, working hours,</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Job Demands/Control)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personality</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IQ</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emotional intelligence</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Emotional intelligence training</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

### Emotional Intelligence Training

- Two days training x 5 hours, individual and group work
- Adapted from RULER Programme (Dr Marc Brackett, Yale Centre of Emotional Intelligence)

### Day 1
- What is emotional intelligence?
- Function of emotions
- Identifying emotions – self
- Using emotions in thinking
- Understanding emotions

### Day 2
- Managing emotions – self + others
- Interpreting Emotional Intelligence Individual feedback profiles

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*Emotions Matter*
Using the mood meter

- Where are you on the mood meter?
- What caused you to feel this way?
- What word best describes your current feeling?
- How are you expressing this feeling?
Mood Meter app

http://moodmeterapp.com/

Tools to help develop EI
The Anchors

http://ei.yale.edu/ruler/
Emotional Intelligence training: attendance

**Control Group**
- DNA: 14%
- Attended: 86%

**Intervention Group**
- DNA: 9%
- Attended: 91%

Participant reactions to EI Training
What were your personal objectives for attending training?

**Gain knowledge**
- Learn more about EI
- To learn from peers and share knowledge in this area
- Take part in and learn about the research

**Gain self-awareness**
- Find out how good my EI is
- Reflect on how my EI affects my work

**Learn skills**
- Develop my own EI
- Learn new EI skills/strategies for myself and for service users
- Learn how to manage stress

Have your personal objectives been achieved?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Not at all</th>
<th>Somewhat/Partly</th>
<th>Mostly/Completely</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Percentage</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>75%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Do you think the emotion skills learned could be used in your role?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Not at all</td>
<td>0.90%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somewhat/Partly</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mostly/Completely</td>
<td>69%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Would you recommend colleagues to attend this programme?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Not at all</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somewhat/Partly</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mostly/Completely</td>
<td>78%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### What did you like **best** about the programme?

#### Reflection
- Time away from work to think
- Chance to reflect on how emotions affect me and my practice

#### Resources
- **EI Tools:** Mood meter, Meta-moment, Blueprint
- My EI Profile
- Reading
- Case studies and tasks relevant to my role

#### Learning from colleagues
- Interactive group work
- Hearing about other’s experiences. 'I'm not alone in feeling this way.'

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### What did you like **best** about the programme?

#### Course structure
- Good structure and well organised
- Easy to understand, no jargon
- Good pace

#### The trainer
- Questions encouraged by the trainer
- Approachable, organised and knowledgeable trainer
**What did you like least about the programme?**

- Majority said nothing
- Questionnaires – too long, repetitive, sometimes unclear
- Group work
  - Some groups off task
  - Some groups ‘venting’
  - Some groups too small
  - Too much time on group feedback
- Venue – temperature, tea-coffee
- Programme too short

**What did you want to see more of?**

- Case studies
- Techniques/strategies
- Time – lots of information to take in
- Reflection
- EI and development
- Emotion management
- Theory
Results

Longitudinal multilevel model

- **Outcome variables**
  - Psychological strain
  - Physiological strain
  - Burnout

- **Predictors**
  - Change over Time
  - Differences between Training group and Control group
  - **Time by group (Change in stress after the training)**

- **Controlling for**
  - Age, sex, life events, job demands, job control, IQ, Trait EI, Ability EI, Personality, social desirability

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Outcomes – Psychological Strain

**Psychological Strain**

- Unable to concentrate
- Sleep loss
- Worrying a lot,
- Difficulty making decisions
- Feeling depressed
- Unable to cope with everyday life
- Loss of confidence
- Loss of self - worth

- **High**
  - 32.00%

- **Moderate to low**
  - 68.00%
Psychological strain

- No significant interaction Time*Training Group

Outcomes – Physiological Strain

**Physiological Strain**
- Feeling faint
- Nausea
- Pain in chest
- Breathless
- Hot or cold
- Numbness
- Weakness

- Low 86%
- Medium 14%
Physiological strain

- No significant interaction: Time * Training Group

Intervention group receive training
Wait list control group receive training

Outcome - Burnout

- Emotional exhaustion – emotional resources depleted

- Depersonalisation – feel negative and cynical towards service users, tend to dehumanise service users

- Personal accomplishment – dissatisfied with personal accomplishments in work, evaluates self negatively.
Time 1 – Baseline Burnout by group

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Burnout</th>
<th>Wait list control group</th>
<th>Intervention group</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Emotional Exhaustion</td>
<td>Mean 22.70 (12)</td>
<td>Mean 21.12 (9)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Norm = 20.66</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social work norm=21.35</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

32% HIGH
39% MEDIUM
29% LOW

- No significant interaction Time*Training Group

Burnout: Emotional Exhaustion

Graph showing Emotional Exhaustion Mean over Time of response

- Intervention group receive training
- Wait list control group receive training
Type of child and family social work and Emotional Exhaustion

Mean Emotion Exhaustion

- Fostering/Adoption: 1.87
- Early intervention/CIN: 2.24
- Safeguarding: 2.74
- Looked after children: 2.77

No differences by type of social work for Psychological or Physiological strain

Are these differences due to experience? E.g. More NQSW may work in safeguarding? No
Predictors of Psychological Strain

- Work demands
- Life events
- Leader support
- Training & Development
- Trait EI
- Ability EI
- Neuroticism

Psychological Strain

Predictors of Physiological Strain

- Training & Development
- Peer support
- Years experience
- Resource difficulties
- Trait EI
- Neuroticism

Physiological Strain
Predictors of Emotional Exhaustion

- Work demands
- Leader support
- Years experience
- Trait EI
- Social desirability

Emotional Exhaustion

Why no effect of EI Training on stress?

Use of training tools

High use

Low use
Boxplot interpretation

Why no effect of EI Training on stress?

Use of training

High use

Low use

Crcf Centre for Research on Children & Families

University of East Anglia
Usefulness of training tools

Why no effect of EI training on stress?

- Self selection?
  - Sample relatively high EI
  - Sample relatively low stress

- Format of training
  - 2 day vs regular 2 hrs per week over a number of weeks
  - More regular training allows for practice and follow-up

- Train everyone in the organisation?
  - Only a few people in each organisation trained
  - If everyone trained, more encouraging climate to make behaviour changes

- Work demands so high that training may not make a difference on its own?
Implications

• Emotional Intelligence training was well received and seen to be useful for informing self-reflection and practice

• Such training is unlikely to be enough on its own to combat stress and burnout

• Behaviour change takes practice – people need opportunities to re-visit and reflect

• Consider other modes of delivery which include follow up
  • Follow up through supervision or mentor scheme?
  • Online follow up?

• When thinking about reducing stress/burnout, consider addressing workplace demands and work environment first

• Provide Time Management training

• Should we do more at the job recruitment stage to assess the capacity for emotional resilience and similar competencies?
Recommendations in your research briefing

- For policy makers
- Senior managers
- Team leaders
- Social workers

Next steps

- Full report – available from Autumn 2016
- Social work practice tool
- Supervisor data
- Future evaluation of different formats of Emotional Intelligence Training
  - Please get in touch if you are interested in taking part in future evaluations
Project website  www.uea.ac.uk/emotionsatwork

Slides will be available on the website

Contact:
Dr Laura Biggart
l.biggart@uea.ac.uk