



Kent Academic Repository

Reeves, Jane, Green, Tracee, Marsden, Lynne and Shaw, Nikki (2017) *myCourtroom. Rosie's family go to court; the use of simulations in preparing social workers for court*. *Social Work Education*, 37 (2). pp. 234-249. ISSN 0261-5479.

Downloaded from

<https://kar.kent.ac.uk/52363/> The University of Kent's Academic Repository KAR

The version of record is available from

<https://doi.org/10.1080/02615479.2017.1391772>

This document version

Author's Accepted Manuscript

DOI for this version

Licence for this version

UNSPECIFIED

Additional information

Versions of research works

Versions of Record

If this version is the version of record, it is the same as the published version available on the publisher's web site. Cite as the published version.

Author Accepted Manuscripts

If this document is identified as the Author Accepted Manuscript it is the version after peer review but before type setting, copy editing or publisher branding. Cite as Surname, Initial. (Year) 'Title of article'. To be published in *Title of Journal*, Volume and issue numbers [peer-reviewed accepted version]. Available at: DOI or URL (Accessed: date).

Enquiries

If you have questions about this document contact ResearchSupport@kent.ac.uk. Please include the URL of the record in KAR. If you believe that your, or a third party's rights have been compromised through this document please see our [Take Down policy](https://www.kent.ac.uk/guides/kar-the-kent-academic-repository#policies) (available from <https://www.kent.ac.uk/guides/kar-the-kent-academic-repository#policies>).

Title Page

“myCourtroom: Rosie’s family go to court’; the use of simulations in preparing social workers for court.”

Professor Jane Reeves, University of Kent Centre for Child Protection: J.Reeves@kent.ac.uk

Tracee Green, University of Kent Centre for Child Protection: T.J.Green@kent.ac.uk

Lynne Marsden, Cafcass: Lynne.Marsden@CAFCASS.GSI.GOV.UK

Nikki Shaw, Kent County Council: Nicki.Shaw@bexley.gov.uk

Abstract

The role of social workers in court, how they prepare, train, write and present their reports, has been the focus of much debate. Key messages from research tell us that social workers often find court work stressful; they can lack confidence in writing reports giving evidence and being cross examined. Pre-qualification training in this area can be patchy, with many workers reporting they often learn ‘on the job.’

This article documents the journey from analysing primary and secondary research findings, via a partnership between the University of Kent Centre for Child Protection and Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), to develop a training simulation for practitioners to increase their knowledge, preparation and practice for court. The partnership turned these research findings into an interactive, immersive simulation to give practitioners the space to reflect upon and critique their experiences of court. Findings from an initial evaluation of the simulation were positive with participants highly rating its usefulness in developing court room skills and knowledge.

Key words: social workers; family court advisers; court work; child protection training; simulations.

“myCourtroom: Rosie’s family go to court; the use of simulations in preparing social workers for court.”

Introduction

The role of social workers (SWs) in court has been the focus of much debate over the years; particularly, how they prepare, train and write and present their reports (Seymour, 2006; Lewis & Erlen, 2012; Holt & Kelly, 2012). On the one hand, SWs can be seen as easy targets for criticism, with many lacking confidence for writing court reports and giving evidence. On the other hand, they are often real situational experts in complex and emotive family situations; however, often a lack of familiarity or fear in the court can prevent this expertise from being apparent. Court training does not tend to come as a part of pre-qualification courses. Instead, the onus of developing these skills are placed on continuing professional development (CPD) and sometimes from learning ‘on the job’ (Family Justice Review [FJR], 2011). The skills of court report writing are also often developed on the job and getting the ‘readability’ at the right level for all audiences – judge, parent or child – can be challenging (Ofsted, 2015).

This article links key research findings on what SWs find most difficult in terms of court work and builds on secondary research knowledge by providing results of a new survey completed by 230 professionals who are involved in court work. The results were used in the development of an immersive simulation tool to help Cafcass practitioners and local authority (LA) SWs prepare for and give evidence in court. Simulation development in child protection draws from gaming and entertainment industry approaches as well as techniques from kinaesthetic learning; both of which are used in police force, military, medical, aviation and service industries training (Graafland, Schraagen & Schijven, 2012; Nimmagadda & Murphey, 2014; Ahrens, 2015).

