

# Open Research Online

---

The Open University's repository of research publications and other research outputs

## Whose risk? The mobile phone, risk and the looked after child

### Conference or Workshop Item

How to cite:

Simpson, Jenny (2014). Whose risk? The mobile phone, risk and the looked after child. In: Safeguarding Vulnerable Children and Adults: Risk and Vulnerability. International Professional Symposium., 19-20 May 2014, High Wycombe, UK.

For guidance on citations see [FAQs](#).

© [not recorded]

Version: Version of Record

Link(s) to article on publisher's website:

<http://bucks.ac.uk/events-conferences/conferences/safeguarding-conference-bucks-2014>

---

Copyright and Moral Rights for the articles on this site are retained by the individual authors and/or other copyright owners. For more information on Open Research Online's data [policy](#) on reuse of materials please consult the policies page.

---

[oro.open.ac.uk](http://oro.open.ac.uk)



The Open University

# Whose risk? The mobile phone, risk and the Looked After Child

Jenny Simpson

Staff Tutor, Social Work

# Context

- Interviews with social work practitioners working for a Independent Fostering agency about Looked After Children and their use of mobile phones and social media
- The interviews revealed that the social work practitioners were able to easily identify risks but not the benefits of associated with mobile phones and their use by Looked After Children



## Context

- The interview extract is concerned with a young teenage girl who absconded from her placement for seemingly no apparent reason.



# Benefits and risks associated with the mobile phone

- communication via mobile phones fulfils both emotional and functional needs (Bond, 2010);
- communication via mobile phones enables ongoing connectedness to social networks of friends, family and acquaintances (Jamieson, 2013)
- the mobile phone supports multifaceted relationships that sees a greater disconnect between members of an individual's social network (Bond, 2010)



# Benefits and risks associated with the mobile phone

- Mobile phones enable young people to control their communication with others by turning their devices off, ignoring texts or claiming that their battery died (Weisskirch, 2009)
- Texting for adolescents is equated with social ease and offers a level of privacy that is seen as equal to that of a letter (Kaseniemi and Rautiainen, 2002)
- Adolescents view their mobile phones as 'keys to safety', seeing them as useful in situations that are either threatening or harmful (Devitt and Roker, 2009)



# Benefits and risks associated with the mobile phone

- Adolescents are subject to surveillance and control via their mobile phones i.e. parents and care givers are able to access the adolescent's spatial location



# Challenge for social work practitioners

- A lack of awareness regarding the social network of the Looked After Child
- Ongoing social and emotional connectedness with birth parent(s) and relatives that cannot be easily monitored or controlled
- The nature, level and frequency of communication Looked After Children have with different members of their social network





## Possible solutions

- Ecomap (Hartman, 1995) which identifies the strength of familial relationships
- Social network map recognises the informal social network(s) that surrounds a Looked After Child, and helps identify those individuals that may be able to provide support and counteract stress, as well those who do the entire opposite
- Social work practitioners developing meaningful relationships with adolescents (Winter, 2011)
- Provide Looked After Children with the opportunities to make decision about matters that affect their lives



# Possible solutions

- Possible solutions supported by:
  - United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (Articles 3 and 12)
  - Review of child protection by Munro (2010 and 2011) which highlighted the need for the child protection system to be more child centred

# References

- Bond, E. (2010) Managing mobile relationships: Children's perceptions of the impact of the mobile phone on relationships in their everyday lives. *Childhood* Vol. 17 (4) pp.514-529
- boyd, d and Marwick, A.(2011) *Social Privacy in Networked Publics: Teens' Attitudes, Practices, and Strategies In A Decade in Internet Time: Symposium on the Dynamics of the Internet and Society*. Oxford Internet Institute.
- boyd, d. and Marwick, A. (2011) *The Drama! Teen Conflict, Gossip, and Bullying in Networked Publics*. In *A Decade in Internet Time: Symposium on the Dynamics of the Internet and Society*. Oxford Internet Institute.
- Devitt, K. and Roker, D.(2009) *The Role of Mobile Phone in Family Communication*. *Children and Society* Vol.23 pp.182-202
- Gilligan, R. (1999) *Working with Social Networks: Key Resources in Children in Risk* In *Research highlights in Social Work*. pp.70-91 Jessica Kingsley Publishers.
- Jamieson, L. (2013) *Personal Relationships, Intimacy and the Self in a Mediated and Global Digital Age* In Orton-Johnson, K. and Prior, N. *Digital Sociology: Critical Perspectives*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, pp. 13-28.
- Kasesniem, E.L. and Rautianinen, P. (2002) *Mobile culture of children and teenagers in Finland* In Katz, J.E. and Aakhus, M. *Perpetual contact. Mobile communication, private talk, public performance*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge pp170-192
- Nylander, S. and Larshammer, M. (2012) *The Phone as a Tool for Combining Online and Offline Social Activity: Teenagers' Phone Access to an Online Community*. *International Journal of Mobile Human Computer Interaction* Vol.4 (4) p.22-36.
- Weisskirch, R.S. (2009) *Parenting by Cell Phone: Parental Monitoring of Adolescents and Family Relations*. *Journal of Youth Adolescence*. Vol. 38 pp1123-1139