

Views and experiences of children and social workers about communication in social work exchanges: a mixed methods systematic review



Background

Communication is critical to effective social work. Successful communication supports relationship based practices, and higher quality assessments of children's needs and safety.

Aim

The aim of this systematic review is to synthesise the existing evidence relating to children and social workers' experiences of communication.

Research Question

What are the views and experiences of children and social workers regarding communication during social work interventions?

Methods

A mixed methods systematic review (MMSR) was used to allow inclusion of qualitative and quantitative data, using guidance from the Joanna Briggs Institute (JBI). Results were thematically analysed.

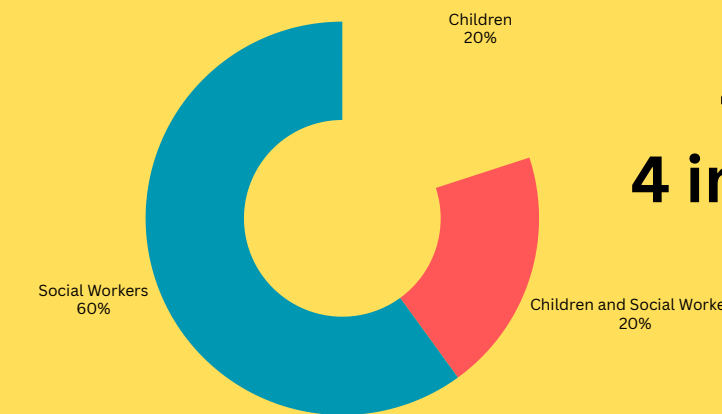
Results



Included studies:
20 out of 2802 studies were identified and included as meeting the eligibility criteria



Location of studies:
7 in the UK, 7 in England,
3 in Norway, 2 in Ireland
1 in Finland



Participants:
4 included only children
4 included children and social workers
12 included only social workers

Thematic Findings

Children

Listening is important to how effective the children perceive the communication to be. However children sometimes view not being listened to when their wishes are unable to be acted upon.

Children find repeated discussions, questions and activities difficult. They do not want to have to repeat themselves, particularly when workers change.

Some children expressed that their social workers only talked to them and did not use any other non-verbal methods such as play or activities.

Children find communication more effective when they have a trusting relationship with their social worker.

Social Workers

Social workers recognise the benefit of non-verbal communication, however this does not always happen in practice.

Social workers find communication skills inhibited by organisational requirements, such as timescales and high case loads.

Hearing and speaking with children who have experienced trauma affects worker's ability and willingness to immerse themselves in communications.

Social workers report a lack of specialized training and support in communicating with children, from both social work educators and employers.

What Next?

1

A qualitative exploration of younger children's views of communication with their social worker

2

A mixed methods exploration of the experience and confidence of social workers when communicating with younger children