The Centre for Child Protection (CCP) at the University of Kent has pioneered the development of these techniques to train professionals via a suite of interactive simulations

(‘Rosie 1’ on sexual abuse; ‘Rosie 2’ on neglect and complexity) and to help children learn to protect themselves from being groomed for child sexual exploitation (CSE) and radicalisation (‘Zak’, ‘Looking out for Lottie’ and ‘Behind Closed Doors’). Finally, a pilot study evaluated this newly developed court skills simulation and gives insights on the use of this technique as a training tool.

Key messages from research

Family courts hear both private and public cases and are responsible for making decisions on the best interests of the child or children. These decisions can range from which parent a child should live with following parental separation to whether a child is considered to be “suffering or likely to suffer significant harm” (Children Act, 1989) and should be removed from their parent’s care and placed for adoption. As these are serious and life altering decisions to make, the courts will hear from interested parties to the proceedings to inform their decision. This will typically include either or both parents to the child(ren) and two professional reports; one from the LASW and one from the Cafcass practitioner. In private law it is more likely that one or the other will be involved; however, in public law, the courts will receive a report from both the Cafcass practitioner and the LASW – both of whom are party to proceedings and, therefore, not officially referred to as “experts” within the court arena. The term “expert” is reserved for those who are instructed by the courts to inform the courts on any required expertise that is unavailable from those who are party to proceedings (Brophy, 2012). Each party to proceedings will want to put evidence to the court to influence the decision in the direction of their views. Evidence is therefore presented and the courts use this in the formulation of their final decision (Davis, 2007).

There has been a great deal of critique regarding the skills and abilities of SWs in the court arena. The quality of evidence presented by LAs is not always consistently good which has

contributed to a distrust and lack of confidence in LASWs (FJR, 2011). In terms of SW reports and assessments for court, McKeigue and Beckett (2010, p.166) argue that "...high quality assessments are crucial...and evidence suggests that currently these are very variable, some being sophisticated and others very poor." This has been emphasised by Ofsted (2015) in their research into LA assessments where they found that, "In some assessments inspectors found that workers tried to 'over professionalise' their written work and consequently did not communicate their thoughts and findings well" (p. 18). Cafcass (2011) indicate that their staff are equally as challenged as LASWs to produce high quality reports as they need to develop more analytical writing skills (FJR, 2011).

The status of LASWs in court has historically not been high. "Research suggests that at present the courts are disinclined to rely on evidence provided by local authorities" (FJR, 2011, p. 103). As a result, expert witnesses are often called to provide evidence that the SW should be able to provide themselves. As a consequence, courts became over-reliant on 'expert' assessments which are thought to contribute towards delays and a poorly functioning system (FJR, 2011). There has long been the view that SWs are not perceived as experts in court and in the Ofsted Report (2012) on adoption it was stated that 'In nearly all local authorities, social workers reported that they lacked credibility and status in the court arena.' (2012, p.15). Much seems to rest on the 'skills and experience of the particular social worker' (Brophy, 2006, p.42) and many are insufficiently qualified or experienced which results in some providing "very, very poor, often very process oriented with little or no analysis" assessments. (Brophy, 2006, p.42).

More recently, however, SWs have been given a vote of confidence as courts are being advised to request expert witnesses only when 'necessary' and to recognise the level of expertise, skill and commitment offered via LASWs (FJR, 2011; Brown Craig, Crookes, Summerfield, Corbett, Lackenby & Brown, 2015). President of the Family Division, Sir

James Munby, wrote, “Social workers may not be experts for the purposes of Part 25 of the Family Procedure Rules 2010, but that does not mean that they are not experts in every other sense of the word. They are, and we must recognise them and treat them as such” (2013, p.3). However, this growing reliance on SWs within the courts needs to be paired with further training as suggested by the Family Justice Review. “We propose that social workers should be taught about relevant legal process and procedure and in particular what the court expects them to present and how to present it” (FJR, 2011, p.88). This has been identified as a gap in training and consideration of how to fill this gap for SWs who have chosen to specialise in child protection has been recommended by the Family Justice Review (2011) and highlighted as a need by SWs themselves (Brown et al., 2015).

