

Autumn 2009

Changes in adolescent well-being over 30 years

The general well-being of British adolescents has been the topic of considerable debate in recent years. Evidence has suggested that the current level of behavioural and emotional problems in teenagers is higher than in the past.

In 2004 the Foundation published findings from work it had funded on changes in the mental health and well-being of adolescents between 1974, 1986 and 1999. This showed rises for problems such as depression, anxiety and conduct disorder.

In analyses undertaken in further studies by the original researchers, Professor Maughan and colleagues at the Institute of Psychiatry and Dr Collishaw at the University of Oxford have now updated the work with a fourth wave of data, collected in 2004. The results are summarised in a new Briefing Paper from the Foundation, *Time trends in adolescent well-being: Update 2009*.



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Interestingly, the new data suggests that the changes may be levelling off, providing cause for guarded optimism. This still, however, leaves young people of today with a general level of emotional and behavioural problems that is significantly higher

than it was for the 16 year olds living through the 1970s and 1980s.

Further Briefing Papers on work funded under the Foundation's Changing Adolescence Programme will be published over the coming months. [www](http://www.nuffieldfoundation.org)

Welcome to the Nuffield Foundation Newsletter which highlights our current areas of grant making and focuses on the outcomes of the projects we fund.

Further details on all the stories marked with this icon [www](http://www.nuffieldfoundation.org) can be found on our website.

The Newsletter is published three times a year and you can obtain further copies or ask to be put on the mailing list by contacting the Foundation. If you have any comments on the Newsletter we would be delighted to hear from you.

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Dementia – the ethics of care

About 700,000 people in the UK currently have dementia and this is likely to increase to 1.7 million by 2051. A new Nuffield Council on Bioethics report sets out an ethical approach to dealing with dilemmas faced by their carers.

The report proposes better access for carers to support and advice and to other carers. There are around 20 Alzheimer Cafés in the UK currently, where people with dementia, their carers, and professionals, are able to get together.

Other challenges include changing the lack of respect often shown to dementia sufferers and providing training for professional carers to help them deal with the ethical dilemmas they come across in their work.

Dr Rhona Knight, one of the authors of the report, said, "Any one of us or a member of our family could develop dementia. We need to pull together to help them and their carers to live better, richer lives." [www](#)



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Speaking up for the witness

Street attacks in the UK rose by 11% last year, to some 850,000. Eight out of ten times, assaults by strangers go unreported or unresolved. Witness Confident is a new Nuffield-funded charity aimed at changing the walk-on-by culture contributing to these alarming statistics.

Police reported that 1,000 CCTV cameras led to just 1 crime being solved last year. The new charity describes them as 'a costly failure' and promotes community engagement as the way to solve and to deter crime. They will provide advice and guidance for witnesses and campaign for them to be recognised as valued resources within the process of law.

Working to an initial ten-year timeline, they will introduce practical initiatives at community level, with the goal of reducing street violence by 22%. [www](#)

Promising outcomes for substance misuse families

The Family Drug and Alcohol Court (FDAC) is evolving into a real potential alternative to standard care proceedings, according to a Nuffield-funded independent, midway evaluation led by Professor Judith Harwin at Brunel University.

FDAC addresses parental substance misuse, a major factor in up to 70% of care proceedings and a risk factor for continuing problems. It aims to improve outcomes for children by addressing their parents' difficulties in a constructive and practical way.

The interim report's key findings include fast access to strong support services,



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rapid response to suggested adjustments and continuity of one judge throughout proceedings. All parents involved in FDAC so far

said that they would recommend it to other parents. There will be a final report at the close of the 3-year trial. [www](#)

From the Archive – an update

In Issue 7 we featured the **1960s Foundation-funded Unit for the History of Ideas, which made a series of short films with companion books about the development of scientific thought.**

Professor Stephen Toulmin and Dr June Goodfield produced the films in the *Ancestry of Science* series, of which one, from 1964, has now become available on DVD and Blu-Ray. Talented director Don Levy had completed a PhD in Theoretical Physics at Cambridge when he made *Time Is*, highly regarded as an experimental, educational documentary. He went on to make the 1967 fiction film *Herostratus* as well as exhibiting surrealist paintings. The BFI have released *Herostratus*, which includes *Time Is* as an additional feature. [www](http://www.bfi.org.uk)



Improving literacy for deaf children



Specialist resources aimed at improving literacy amongst deaf children are now available online and proving popular with teachers.

