

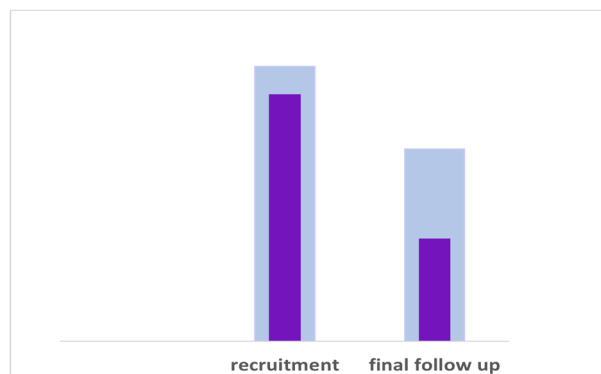


Latest update and last chance to refer families

We are making excellent progress with the biggest research project of its kind in social services and childcare proceedings in the UK. We now have 356 families (including 457 children) involved in the project and only need 40 more families to hit our target.

BeST[?] has been running since 2012 in Glasgow and October 2017 in London. We will stop recruiting new families into the study after May 2021 - that means you still have time to refer families into the study.

Many of our BeST[?] children have now completed their involvement with the study, while some are just at the beginning. Overall, we have achieved 90% of our recruitment target and more than half of the final follow up data has already been collected.



What is BeST[?]

BeST[?] aims to find out which is the best parenting capacity assessment service for young children coming into care. We are comparing an infant mental health service (NSPCC's Glasgow/London Infant and Family Team—GIFT/LIFT) with the approach normally used in the participating local authorities - known as Social Work Services-as-usual.

We want to know which service works best for children's mental health and 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 care in Glasgow, Renfrewshire, and the London Boroughs of Croydon, Tower Hamlets, Bromley, Sutton and Barking & Dagenham.

We are doing detailed research assessments on all the children participating in the study as they come into care, 15 months and 2.5 years later. The main measure we 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 is widely used in research. We are also measuring how long it takes for children to be placed permanently back at home or in placements away from their parents, as well as the child's quality of life, the costs of parenting capacity assessments and other services used and parent/carer-child relationship functioning.

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



Key points to remember about BeST² and LIFT/GIFT

1. **BeST²** is the study. It is a **randomised controlled trial** - this means when we recruit a new family, they will be randomised to a service for a parenting capacity assessment.
2. **GIFT/ LIFT** - is the infant mental health-based parenting capacity assessment that 50% of BeST study families will be **randomised** to.
3. The other 50% will be randomised to **Services-As-Usual** -that is, the local authority's usual way of conducting a parenting capacity assessment, whatever that may be.
4. Regardless of which service a family is randomised to, or whether or not they complete their assessment, **we want to follow up every child consented at our 3 research time points** - this is how we will be able to compare whether GIFT/LIFT is better than Services-as-usual.

BeST? videos

Watch our short video to [find out more about the study](#) We also have a longer film aimed at **social workers, foster carers, birth parents** or anyone else who wants to know more about the study:

http://media.gla.ac.uk/web/researchinstitutes/IHW/A_New_Opportunity_BeST_Services_Trial_May_2019.mp4

And finally, a film aimed at **legal professionals**:

http://media.gla.ac.uk/web/researchinstitutes/IHW/Gold_Standard_BeST_Services_Trial_May_2019.mp4

Please share these with families or other parties involved with them to help them understand what we are trying to do.

Adapting to social distancing

It goes without saying that we have all had to make huge changes to how we live and work in these unprecedented times. We have been impressed by how well the services we work with at BeST? have been able to adapt to deliver their essential services using a mixture of remote methods and face-to-face work where necessary.



Our colleagues at NSPCC's LIFT and GIFT teams have worked hard to make sure that they are delivering an infant mental health parenting capacity assessment that aligns with the original programme requirements and meets the needs of social work and judicial decision-making structures.

Meet our London team

We have recently welcomed 3 new members to the BeST² team in London, joining [Udita Iyengar](#), our project manager and [Dennis Ougrin](#), the principal investigator at King's College London. Anni Molloy and Lorraine Roach have joined as recruitment coordinators, and Juliana Lovato is our research administrator.

[Lorraine](#) and [Anni](#) both have extensive experience as Children and Families social workers. Anni has been conducting assessments as an Independent Social Worker while Lorraine has worked with CAFCASS and more recently with the Pause Project which aims to support birth mothers who have had multiple children removed from their care. [Juliana](#) has worked in similar research administration roles and will be a great support to our work.

Juliana, Anni and Lorraine will be in regular touch with you over the coming months to identify and contact families who may wish to be part of the BeST² project and to track the placement of children who are already involved.



We follow up all children in the study until the 2.5 year point - and you can help!

You can help the study in 2 main ways:

1. getting in contact with families who are eligible **to be involved - that's** any family with a child under 60 months coming into care. We would like to talk to these families to let them know they can take part.
2. tracking children as they move placement at our study follow up 15 months and 2.5 years after they come into care. We will be in contact when we are planning follow up research visits to find out where the child is currently living. Where children have been moved to adoptive placements or new foster care placements, we need to be able to get in touch with the new parent. We **don't** think it is right to contact new carers out of the blue so when a child moves placement, we really appreciate when the social workers involved can let the new carer know that the child is part of a study, and the study team would like to make contact.

Get in touch

If you would like to know more about the study or have a family you would like to discuss, you can always get in touch with our team.

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<https://www.kcl.ac.uk/research/the-best-services-trial>

The BeST? Trial



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