A review of recent literature suggests that there are several key themes in relation to SWs in the court arena. These themes range from practical considerations in learning and understanding the law and legal concepts to preparing for court via report writing skills, confidence and presentation. These key issues are presented below in Table 1, alongside how these are currently addressed through training.

Table 1: Key issues from literature review results

The points from Table 1 are, arguably, all areas which need targeted focus at both pre-and post qualification levels; however, training can be costly both in time and money if it is to be done effectively. Court role play training, which gives the ‘real’ experience of a court case, can be expensive and often only involve a small number of people at any one time. Films can also be helpful, like the Research in Practice (2008) videos; however, they do not give you the full ‘immersive’ experience of having undertaken the experience yourself. Immersion and taking risks safely are advantages to using a simulated digital learning environment (Nimmagadda & Murphy, 2014).

The use of simulations in teaching and learning

The facilitation of deep learning and the practicing of complex skills for practitioners can be limited (Clare, 2007; Reeves, Drew, Shemmings & Ferguson, 2015). Pre-qualification training can offer a variety of placements and opportunities to co-work, be mentored and watch more experienced practitioners at work. However, many practitioners do come into their work with gaps in their 'micro' skills (Forrester, Kershaw, Moss & Hughes, 2007) and in their knowledge and application of skills for court. Current contemporary training in child protection tends to use a variety of methods including paper case studies (Lee, Mishna & Brennenstuhl, 2010), research, discussion and films. However, these approaches can give limited opportunities to actually practice skills, discuss feelings and to interact with the case. As Trevithick (2008) argues, knowledge needs to be accessible and relevant and have 'practice validity' and enhance 'practice wisdom' (Sheppard, 1998, p.736).

Developments at the CCP at the University of Kent have facilitated the move away from traditional training methods to a suite of contemporary serious games looking at child sexual exploration, radicalisation and working with neglect in complex families. As we know from other disciplines, simulation allows practitioners to experience and practice difficult events in a safe environment and take risks safely (Nimmagadda & Murphy, 2014). Using approaches from gaming and the entertainment industries and those used by the military, medical professions and police, compelling research evidence suggest people who use simulations become immersed and therefore better retain learning (Graafland et al., 2012; Ricciardi & DePaolis, 2014; Nimmagadda & Murphey, 2014; Ahrens, 2015). More recent research argues that 'feeling strong emotions for the characters and events during a narrative' (Correa, Stone, Stikic Johnson & Berka, 2015, p.11) can change beliefs and possibly behaviour. If these techniques are effective in other professions then the potential use and impact in child

protection is persuasive, as indicated in positive evaluations of the ‘Zak’ (Reeves & Sheriyar, 2015) and ‘Rosie 2’ (Reeves et al., 2015) simulations.

Moreover, if we consider the landscape of contemporary learners, many are now ‘digital natives’ and have ‘exceptional visual literacy skills’ and can cope with ‘multiple streams of information’ (Bellotti, et al., 2011) and for them a video, a case study and a piece of research are not enough – they want to be immersed in their training and simulations can do this.

Our objective was to take the key messages from secondary research and expand on this with our own primary research in order to inform a bespoke court training environment which mirrored the ‘real life’ situation (Minocha & Reeves, 2010) of the court experience to provide impactful training and reach a wide audience of learners.

The survey

The key messages from existing research in Table 1 were taken as the starting point for an electronically administered questionnaire. Questions explored what Cafcass managers and practitioners, LASWs and professionals undertaking a distance Learning MA in Advanced Child Protection thought of their experiences in the court arena. All respondents had experience preparing for and attending court. The survey was carried out during February 2015 and ethical approval was obtained through Cafcass, which covered all participants.

The secondary and primary research would then be combined to inform themes embedded in the design of the simulation.

The whole population sample of Cafcass managers and practitioners (n~1700; Cafcass, 2016) were invited to participate in an online survey via an email cascaded down through Assistant Directors. A total of 191 replies from Cafcass were received marking an 11% response rate which is similar to other online surveys (Galvani, Dance & Hutchinson, 2013). Within this sample, managers and enhanced practitioners were identified (n=38) and other Cafcass

practitioners were also identified (n=156). Looking beyond Cafcass, convenience sampling was used in identifying LASWs within one metropolitan borough in the UK. A request was made to the LA Director to cascade an information sheet, consent form and link to access and participate in the online survey to at least 20 social workers within the LA. Similarly, a convenience sample of 14 MA students who were experienced practitioners within the court arena were also invited to participate in the online survey. LASW and MA student replies were received via the same link (n=39).

