



# Newsletter

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## What is BeST?

BeST<sup>1</sup> is a project aiming to find out what is the best service for young children coming into foster care. We are comparing an infant mental health service (the New Orleans Intervention Model (NIM)) with Social Work Services -as-usual.

In both Glasgow and London, various health and social work services are currently offered for children who enter foster care. The BeST<sup>1</sup> Services Trial team is trying to find out which service works best for children's mental health development as well as for their placement stability. We are inviting all families to take part if they have a child

aged between 0 and 5 years entering an episode of foster care in Glasgow or London.

We are doing detailed research assessments on all the children



participating in the study as they come into foster care, 15 months and 2.5 years later. The main outcome we plan to look at is the child's mental health

2.5 years after entry to care using a questionnaire called the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ), which has been used in a lot of studies, including the most recent surveys of child mental health across England. We are also measuring how long it takes for children to be placed permanently back at home or in adoptive placements, as well as the child's quality of life and parent/carer-child relationship functioning.

We hope all of this information will allow us to work out whether NIM or Social Work services-as-usual is the most cost-effective way of helping children in foster care.

## Progress so far...

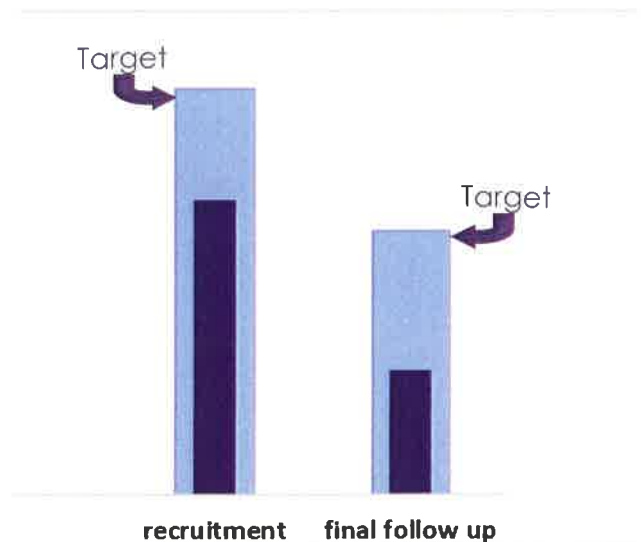
We now have 291 families involved in the project – that's **nearly 350 children!**

BeST<sup>1</sup> has been running since 2012 in Glasgow and is now operating in Renfrewshire.

In London, we are very excited to have 5 boroughs taking part with more to join soon: Croydon, Tower Hamlets, Bromley Sutton and Barking & Dagenham are all involved in the project.

Many of our BeST<sup>1</sup> children have now completed their involvement with the study, while some are just at the beginning..

Overall, we have achieved around 75% of our recruitment target and almost half of the final follow up data has already been collected.



## The BeST? Trial

Get in touch to find out more

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## BeST? Profile

BeST? Involves some really inspiring people who work away behind the scenes in groups that advise the study. One such group is the Data Monitoring and Ethics Committee (DMEC), which makes sure everything we do is of a good ethical standard and the information we gather is good quality.

One of our DMEC members, Consultant Psychiatrist Dr Shubulade Smith, has had two fantastic honours this year—a **CBE** and **Psychiatrist of the Year**. Well done Lade, and a huge thanks to you, and all of the people supporting this important research.



## Groundbreaking research: BeST? is first RCT in the Family Division

BeST? is operating across the two very different legal systems of Scotland and England. We hope our findings will highlight the importance of good infant mental health approach and will reveal how these different legal systems support these new ways of working.

In London, we are fortunate to have the very active involvement of Judge Carol Atkinson, Designated Family Judge for East London who is supporting the implementation of the trial in the East London Family Court jurisdiction.

We are also extremely privileged that BeST?, the first randomised controlled trial in family proceedings, has received the endorsement of Sir Andrew McFarlane, President of the Family Division of the High Court.

## What's next? Hearts and Minds

Work on the Best Services Trial is ongoing and the results will not be known for some time. However, we are already learning a lot about the mental health and wellbeing of very young children entering care.

This work has revealed that human beings are amazingly good at adapting to stress: while some children who have had a difficult start in life go on to have problems, many do not. We are now going on to explore why so many children are resilient.

We are contacting the parents and carers of children aged 7-10 who were involved in BeST? to invite them to take part in the next phase of our research. We already have a group of children who have agreed to come along and see us again and we'll be meeting with them in the new year. We'll be in touch with other children as they get to the right age range.

If you are caring for a child who has been in the BeST? and would prefer **not** to be contacted please call 0141 201 9239 to let us know.

