

Expert witness risk/parenting assessment reports in family proceedings

Curriculum Vitae: Dr. Peter Dale
PhD. Child Protection Researcher/Academic
Counsellor/Family Therapist

Expert Witness Risk/Parenting/Family Assessments:

I have undertaken over 750 risk/parenting assessments since 1977. All assessments incorporate a research informed evidence-based analysis of risks, and a therapeutic perspective on potential for change in relation to identified individual and family problems. My last position before leaving the NSPCC in 2001 was as Senior Research Officer.

My main areas of assessment practice include:

- **Risk/parenting/family & viability assessments in public law proceedings (e.g. care proceedings)**
- **Child protection assessment following serious injuries to infants**
- **Assessment of potential for change for parents**
- **Assessments of kinship care proposals in the context of care proceedings**
- **Assessment of appropriate post-placement contact arrangements when children have been placed in substitute care (including direct post-adoption contact)**
- **Assessment of the 'reasonableness' of local authority actions (and inactions)**
- **Family assessments in private law proceedings (e.g. residence and contact disputes).**
- **Provision of 'follow-up' therapeutic interventions (and continuing assessment) in reunification and contact programmes.**

Professional qualifications and experience:

My professional qualifications and experience relevant to expert witness risk/parenting assessments are as follows:

Academic and Professional Qualifications

1971 - 1974	BA(Hons) Social Science.
1976 - 1977	Post-Graduate Diploma in Psychiatric Social Work.
1989 - 1991	Post-Graduate Diploma in Counselling.
1991 - 1996	PhD (Counselling, Psychotherapy & Child Protection).
1999 - 2000	Certificate in Management Studies.

Research/Evaluation

- PhD (1991–1996): A large qualitative study that focused on: i) the consequences of all forms of child abuse; ii) the effectiveness of counselling/psychotherapy following child abuse; and iii) the nature of true/false memories of abuse.
- 1997–2005: I led an NSPCC research team focusing on child protection assessment and case management of serious and fatal injuries to infants with discrepant parent/carer explanations (from clinical and Serious Case Review perspectives).
- 1987 & 2002–2005: I undertook two research projects into parents' perceptions of child protection services.
- I have also undertaken formal evaluations of local authority and voluntary agency child protection assessment practice.

Author

I am the author of over 40 published papers, chapters and books relating to assessment, treatment and counselling in relation to child abuse and child protection (including my own research). I have presented to conferences throughout the UK, and in Ireland, France, USA, Canada and Australia. I have acted as peer reviewer for many journals and publishing companies.

Selected publications

Books (1986–2005):

Dale, P., Green, R. & Fellows, R. (2005). *Child Protection Assessment Following Serious Injuries to Infants: Fine Judgments*. Chichester: John Wiley & Sons.

Dale, P., Green, R. & Fellows, R. (2002). What Really Happened? Child Protection Case Management of Infants with Serious Injuries and Discrepant Parental Explanations. London: NSPCC. (This book can be downloaded free, courtesy of the NSPCC, from my website: www.peterdale.co.uk)

Dale, P. (1999). Adults Abused as Children: Experiences of Counselling and Psychotherapy. London: Sage.

Dale, P., Davies, M., Morrison, T. and Waters, J. (1986) Dangerous Families: Assessment and Treatment of Child Abuse London: Tavistock/Routledge.

Peer-reviewed papers:

Dale, P. (2004). 'Like a fish in a bowl': parents' perceptions of child protection services. *Child Abuse Review*, 13, 137-157.

Dale, P., Green, R. & Fellows, R. (2002). Serious and fatal injuries with discrepant parental explanations: some assessment and case management issues. *Child Abuse Review*, 11, 296-312.

Dale, P. & Fellows, R. (1999). Independent child protection assessments: Incorporating a therapeutic focus from an integrated service context. *Child Abuse Review*, 8, 4-14.

Dale, P. & Allen, J. (1998) On memories of childhood abuse: a phenomenological study. *Child Abuse & Neglect* 22, 8, 799-812

Dale, P., Allen, J. & Measor, L. (1998). Counselling adults who were abused as children: clients' perceptions of efficacy, client-counsellor communication and dissatisfaction. *British Journal of Guidance & Counselling*, 26 (2) 141-157.

Other relevant papers and chapters:

Dale, P. (2013) *Serious injuries to infants: key risk assessment considerations*. In: Calder, M. & Hackett, S. *Assessment in Childcare: Using and Developing Frameworks for Practice*. (Second Edition) Dorset: Russell House Publishing.

Dale, P. (2013). Restrictions on natural parent contact with infants during care proceedings where forced adoption may be the outcome – some cautions about recent research and developing practice. *Families, Relationships and Societies*, 2,2,175-91.

Dale, P. (2010). Child protection risk assessment: an independent expert witness perspective. *Family Law*, June 628–635.

Dale, P. (2003). Serious injuries and discrepant parent/carer explanations: specialist assessment issues. *Family Law*, Sept. 668-673.