The questions in the survey were largely informed by the findings from the literature review and the content and design of the project was overseen by an inter-professional and interdisciplinary learning group. Questions for the survey were adjusted and added to by panel members based upon their professional advice relating to the proposed initial outline of learning activities to be covered by the simulation.

Findings

The following research question was presented to all participants highlighting the 9 key areas identified within our initial review of the literature. Participants were invited to agree or disagree with each key area after being presented with the following question:

Research tells us that the issues listed below are the most common problems for social workers in the Court arena. Please could you indicate if you agree or disagree with these statements?

Figure 1. Cafcass Managers and Enhanced Practitioners

Data from 35 Cafcass managers and enhanced practitioners (Figure 1) indicates broad agreement with the previously stated key messages from research. The highest areas of concern amongst managers was the lack of understanding in the application of the law

(n=30); anxiety in giving evidence in court (n=32) and in being cross examined (n=30).

Other high priority areas were citing research in court and finding court work stressful.

Figure 2. Cafcass Practitioners

Data from 156 Cafcass practitioners (Figure 2) highlighted similar patterns in areas of concern as their managers, particularly in relation to giving evidence (n=133) and being cross examined (n=129) but they felt less worried in their reporting of understanding the application of the law than the managers (n=106). The latter point may be explained because Cafcass practitioners work closely with solicitors and may feel more comfortable relying on the solicitors to keep them informed and up to date on the law.

Figure 3. Local Authority Social Workers and Child Protection Professionals on the MA

Data from 39 LASWs and MA students (Figure 3) also showed concern about citing research evidence (n=38) and giving evidence in court generally (n=38), with only one person saying they were comfortable with these points. Additionally, LASWs and child protection professionals on the MA, highlighted anxiety in relation to giving evidence and preparation for court and identified these as areas needed for development.

Reviewing, analysing and challenging evidence in court and cross examination emerged as significant training needs for both Cafcass and LASWs. Current training within Cafcass includes a core induction course which addresses this element of court work. Moreover, there is also 'live' court simulation training commissioned; however, as previously stated LA training differs from region to region.

These findings indicate gaps in practice between Cafcass staff and those employed by the LA. This may not be a surprise in terms of the self-reported confidence and skills amongst Cafcass staff who spend their time in the socio-legal context.

However, the implications for confidence levels in court between the workers provides an interesting starting point for possible joint training and thinking about pre-qualification training for all those wanting a career in child protection.

myCourtroom: Rosie's family go to court – using the immersive world to address stated training needs

myCourtroom: Rosie's family go to court is the simulation developed in response to both primary and secondary research discussed above and has incorporated these findings in its learning objects, as can be seen in Table 2. Learning objectives were expanded to also include the voice of the child and the development of support to both children and Litigants in Person (LiPs). LiPs are a self-represented party in court due to a lack of financial aid to pay for a solicitor; this is common for parents in private proceedings (Trinder et al, 2014). Elements of the simulation are available to support direct work with children whose family is involved with the courts and for LiPs who may find the process of private proceedings difficult to navigate. Consequently, there are three versions of the simulation; one for professionals; one for professionals to work directly with children and young people and one for LiPs to access via Cafcass.

Table 2. Key learning objectives for the simulation

myCourtroom: Rosie's family go to court is a series of events depicted over 9 scenes which is based on a follow-on story to the simulations 'Rosie 1' & 'Rosie 2'. Rosie 1 introduces us to the McGraw family and offers SWs the opportunity to have an immersive 3D family home visit, to make conversation choices and to assess the family and Rosie's safety. Rosie 2 is a 13-scene simulation of the same family 5 years later where neglect is the main presenting issue in what is now a complex family with twins and another baby on the way.

Professionals progress through the simulation and make a decision regarding the outcomes for the children in the family. *myCourtroom: Rosie's family go to court* follows on as the third instalment of the same case.

