



Press release – Embargoed until 00.01am Wednesday 2 December

TACT (The Adolescent and Children's Trust) and the University of East Anglia (UEA), welcome new Big Lottery Fund Research Programme grant for a study of looked after children and offending

Today (2 December 2009) TACT, in partnership with the University of East Anglia (UEA), welcomed a Big Lottery Fund grant to support an 18-month research project 'Looked after children and offending: identifying risk and protective factors'.

Looked after children are twice as likely as children in the general population to be cautioned or convicted of offences. Forty per cent of children in custody and 25% of adult prisoners have been looked after. This national project will aim to understand what lies behind these high rates and use the findings to help care and youth justice agencies to reduce risks of offending and criminalisation, and to promote life-chances, resilience, prosocial behaviour and physical and emotional well-being.

The project will be led by TACT in partnership with a UEA research team led by Professor Gillian Schofield, Co-Director of the Centre for Research on the Child and Family.

Commenting on the project, TACT Chief Executive, Kevin Williams, said:

"Frequently quoted and often misleading statistics about the number of criminals who have been through the care system over simplify the extremely complex relationship between care and crime. Young people in care are among the most vulnerable in society. Despite this, there is a risk that being in care may act as an inappropriate accelerant into the criminal justice system. TACT's Big Lottery funded research partnership with the University of East Anglia will be invaluable in helping formulate effective policy on care and crime."

Professor Gillian Schofield said:

"This research will investigate one of the most troubling issues for those involved in helping young people in the care and youth justice systems, and for wider society. Children who come into care from backgrounds of adversity, abuse and neglect are already at higher risk of conduct problems and offending behaviour. We need to know why some high risk young people's pathways in their families and then in care lead to offending and criminal careers while others do not. To improve policy and practice we need to identify and minimise risk factors, but also to identify and promote protective factors in the lives of young people and in our care and youth justice systems."

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Notes to editors

Contact TACT's Executive Director of External Affairs, Gareth Crossman, on 020 8695 8120 for further information.

The Adolescent and Children's Trust (TACT) is the UK's largest charity provider of fostering and adoption services. Our core work involves providing high quality and well supported fostering or adoptive families for children and young people in the care of local authorities. Working in partnership with local authorities from our offices across England, Wales and Scotland, we are dedicated to providing creative, effective and outcome-focused services. We also campaign on behalf of children and young people in care, carers and adoptive families.

The Centre for Research on the Child and Family is based in the School of Social Work and Psychology at the University East Anglia and has an international reputation for excellence in research on the well-being of children and their families. The Centre has played a key role in influencing policy and practice in relation to vulnerable children, and in particular in improving the life-chances of children and young people in care. In the latest Research Assessment Exercise, over 50 per cent of the University of East Anglia's research activity was deemed to be world leading or internationally excellent with 87 per cent in total being of international standing.

The research grant is for £211,651. It will cover the 18 months of the project and will primarily pay for staff recruited by the UEA to carry out the research. The grant will also cover publication and other ancillary costs.

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