

“Post adoption social work with families with children with a confirmed or suspected diagnosis of Fetal alcohol spectrum disorder: Exploring the experiences of adoptive parents, children, and social workers.”

Rebecca Govan – Assistant Lecturer and Doctoral Researcher



Aims of project: To identify and analyse the views, perceptions and experiences of children and families and to explore the current policy context related to FASD and post adoption social work practice in England

Background literature and context

- Fetal alcohol spectrum disorder (FASD) is considered a spectrum of disorders (Elliot, 2023).
- There is a high prevalence of children with FASD in the care experienced population (Gregory et al 2015) which means that post adoption social work is very likely to occur with families with a child with FASD.
- There is a lack of policy, procedure and training in FASD for social workers in England (Gilbert et al, 2021).
- There is also a paucity of research on post adoption social work support specifically targeted at families of children with a confirmed or suspected diagnosis of FASD (Hall et al, 2022).



Intended outcomes from the project

- Hearing, amplifying and sharing the stories of families and children.
- Improvements in social work practice through knowledge exchange.

What is the role of the social worker in this area currently?

Preventative conversations

- With women at risk of alcohol exposed pregnancies.

Social workers are “uniquely qualified to identify pregnant women at risk of alcohol exposed pregnancies” (Kotrla and Martin, 2009)

Assessment and recording:



What could FASD informed social work practice look like?

Advocacy in diagnosis

- Hanlon-Dearman (2021) describes the importance of diagnosis: “Children, who will ultimately be responsible for their own care and treatment decisions, will need to become aware of their diagnosis and understand their profile of strengths and challenges.”
- Early diagnosis is the precursor to early intervention.

Supporting identity and diagnosis

“Children who will ultimately be responsible for their own care and treatment decisions will need to become aware of their diagnosis and understand their profile of strengths and challenges.” (Hanlon-Dearman, 2021: 93)