The simulation was written by an inter-professional learning group from CCP and Cafcass over an 18-month period. Additionally, a series of consultations for feedback was embarked upon throughout the duration of the project. The simulation includes two introductory scenes setting the background of the case; one from the Cafcass practitioner and one from the perspective of Rosie – who also offers reflections from her perspective in most scenes. There is a professional office where documents can be interrogated and read and a ‘first directions’ court hearing appointment with the Cafcass practitioner, the parents and the judge. A ‘wishes and feelings’ session between the Cafcass practitioner and Rosie is presented whereby Rosie makes a disclosure which changes the course of the proceedings from private to public law. An interactive court scene is provided which enables the ‘player’ to probe items or characters and to familiarise themselves with the court environment. Particular to public law, ‘case management hearing’ and ‘final hearing’ scenes are presented which include the LASWs, Cafcass practitioner, parents, legal representatives, judge and usher. The final scene offers reflections from the SW, Cafcass practitioner and Rosie one year after the final hearing whereby they reflect on the consequences and outcomes of the court experience for them as individuals.

The court scenes provide dialogue and interaction which directly relates to what SWs and Cafcass practitioners indicate that they worry about; giving evidence, citing research, writing reports, being cross examined and being confident experts in their field in an environment which can feel intimidating and unfamiliar.

Each scene offers the opportunity to pause the game to have screen prompted discussions, to hear the voice of the child and family, to consider the approaches of the key professionals and critique the positions they take up via their verbal evidence, assessments and reports on the children and family. The characters have been chosen based upon incorporating variety across gender, ethnicity and age ranges and some are illustrated below.

Figure 4. Characters in the simulation

Features in the game include:

- Dialogue between characters (spoken and written on-screen)
- Thought bubbles showing the characters' real worries and feelings so players can practice 'mentalising' the position of other professionals and family members
- Discussion points that prompt the user to consider pertinent issues from scenes
- 'Clickable' interactions with descriptions of objects in an interactive courtroom scene
- A narrative from Rosie reflecting on the unfolding events and how they have made her feel; encouraging child centred practice

Figure 5. Example of a thought bubble

A comprehensive Training Pack written in partnership between CCP and Cafcass is also provided; offering research, information, advice and external links. Messages from secondary and primary research indicate four main headline concerns; anxiety about giving evidence in court, being cross examined, preparing effectively and citing research. In order to tackle this effectively, the three court scenes provide a variety of opportunities for analysing and critiquing these issues. For instance, in the First Directions Hearing, we see the Cafcass practitioner managing interactions with the family and the differing parties within the Court and negotiating the tension between Rosie's parents. Reaching a level of comfort with this authority in professional practice is essential to strong staff performance and it should be

paired with an empathy for the stressful situation both sides of the family are in (Forrester et al., 2007). The simulation provides a vehicle to 'up skill' staff in these difficult areas.

This flexibility can be integrated in all of the *myCourtroom* scenes to enhance learning. For example, in the Case Management Hearing, we see the family in opposition to the professionals in respect of interim placements for the children. This primarily focusses on the LASW utilising research whilst giving evidence on adolescence neglect and assessing the likely long-term consequences of living in the current home environment. We see all the professionals considering the very different needs of each child in the family; Rosie (aged 11); Charlie and Jade ('the twins' aged 3) and Joshua (aged 9 months). The professionals have the complex task of evidencing likelihood of harm given past experiences of other children in the parent's care. This requires sophisticated assessment and communication skills. The key characters in the simulation have been scripted to do this but the learner can critique their performances and add their own revisions following prompts from the screen and via small group discussion. A study by Jackson and Back (2011) looked at the use of role-plays to teach advanced communication skills for doctors who are required to have difficult conversations with seriously ill patients. They found that facilitating reflection, encouraging risk taking in participant's communication skills and creating a 'safe learning environment' encourages deep learning. Arguably, simulations offer safer environments to take risks compared to role-plays Kneebone, et al., (2006) because it is not the learner's role-playing skills that are on display. Instead, their analytical and decision-making skills are targeted via the on-screen choices they make (dependent upon the gameplay available) and how they react to the unfolding action within the game.

