

Institution: University of Winchester		
Unit of Assessment: 4		
Title of case study: Helping Child Witnesses to Remember More		
Period when the underpinning research was undertaken: 14.01.2013 to 13.07.2016		
Details of staff conducting the underpinning research from the submitting unit:		
Name(s): Rachel Wilcock	Role(s) (e.g. job title): Reader in Psychology	Period(s) employed by submitting HEI: 02.02.2015 to date
Period when the claimed impact occurred: 2015 to 2020		
Is this case study continued from a case study submitted in 2014? No		
1. Summary of the impact (indicative maximum 100 words)		
<p>Child witnesses with and without autism are not always deemed reliable witnesses. This research evaluated interventions to support them to give reliable evidence. The research showed that: 1) for typically developing children Registered Intermediaries (RIs) led to greater witness reliability, and 2) autistic child witnesses can perform equivalently to typically developing child witnesses. The impact of the research is: 1) an increase in requests for RIs to support vulnerable witnesses when giving evidence and more training places for RIs in England and Wales, and 2) greater police awareness of the abilities of children with autism to be reliable witnesses.</p>		
2. Underpinning research (indicative maximum 500 words)		
<p>Crown Prosecution statistics showed that in 2008/9 48,000 children were called to court. Children can give reliable eyewitness evidence but many need additional support to maximise the amount of accurate evidence provided in court. This research evaluated interventions to support child witnesses to give a greater amount of accurate evidence. Further, autistic children often have more communication problems than typically developing children and, due to their greater vulnerability, are more likely to come into contact with the Criminal Justice System. Consequently, this research included a sample of children with autism.</p> <p>The research was funded by an ESRC grant 2013-2016 awarded to Professor Henry, Dr Wilcock and Dr Crane at London South Bank University. In February 2015, Dr Wilcock moved to the University of Winchester to which her portion of the funding was transferred.</p> <p>The research examined how child witnesses aged 6 to 11 years, (71 autistic, 201 typically developing children, all with IQs over 69) performed during a 'mock' criminal investigation. After seeing a staged crime event involving two perpetrators, children underwent an initial recall to simulate police taking a statement, one week later they received a detailed evidence gathering interview followed by two identification lineups. At interview the children were assigned to one of four conditions: a) <i>Best Practice Police Interview</i> based on current Achieving Best Evidence guidelines used in England and Wales, b) <i>Registered Intermediary (RI)</i>, typically a speech and language therapist who facilitates communication between witnesses and Justice System Practitioners, c) <i>Verbal Labels</i>, additional verbal prompts to help memory, d) <i>Mental Reinstatement of Context Sketch Plan</i>, a drawing technique encouraging witnesses to think about the time of the crime which aids memory. The two lineups were run in accordance with the Police and Criminal Evidence Act Code D used in England and Wales. Children who received RI assistance at interview were also supported</p>		

by a RI during the lineups.

In an initial statement, autistic children recalled significantly fewer correct items of information but they were no less accurate than typically developing children (3.1).

One week later, at interview, for typically developing children the assistance of a RI led to a near doubling of correct information remembered compared to the best practice interview conditions but the same beneficial effect was not seen for children with autism (3.2). Autistic and typically developing children showed comparable performance in the other three interview conditions.

At lineup, for typically developing children, the assistance of a RI led to more correct perpetrator identifications compared to best practice lineups and there was some evidence that RI assistance led to more correct rejections of perpetrator absent lineups (3.3). Autistic children performed comparably on three out of four lineups with typically developing children (3.4).

Key messages evidenced by the underpinning research were:

- 1) Registered Intermediaries are very beneficial for typically developing children at interview and lineup.
- 2) Children with autism can perform equivalently to typically developing children at interview and lineup. They are also no less accurate at initial statement taking.

3. References to the research (indicative maximum of six references)

References

- 3.1 Henry, L.A., Messer, D., Wilcock, R., & Crane, L. (2017). Do measures of memory, language, and attention predict eyewitness memory in children with and without autism spectrum disorder? *Autism and Developmental Language Impairments*, 2, 1-17. doi:10.1177/2396941517722139
<http://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/2396941517722139>
- 3.2 Henry, L.A., Crane, L., Nash, G., Hobson, Z., Kirke-Smith, M., & Wilcock, R. (2017). Verbal, visual, and intermediary support for child witnesses with autism during investigative interviews. *Journal of Autism and Developmental Disorders*, 47, 2348-2362. doi: 10.1007/s10803-017-3142-0
<https://link.springer.com/journal/10803>
- 3.3 Wilcock, R., Crane, L., Hobson, Z., Nash, G., Kirke-Smith, M., & Henry, L.A. (2018). Short Paper. Supporting child witnesses during identification lineups: exploring the effectiveness of Registered Intermediaries. *Applied Cognitive Psychology*, 32 (3), 367-375. doi: 10.1002/acp.3412
<https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/full/10.1002/acp.3412>
- 3.4 Wilcock, R.A., Crane, L.A., Nash, G., Hobson, Z. Kirke-Smith, M. & Henry, L.A. (2019). Eyewitness identification in child witnesses with autism spectrum disorder *Research in Autism Spectrum Disorder*. 66, 1-8. doi:10.1016/j.rasd.2019.05.007
<https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S1750946719300893>

Outputs were assessed for quality by anonymous external reviewers.