Learning to read and write is more difficult for deaf children because letters represent sounds and they do not make the subtle discriminations between speech-sounds required

for using an alphabet. Funded by the Foundation and the National Deaf Children's Society, Professor Nunes, from the University of Oxford, developed a system based on the visual representation of morphemes – units of meaning used to form words – through a series of pictures, books and games. [www](http://www.bnf.org.uk)

Affirmative action without quotas



Research shows that Northern Ireland's innovative affirmative action programme has resulted in improvements in fair employment, both for Catholics and Protestants.

Northern Ireland's affirmative action programme uses detailed monitoring of firms' workforce composition plus agreed action plans, where necessary, to ensure that both have 'fair participation' in employment, avoiding the setting of quotas.

The legislation requires employers to carry out regular reviews of their workforce composition, and to undertake remedial action where required. The Commission responsible for enforcement of the legislation can then identify

those employers whose workforce is insufficiently representative and initiate agreements with them for improvement.

An interdisciplinary team of researchers from the University of Oxford, led by Professor Heath, carried out a Nuffield-funded study into what, if any, links there were between changes to workforce composition and fair employment policies. They found a direct association between the agreements and positive change, and apparent 'spillover' effects on employers overall, with a general move towards fair employment.

The Northern Ireland approach provides a positive example in this field for other jurisdictions looking at how to tackle issues of fair employment. [www](http://www.bnf.org.uk)

Mapping respiratory disease in Africa

The Foundation is funding a project to establish an African network of trained clinical investigators in respiratory medicine. While malaria and AIDS have been the subject of intensive research, infectious respiratory diseases are less recognised killers. Smoking and air pollution add further to the high incidence of respiratory health problems, yet to date there has been very little published data on the subject.

In partnership with the Pan African Thoracic Society, Dr Gordon at the Liverpool School of Tropical Medicine is co-ordinating research training courses that are beginning to give rise to much-needed investigations. [www](#)



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From Romania to recovery?

A new publication explores the policy and practice implications of the findings from a longitudinal study into the children adopted by UK families from Romanian institutions. It addresses key questions such as: does the removal from institutions and the adoption into well functioning families bring about recovery for these children? [www](#)

New rheumatism control

Oliver Bird Rheumatism Programme PhD student Lauren Whyte has been instrumental in discovering a new way in which cells that destroy bone can be controlled.

Lauren's research has shown that a protein called GPR55 found in bone cells can stimulate the activity of osteoclasts, bone cells that remove old bone. Based at the University of Aberdeen, the research team also found that GPR55 is activated by compounds found in the body but can also be blocked by cannabidiol – a constituent in cannabis known as CBD. [www](#)



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Nuffield Science Bursaries update

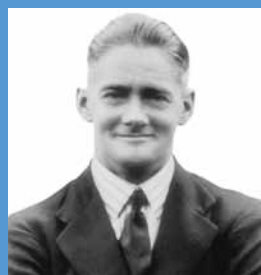
This year, 1015 students in schools and colleges were awarded science bursaries. One of last year's bursary students has won a string of prizes culminating in a week visiting the European Laboratory for Particle Physics. Courtney Williams won a prize at the Big Bang Fair in London to take part in the EU Contest for Young Scientists in Paris where she was awarded the Special CERN prize. [www](#)



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Biofuels

The Nuffield Council on Bioethics has set up a new Working Party to consider the ethical implications of future generation biofuels, including environmental sustainability, food security and the rights of farmers in developing countries. [www](#)



William Morris, Lord Nuffield
1877-1963

The Nuffield Foundation is an endowed charitable trust established in 1943 by William Morris (Lord Nuffield) the founder of Morris Motors with the aim of advancing social well being. We fund research and practical experiment and the development of capacity to undertake them, working across education, science, social science and social policy. While most of the Foundation's expenditure is on responsive grant programmes we also undertake our own initiatives.

Full information on all our current activities and on how to apply for grants can be found at www.nuffieldfoundation.org

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