

Article in *Seen and Heard*, Volume 31 | Issue 3 | 2021  
By Dr Vanessa Richardson and Professor Alison Brammer

## **MOTHERS OF CHILDREN REMOVED UNDER A CARE ORDER: OUTCOMES AND EXPERIENCES**

*Dr Vanessa Richardson and Professor Alison Brammer, Law Department, Keele University*

*Study funded by a British Academy Small Research Grant SG142696*

### **Abstract**

Focusing on practice within child-protection law, this paper reports on research investigating the life experiences of nine mothers, whose children have been subject to care orders under the Children Act 1989. Highlighting the intergenerational complexity of this problem, the study contains the participants' accounts of unresolved relationship difficulties with their mother, strengthening and depleting the participants' well-being, which bear on the participants' relationship with their children. The study highlights new relationship difficulties arising when children are placed within the family. In conclusion, it suggests a need to address children's experiences of harm in a more intergenerational way involving provisions to safeguard and promote the welfare of mothers. The study argues that broader subjectivity should be introduced in the deliberations about harm, leading to support for mothers in order to meet the needs of children.

### **The study**

This psycho-social study (Hollway and Jefferson, 2013; Richardson and Brammer, 2020) involved nine mothers, whose children have been subject to care orders under the Children Act 1989. The participants were aged between 19 and 25 years. They had 31 children aged between 14 years and three months, illustrating the growing intergenerational nature of this problem. Five children were living with their mother supported by a voluntary agency. Eight were adopted. Four children were in long-term foster care. Nearly half, 14 children, were placed with relatives. Within this group, four were living with fathers, six were with maternal grandmothers, one with a paternal grandmother, two with adoptive grandparents and one with a half-sibling's paternal grandparent. The participants had

---

*To read this article in full please contact [nagalro@nagalro.com](mailto:nagalro@nagalro.com)*