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Home tutoring for Children in Care – student, tutor and carers' perspectives

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**Declaration**

Submitted by Elizabeth Anna Russell to the University of Exeter as a thesis for the degree of Doctor of Educational Psychology in Education, Child and Community Psychology, May 2011

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I certify that all material in this thesis which is not my own work had been identified and that no material has previously been submitted and approved for the award of a degree by this or any other university.

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**Signature:**

**Elizabeth Anna Russell**

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## Home tutoring for Children in Care - student, tutor and carers' perspectives

### Overview

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- 1.2 Selected Literature
- 1.3 Research Aims
- 1.4 Design and Methods
- 1.5 Measures and Procedures
- 1.6 Results
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#### **Paper Two: 'My Secret Weapon', The role of a home tutor in the lives of Children in Care and their carers.**

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Certificate of Ethics  
Research Approval

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## **Overview**

This thesis is formed from two papers. The first explores the perspectives of Children in Care in Years 10 and 11 with regards to school, home tutoring and self concept. The educational predictions and attainment of Children in Care are examined. The second paper explores the contribution of a home tutor in supporting Children in Care with the objective of increasing their educational attainment.

### **Paper One: Children in Care; Educational progress and perspectives on school, home tutoring and self concept**

The introduction in paper one sets details the current political climate and describes the context of the local authority in which the home tutoring service is based. The literature describes research which examines various qualities of the group of young people known as 'Children in Care'. It is through this literature that the characteristics which make this group vulnerable can be identified.

The rationale for finding out more about the perspectives of Children in Care and what would support them to achieve their potential is that they are, as a group, underachieving when compared to their peers on many levels such as poorer educational outcomes, they are more likely to be in 'NEET' (not in education,

employment or training) and are more likely to have mental health problems (Simon and Owen, 2006).

It was found that i) none of the Children in Care in the local authority were predicted to attain above a grade B for either English, maths or science GCSE, ii) those who received home tutoring were on average more likely to be predicted higher grades than those who do not receive home tutoring, iii) those who receive home tutoring are more likely to be entered to take their GCSE exams than those who do not receive home tutoring, iv) that the Children in Care placed a high importance on doing well at school but there was a discrepancy between this rating and the one for how much they liked school and v) a considerable amount of Children in Care are not achieving their predicted GCSE grades.

The results are interpreted as support for the importance of early intervention and the importance of providing equal opportunities to all.

### **Paper Two: 'My Secret Weapon'; The role of a home tutor in the lives of Children in Care and their carers**

Paper two builds upon the findings in paper one by exploring the issues and concepts associated with Children in Care and their educational attainments in greater detail through semi-structured interviews with five home tutors, five

Children in Care and six home tutors. The Children in Care interviewed had an average of 30 tutoring sessions in the previous academic year with their home tutor

Themes were formulated from the interview transcripts using open and horizontal coding; 20 categories were identified which formed the structures of five broad themes; Personal relationships, Confidence, Resilience/Stability under adversity, Normalisation and Filling the gap. These were analysed using interpretative analyses using a grounded theory approach.

It was found that home tutoring was perceived to have made a significant impact to those involved. It has led to increased positive outcomes for the participants. Many factors which affect the outcomes of Children in Care were identified by participants. A theoretically based psychological model emerged from the data to help to develop professional and psychological understanding of the needs of Children in Care. The model is based upon the themes from the data as well as resilience theory and attachment theory. The model shows how the themes may combine to have an effect of the outcome of a Child in Care.

Improvements for the home tutoring service were identified and suggestions regarding the role of the Educational Psychologist and the practice of the Local Authority in supporting Children in Care were put forward.

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**Paper One: Children in Care; Educational progress and perspectives on school, home tutoring and self concept**

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**Abstract**

The purpose of this study was to gain the perspectives of Children in Care in Years 10 and 11 with regards to home tuition, their feelings about school and their ratings of self concept. Background information such as predicted educational attainment and number of placement moves in a given time frame were also studied in order to consider factors which are important to Children in Care and their educational progress.

In particular this paper asked the questions;

- 1) How do Children in Care receiving home tutoring differ from those not having home tutoring with regards to predicted GCSE grades?
- 2) What are the perspectives of Children in Care receiving home tuition with regards to school?
- 3) What are the perspectives of Children in Care receiving home tuition with regards to home tutoring?
- 4) What are the self-concept scores for Children in Care receiving home tuition with regards to all dimensions of self concept?
- 5) What are the Children in Care's predicted and actual GCSE scores and what is their relationship?

There were 87 participants, 33 of whom accessed the home tutoring service. The Children in Care completed the Self Description Questionnaire II (Marsh, 1992) and a questionnaire designed by the researcher to elicit participants' opinions on what was important to them with regards to school, home tuition and life in general.

It was found that i) none of the Children in Care in the local authority were i) predicted to attain above a grade B for either English, maths or science GCSE, ii) those who received home tutoring were on average more likely to be predicted higher grades than those who do not receive home tutoring, iii) those who receive home tutoring are more likely to be entered to take their GCSE exams than those who do not receive home tutoring, iv) that the Children in Care placed a high importance on doing well at school but there was a discrepancy between this rating and the one for how much they liked school and v) a considerable amount of Children in Care are not achieving their predicted GCSE grades.

The results were interpreted as support for the importance of early intervention and working to support Children in Care in order to 'close the gap' between their educational attainment and their peers educational attainment before the discrepancy between the two groups enlarges. Key conclusions to improve the home tutoring service will be discussed in paper two.

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## **Paper Two**

### **'My Secret Weapon', The role of a home tutor in the lives of Children in Care and their carers.**

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#### **Abstract**

This paper will examine what it is like to be a Child in Care and what difference (if any) home tutoring makes to the lives of those involved. The research questions for this paper are; 1) What difference does home tutoring make to those involved? 2) What affects the outcomes of Children in Care?

Five home tutors (one male and four females), six carers (one male and five females) and five Children in Care in Year 11 (two males and three females) were interviewed using semi-structured interviews. These five Children in Care had an average of 30 tutoring sessions in the previous academic year.

The replies given to the questionnaires in Paper One guided the direction of the semi-structured interviews. Issues which came up through the questionnaires were examined in more depth and explored through the interviews.

Themes were formulated from the interview transcripts via QSR International's NVivo 9 qualitative data analysis software 2010 using open and horizontal coding; 20 categories were identified which formed the structures of five broad themes; Personal relationships, Confidence, Resilience/Stability under adversity, Normalisation and Filling the gap. These were analysed using interpretative analyses using a grounded theory approach.

It was found that home tutoring was perceived to have made a significant impact to those involved. It has led to increased positive outcomes for the participants. Many factors which affect the outcomes of Children in Care were identified by participants. A new theoretically based psychological model emerged from the data to help to develop professional and psychological understanding of the needs of Children in Care. It considers the impact of a home tutor as a key adult to Children in Care and how this helps us to understand what could be offered to support Children in Care. The model is based upon the themes from the data as well as resilience theory and attachment theory. The model shows how the themes may combine to have an effect of the outcome of a Child in Care.

Improvements for the home tutoring service are identified and suggestions regarding the role of the Educational Psychologist and the practice of the Local Authority in supporting Children in Care are put forward.

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