Dale, P. (2002). Benefits of therapy with adults who were abused as children: some issues from evaluation of counselling services. In: C. Feltham (Ed). *What's the Good of Counselling and Psychotherapy?* London: Sage.

Examining:

External examiner PhD thesis: *The Hostage Theory: An exploration of its presence and importance as a partial explanation of protection failure*. Stanley, J. Monash University, Melbourne, Australia, 1998.

External examiner PhD thesis: *Listening to children: what they tell us about abuse and professional interventions*. Mudaly, N. Monash University, Melbourne, Australia, 2002.

Selected conference presentations:

2009 South Gloucestershire ACPC conference. Presentation: Child Protection Assessment– Fine Judgements and Fair Process (24th September 2009).

2008 Republic of Ireland, Health Service Executive (HSE) Limerick Institute of technology. One-day workshop: Serious Suspicious Injuries to Infants – Child Protection Assessment Challenges (9th June 2008).

2007 Hertfordshire ACPC. Presenter: Half-day workshop: Serious Disputed Injuries to Infants – Child Protection Assessment Challenges. (9th July 2007).

2007 Newcastle, In-Trac conference. Co-presenter (with Andrew Turnell) one-day workshop: Working with Disputed Child Abuse – Constructive Approaches to Serious Cases. (2nd March 2007).

London, In-Trac conference. Co-presenter (with Andrew Turnell) One-day workshop: Working with Disputed Child Abuse – Constructive Approaches to Serious Cases. (5th March 2007).

2006 Sydney, Australia. Australians Against Child Abuse conference. One-day workshop: Understanding Child Protection Errors/ Reducing Child Protection Errors, (13th March 2006).

Melbourne, Australia. Australians Against Child Abuse conference. One-day workshop: Understanding Child Protection Errors/ Reducing Child Protection Errors, (21st March 2006).

- London. In-Trac conference. Presentation of paper: Serious Suspicious Injuries to Infants – Child Protection Assessment, Analysis and Planning. London, (24th May 2006)
- 2003 BASPCAN, York 5th National Congress. Presentation of paper: “Like a Fish in a Bowl”: Family Perceptions of the Child Protection Services. (20th& 23rd July).
- 2002 Denver, USA. X1V International Congress on Child Abuse and Neglect. Presentation of paper: Serious injuries to infants with discrepant explanations: assessment and case management issues. (8 July).
- 2002 Wiltshire Area Child Protection Committee, Presentation of paper: Serious Suspicious Injuries to Infants – Child Protection Assessment (4th December).
- 1998: Melbourne, Australia. Kids First: Protecting Children - Problems & Solutions. Melbourne Convention Centre. Plenary address: Protection or Prevention? An integrated approach to services for children and parents. (3 April).
- 1998: Melbourne, Australia. Kids First: Protecting Children - Problems & Solutions. Melbourne Convention Centre. Presentation of paper: On memories of childhood abuse: a phenomenological study. (2 April).
- 1996: Port de Bourgenay, France. NATO Advanced Study Institute, Recollections of Trauma: Scientific Research and Clinical Practice. Presentation of paper: Counselling adults who were abused as children – a qualitative study. (June).
- 1996: Dublin, Ireland. X11 International Congress on Child Abuse and Neglect. Presentation of paper: Counselling adults who were abused as children – a qualitative study (August).
- 1996: University of Birmingham. BAC Research Conference. Presentation of paper: Counselling adults who were abused as children – a qualitative study. (March).
- 1984: Montreal, Canada. IV International Congress on Child Abuse and Neglect. Presentation of paper: A model of intervention in child abusing families: a wider systems view).
- 1983: London, Institute of Family Therapy/University of London. Child Abuse in the Family Context with Professor Salvador Minuchin. Clinical presentation.

Memberships and affiliations

I am an individual member of the British Association of Social Workers. I am a past visiting lecturer at the University of Sussex (1986–2005).

Practice experience

Throughout my career I have had a direct, supervisory, consultative or audit/evaluation role in over 750 serious child abuse assessments. Since 2002, I have provided numerous risk/parenting assessment reports (commissioned singly and jointly on behalf of Guardians, local authorities and parents), and have given evidence in many contested cases in the High Courts and County Courts in England and Northern Ireland.

I have worked continuously in the field of child welfare (particularly family support and child protection) since 1976. Practice settings include child & family psychiatric clinics (family therapy); Guardian-ad-Litem; and the NSPCC (as practitioner, manager and Senior Research Officer). I established, managed and latterly provided consultancy to the NSPCC East Sussex Independent Assessment Service which operated from 1986–2000. I have been a member of two Area Child Protection Committees (one for 15 years), and have participated in many Serious/Fatal Case Reviews.

In 1987 I established and managed the NSPCC East Sussex counselling service for adults who were abused as children (which continues as a private company). I have extensive therapeutic and assessment experience of working with families where there are significant disputes about parenting (welfare, residence and contact) arrangements. I maintain a private counselling and supervisory practice. I continue to research and write for publication in the fields of risk assessment, child protection, and therapeutic interventions.

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