A limitation of the simulation is that *myCourtroom* was written for the English legal system. Consequently, it is not immediately transferrable outside of this system or jurisdiction without alterations to the game. Moreover, whilst simulations are easy to use, there is an initial upfront cost and the more complex, sophisticated and hi-tech the requirements of the simulation – the costlier this is. Agreement on which teaching and learning features to include is often a balance between cost and technological capacity. However, a suite of simulations, like the Rosie series, can adapt and add features based upon ongoing evaluation and evolving technological platforms.

Pilot evaluation of *myCourtroom: Rosie's family go to court* and implications for training.

Pilot evaluations were carried out from April 2016 to May 2017 and consisted of feedback from 79 professionals involved in child protection work (See Table 3). These professionals were selected using a convenience sampling methodology whereby they attended training and offered an evaluation. Evaluations were based upon a pro-forma questionnaire designed by Cafcass and the University of Kent comprising of short answer questions and a 10-point Likert scale with 1 being poor and 10 being excellent. The initial evaluation form, administered in April 2016, consisted of 28 Likert scale questions and short answer questions. Following feedback about the length of the questionnaire an updated evaluation form was given to the remaining participants. This version consisted of 18 Likert scale questions in addition to a variety of short answer questions.

Table 3: Participants in evaluation of *myCourtroom: Rosie's family go to court*

The simulation was well received in this initial pilot as can be seen in Table 4. Participants rated the usefulness of this training in the context of public and private law, direct work with children involved in family courts and general teaching and learning questions. *myCourtroom*

training has been rated the highest for being beneficial to new staff; however, it is also very highly rated in supporting learning for Cafcass, LASW and other professionals in learning about public law knowledge and as a teaching and learning tool in general. The lowest ratings are with regard to writing reports for court and training packs and worksheet materials; however, qualitative data alongside these concerns were not a critique of content so much as a desire for the day's training to allocate more time for review and engagement with this content.

Table 4: Evaluation results from *myCourtroom: Rosie's family go to court*

Short answer comments also reflected positively on this training experience. Comments included 'very good' 'very relevant' and 'very real' when evaluating the overall usefulness of it as a facilitation tool to prompt discussion and to view going to court through different lenses:

"Really helpful prompting discussion around practice challenges and what it might be like from a child/family viewpoint."

In terms of general court etiquette, it was remarked that the simulation used overt but also subtle means to get key messages across.

Themes outlined in primary and secondary research were amalgamated to achieve a deeper and more focussed understanding on how to prepare for court. Pilot evaluation feedback indicated that the simulation would help in this preparation as well as an overall understanding of the 'journey' a case makes through the court system:

"It will help the LA and new starters understand the journey of a case...and to help them understand the terminology."

“It is very helpful to the practitioner to think about what factors need to be considered as part of the case planning... referring to the safeguarding letter, taking account whether new information is received at court.

“Very good at highlighting the points of discussion and focussing it back to the importance of pre-planning.”

As previously stated, giving evidence and being cross examined were viewed with nervousness; even by more experienced practitioners. Indeed, the literature indicates a lack of opportunities for SWs to undertake robust training to enable them to practice and re-practice essential court skills. Throughout *myCourtroom*, interactions between the SW and Cafcass practitioner were seen as a useful prompt in stimulating pertinent discussions on court work; particularly, how to manage disagreement between professionals. The simulation has been written to include a range of good practice examples; however, there are deliberate points where narrative has been included to provoke discussion and debate on good practice skills. The SW and Cafcass practitioner have very different perspectives on the family; thus encouraging ‘players’ to analyse, assess and re-assess the children’s needs and the professional’s skills in getting their differing views across in the court room. Evidence from this initial evaluation suggests that the simulation is an excellent facilitation tool to promote discussion and to consider how to give evidence:

“This will promote a lot of discussion and debate amongst practitioners.”

“I think it will stimulate a lot of discussion including some of the dilemmas, how you should evidence what you are saying, what happens when you are giving evidence and how you should prepare yourself.”

“We are encouraged to use evidence based research, however, this needs to be appropriate. I found it (the simulation) quite reassuring. I get incredibly nervous giving evidence; at times you feel like you are in a boxing ring.”

