

New study proves the success of support for parents who have children taken into care

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A scheme supporting parents who have had children taken into care has been praised by Cardiff University academics in charge of its first independent evaluation.

Dr. Louise Roberts, from the Children's Social Care Research and Development Centre (CASCADE), led the assessment of one of the first Reflect schemes, which has been run by Barnado's Cymru in Gwent since 2016.

Reflect aims to give women and their partners the assistance they need to make positive changes to their lives and to avoid becoming repeat visitors to the family court.

The results of the study showed some parents had been helped to find safe accommodation, escape unhealthy relationships or tackle substance abuse, while others who had previously been too anxious to leave the house had started socialising again, begun volunteering or developed a healthier lifestyle.

Dr. Roberts, based at the School of Social Sciences, said: "The findings provide encouraging evidence that the newly developed service is having a [positive impact](#) for highly vulnerable parents.

"The research highlighted the high level and multi-faceted needs of women and their partners and the process of building relationships and trust was often time consuming and challenging. The sensitive, respectful and non-judgmental approach of Reflect workers was important in overcoming these barriers and the ability of the [service](#) to provide practical as well as [emotional support](#) was highly valued.

"Parents appreciated having 'someone on their side' and women and their partners made both small and significant steps towards positive change."

The evaluation of one of the pilot Reflect projects comes at a time when similar services are being introduced across Wales with the help of £850,000 from Welsh Government. Parents are supported for up to two years and are given tailor-made help ranging from counselling and

confidence building to debt management.

James Saunders, Children's Services Manager with Barnardo's Cymru, said: "Reflect has offered practical and therapeutic support to parents, helping them make long-term, positive changes within their lives. For those [parents](#) that have come to the end of the Reflect programme during the evaluation period we have seen an increase in their self-confidence, resilience and belief in both themselves and a positive future."

Provided by Cardiff University

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