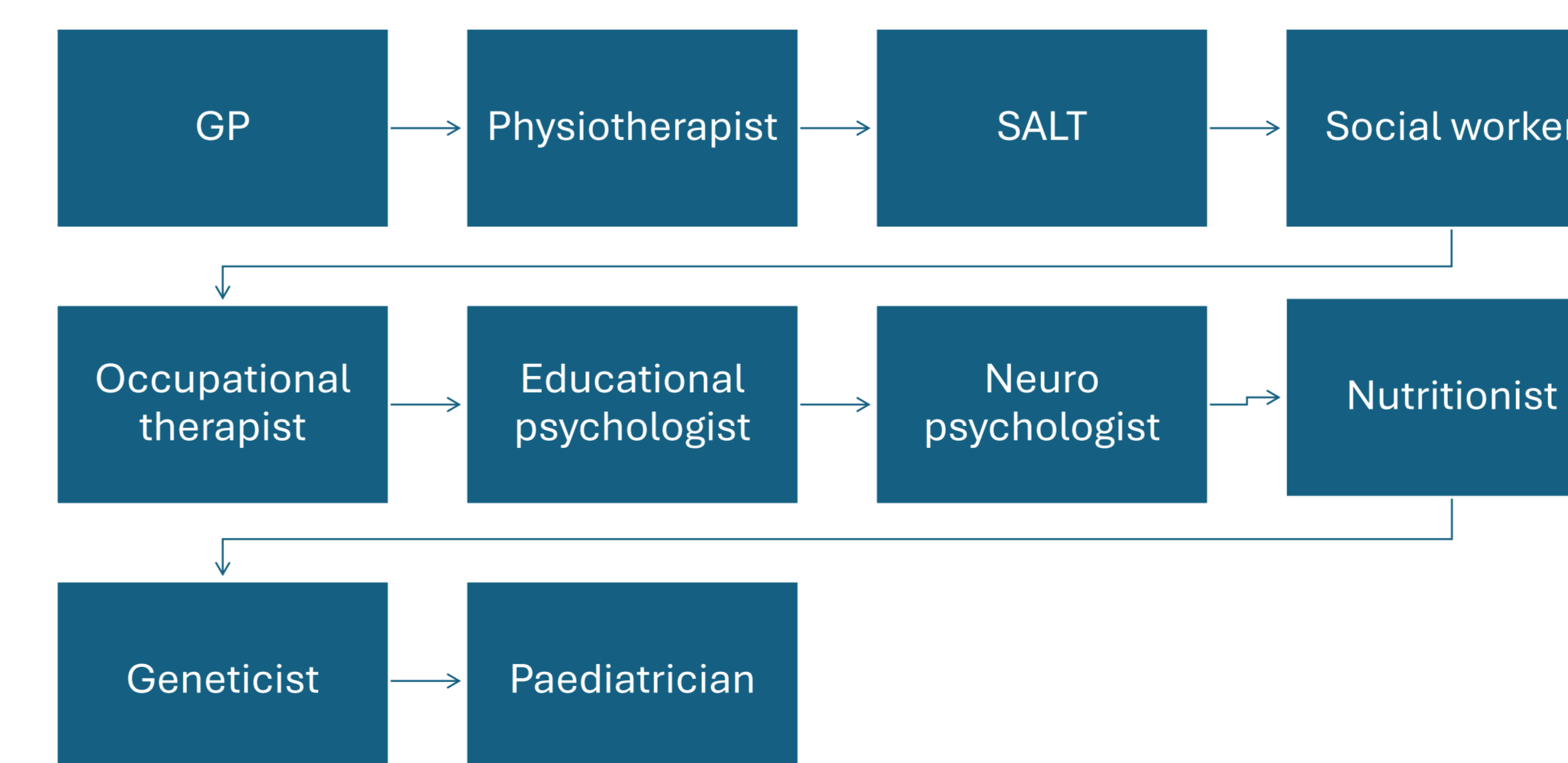


Offering parents advice and support

• Mukherjee et al (2013) explore what it takes to parent or care well for a child with FASD and conclude the following is required:

- Respite care
- Multi-disciplinary team support
- A change in societal attitudes towards FASD
- Development of functional management skills for the child
- Connection with biological family
- Training
- Discussions about the future

MDT working



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Contact: Rebecca.govan2@bcu.ac.uk

FASD specific education and training

Social work education – Joint training for professionals and care givers.

FASD training routinely considered as part of CDP required by Social Work England.

“Given the high prevalence of FASD, comprehensive multiagency training is required, targeting health professionals, social services, child protection agencies, criminal justice officials and teachers”

(Scholin et al., 2021)



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Research Questions

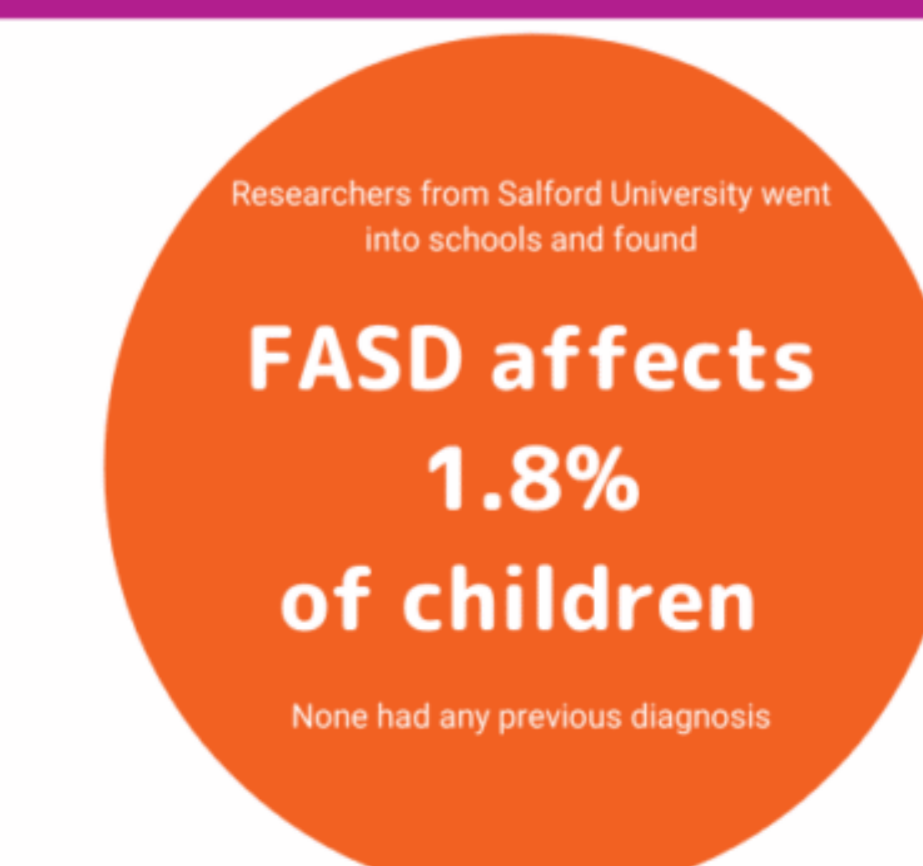
- ✓ What training is provided by local authorities to social workers in the area of FASD?
- ✓ What are the experiences of social workers who are supporting families with a child with a suspected or confirmed diagnosis of FASD post adoption?
- ✓ What are the experiences of post adoption social work, for families with children with a suspected or confirmed diagnosis of FASD?
- ✓ What are the experiences of post adoption social work for children with a confirmed or suspected diagnosis of FASD?

Research Design

1. A request to all the local authority directors of children's social care in England pertaining to the training they provide in FASD to social workers involved in post adoption support.
2. A questionnaire for social workers in this field
3. Focus groups with adoptive parents of children with diagnosis or suspected FASD.
4. Play based interviews with children with a diagnosis of, or suspected, FASD.

Intended participants

- Post adoption Social Workers
- Adoptive Parents of Children with FASD
- Children with FASD



Almost twice as many as autism