Conclusions

Research clearly tells us that there are significant elements of court work that some LASWs and Cafcass practitioners and managers find difficult; in particular, low confidence levels when giving evidence, drawing on research in court and being cross-examined. As such, reliable, affordable and accessible training for SWs in court work skills are required and have been requested by the Family Justice Review (2011) and SWs themselves (Brown et al, 2015). Immersion in your own case can often mean that professionals are too ‘attached’ and not objective to reflective learning and watching others may not give exposure to models of best practice. Having mock-trials and role plays with actors or facilitating students to do this themselves can be useful but evidence suggests they can be time consuming. Elements of best practice from role plays can be incorporated into simulations but also into the learning activities surrounding them.

It is clear simulations offer experiential learning, allow practitioners to explore different perspectives and facilitate an immersive training experience. Findings from this initial small-scale evaluation with professionals is encouraging; however, this is only an initial analysis. Further research is planned on the inter-professional effectiveness of the training as well as the longer-term impact on the retention of knowledge and skills.

myCourtroom: Rosie’s family go to court was built based upon research and tailored directly to perceived gaps in training or practice. It was built upon pedagogic knowledge gained from developing a suit of other training simulations by CCP. Being able to take the courtroom into the classroom (pre-qualification training) and the workplace (inter-professional CPD) enables

recently qualified and more experienced practitioners to reflect, critique and share good and bad practice – even down to regional variations and how the Judge or magistrates direct proceedings. *myCourtroom: Rosie's family go to court* was written as the third in a series of simulations about the same family; thus, enabling SWs and Cafcass practitioners to see the history of the case, assess and re-assess the capacity for change, consider parenting within the family and see how the decisions in court materialised. In the court arena, it is often difficult to remember that the child or, in this case children, are at the heart of the case and *myCourtroom: Rosie's family go to court* offers professionals the opportunity to hear Rosie's voice throughout as well as the perspectives, feelings and opinions of a variety of professionals involved within the family.

References

- Ahrens, D. (2015). Serious games – A new perspective on work based learning. *Social and Behavioural Sciences*, 204, 277-281.
- Bellotti, F., Berta, R., De Gloria, A., Panizza, G., Pellegrino, M., & Primavera, L. (2011). Designing serious games for cultural heritage purposes. In S. de Freitas & P. Maharg (Eds.), *Digital Games and Learning*. London: Routledge.
- Brammer, A., Boylan, J. & Dowding, S. (2013). *Curriculum guide for continuing professional development on pre-proceedings and court related skills in cases concerning the care and protection of children*. The College of Social Work.
- Brophy, J (2006). *Research review: Child care proceedings under the Children Act 1989*. Department for Constitutional Affairs: University of Oxford.
- Brophy, J. (2012) *The contribution of experts in care proceedings: Evaluation of independent social work reports in care proceedings*. University of Oxford.
- Brown, S., Craig, L., Crookes, R. Summerfield, A., Corbett, N. Lackenby, J. and Bown, E. (2015). *The use of experts in family law: Understanding the processes for commissioning experts and the contribution they make to the family court*. Ministry of Justice Analytical Series.
- Bury, C.L., Shdaimah, C.S., Richardson, L. & Rice, K. (2011). Child welfare in the court: Collaboration between social work and law faculty to prepare social work students for work with the court, *Journal of Public Child Welfare*, 5, 426-444.
- Cafcass (2011). *Cafcass response to the family justice interim report: Towards a Family Justice Service*.
- Cafcass (2016). *Cafcass at a glance*. [webpage]. Retrieved from <https://www.cafcass.gov.uk/contact-us/press-office/cafcass-fact-sheet.aspx>
- Children Act (1989). London: HMSO
- Clare, B. (2007). Promoting deep learning: A teaching, learning and assessment endeavour. *Social Work Education*, 26(5), 433-446.
- Correa, K.A., Stone, B.T., Stikic, M., Johnson, R.R. and Burka, C. (2015). Characterizing donation behaviour from psychophysiological indices of narrative experience. *Frontiers in Neuroscience*, 9, 301.
- Davis, L. (2007). *See you in court: A social worker's guide to presenting evidence in care proceedings*. London, Jessica Kingsley Publishers.
- Dyke, C. (2016). *Writing analytical assessments in social work*. Northwich; Critical Publishing.

Eccles, C. & Erlen, N., (2008). *Evidence matters: Social work expertise in the family court: A handbook*. Research in Practice.

Family Justice Review (2011). *Family justice review: Final report*. Ministry of Justice, the Department of Education and the Welsh Government.

Forrester, D., Kershaw, S., Moss, H. and Hughes, L. (2007). Communication skills in child protection: How do social workers talk to parents? *Child and Family Social Work*, 38, 1302-1319.

Galvani, S., Dance, C. and Hutchinson, A. (2013). Substance use training experience and needs: Findings from a national survey of social care professions in England. *Social Work Education*, 32(7), 888-905.

Graafland, M., Schraagen, J.M. and Schijven, M.P. (2012). Systematic Review of Serious Games for Medical Education and Surgical Skills Training. *British Journal of Surgery Society*. 99(10), 1322-1330.

Holt, K. & Kelly, N. (2012). Rhetoric and reality surrounding care proceeding: Family justice under strain, *Journal of Social Welfare and Family Law*, 34(2), 155-166.

Jackson, V.A. & Back, A.L. (2011). Teaching communication skills using role play: An experienced based guide for educators. *Journal of Palliative Medicine*. 14(6), 775-780.

Kneebone, R, Nestel, D, Wetzel, C, Black, S, Jacklin, R, Aggarwal, R, Darzi, A. 2006. The human face of simulation: Patient-focused simulation training. *Academic Medicine* 81: 919–924.

Lee, E., Mishna, F., Brennenstuhl, S. (2010) “How to critically evaluate case studies in social work. *Research on Social Work Practice*, 20(6), 682-689.

Lewis, J and Erlen, N. (2012) *Evidence matters in family justice: Legal briefing*. Research in Practice.

McKeigue, B & Beckett, C. (2010) Squeezing the toothpaste tube; will tackling court delay result in pre-court delay in its place? *British Journal of Social Work*, 40, 154-169.

Meolwyn-Williams, A. (2012). *Evidence matters in family justice: Legal briefing*. Research in Practice.

Minocha S & Reeves A. J. (2010). Interaction design and usability of learning spaces in 3D multiuser virtual worlds. In Katre D, Orngreen R, Yammiyavar P, Clemmensen T (eds)., *Human Work Interaction Design: Usability in Social, Cultural and Organizational Contexts* (pp. 157-167). New York; Springer.

Munby, J. (2013). The process of reform: Expert evidence. *View from the President's Chambers* (3).

Nimmagadda, J. and Murphy, J. (2014). Using simulations to enhance interprofessional competencies for social work and nursing students. *Social Work Education: The International Journal*, 33(4), 539-548.

Ofsted (2012) *Right on time; exploring delays in adoption*.

Ofsted (2015). *The quality of assessment for children in need of help*.

Reeves, J., Drew, I., Shemmings, D., Ferguson, H. (2015). Rosie 2' A child protection simulation; perspectives on neglect and the 'unconscious at work'. *Child Abuse Review*, 24, 346-364.

Reeves, J. & Sheriyar, A (2015). Addressing radicalisation into the classroom: A new approach to teacher and pupil learning. *Journal of Education and Training* 2(2), 20-39.

Research in Practice (2008, April 22). Evidence Matters. [Video file]. *YouTube*. Retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-m-rnhULToQ&index=4&list=PL24209F0B5689D40A>

Ricciardi, F. & De Paolis, L.T. (2014). A comprehensive review of serious games in health profession. *International Journal of Computer Games Technology*. Article ID 787968, 1-11.

Seymour, C. (2006). A model to support the development of courtroom skills, *The Journal of Practice Teaching in Health and Social Work*, 7(3), 70-81.

Sheppard M. (1998). Practice validity, reflexivity and knowledge for social work. *British Journal of Social Work*, 28(5), 763-781

Trinder, L., Hunter, R., Hitchings, E., Miles, J., Moorhead, R., Smith, L., Sefton, M., Hinchly, V., Bader, K. and Pearce, J. (2014). *Litigants in person in private family law cases*. Ministry of Justice Analytical Series.

Trevithick P. 2008. Revisiting the knowledge base of social work: A framework for practice. *British Journal of Social Work*, 38(6), 1212-1237.