4. Details of the impact (indicative maximum 750 words)

The research has impacted Police, RIs, Barristers and Judges, who have used the findings to enhance their professional practice, and bodies such as the National Autistic Society and Witnesses and Victims of Crime.

Police: As part of the ESRC grant, Seminars on Autism and Policing and the role of RIs were held at City, University of London in 2015, 2016 and 2019. Altogether 410 Metropolitan Police staff attended and 316 completed evaluations immediately after the seminars (5.1). Prior to the events most delegates rated their knowledge/awareness of RIs and how to interview a witness with Autism as fairly limited/not well prepared. After the events, the majority rated their knowledge as fairly extensive/much better prepared. One delegate reported: *Knowledge of autism will help if I have a case with autistic victims or suspects. Knowing what an intermediary can do is invaluable and I would definitely use this in the future.* 230 of 313 respondents said they would be likely/very likely to use their new knowledge in their professional role (5.1). Ten months after the 2019 seminar, 35 of the 56 police delegates who agreed to be contacted responded to a questionnaire (5.2). During this ten month period seven police delegates had interviewed an individual with autism and one had requested a RI. All the officers we spoke to in follow up phone calls stated they had used the information they had learnt (5.2).

In April 2019 the Centre for Forensic and Investigative Psychology at the University of Winchester hosted a Vulnerable Witnesses Professional Development Conference. There were 45 delegates (from 6 different police constabularies in England and Wales, and other organisations including the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner, Victim Support, Citizen's Advice Witness Service, Rail Accident Investigation Branch, Ministry of Defence) and 35 completed evaluations. 29 delegates reported their knowledge/awareness of RIs had increased and 23 delegates reported their knowledge/awareness of autistic child witnesses had increased. 15 delegates reported their organisations would make increased use of RIs. 14 delegates reported their organisations could make changes to autism training/practice. Subsequently, a follow up phone call with a senior representative of the National Video Identification Parade Electronic Recording (VIPER) bureau, confirmed that they had communicated the impact of RIs across senior stakeholders within the UK police identification community.

The importance of training police in supporting autistic witnesses was acknowledged in the Autism Awareness Bill introduced by Ann Clwyd MP in May 2019 where she called for mandatory autism training for all police officers. We were in contact with Ms Clwyd's researcher with our research papers and details of police training events.

The National Autistic Society guidelines - Autism: A guide for police officers and staff (5.3), which Henry, Wilcock and Crane contributed to, as a result of the research, was added to the College of Policing's Authorised Professional Practice on mental health. In 2020 we worked with the National Police Autism Association to better understand police use of the NAS guidelines. Twelve forces responded to our questions, 11 reported their force was aware of the guidelines and seven confirmed they referred to the guidelines as part of their training.

Registered Intermediaries (RIs): Henry, Wilcock and Crane contributed to Intermediaries for Justice (IfJ) conferences in 2017 (oral paper of 3.2) and 2018 (poster presentations of 3.2 and 3.3). A senior representative of IfJ (5.4) noted the number of requests for RIs had increased as had the number of RIs being trained; both, in part, as a result of 3.2 and 3.3. A registered intermediary confirmed that these same papers are also included on the reading list for the mandatory RI training (5.5). Corroborating the suggestion of the IfJ Chair that the number of requests for RIs had increased in part due to 3.2 and 3.3, the Ministry of Justice (MoJ) responsible for managing RIs also reported that the number of requests for RIs

assisting in cases involving children increased from 3,683 in 2015 to 4,635 in 2019 (5.6). The Victims' Crime Commissioner's review of provision of RIs for children and vulnerable victims and witnesses (5.7) called for more provision of RIs. 3.2 is cited in this report. Furthermore, the Parliamentary Office of Science and Technology's note on improving witness testimony (5.8) cites 3.3 to argue that obtaining eyewitness evidence from vulnerable witnesses may not be possible without RIs. Wilcock is named in the acknowledgements of 5.8.

Barristers and Judges: The research team worked with judges, barristers, police officers and RIs to write a new toolkit entitled 'Witnesses and Defendants with Autism: Memory and Sensory Issues' (2015 - toolkit 3). The team also contributed to a revision of the toolkit 'Planning to Question Someone with an Autism Spectrum Disorder, including Asperger Syndrome' (2016 - toolkit 15). Both toolkits (5.9) are available to all legal professionals. Downloads of toolkit 3 April 2015 to March 2018: 902. Downloads of toolkit 15 December 2016 to March 2017: 1,810.

National Autistic Society: The NAS guidelines - Autism: A guide for police officers and staff has been promoted by the College of Policing (5.3). Wilcock is a named contributor with ESRC support for her time acknowledged. The Guidelines received 4,631 page views April 2017 to February 2019 and 406 downloads from June to October 2019.

Witnesses and Victims of Crime: A National Vulnerable Witness Advisor (5.10) suggests that papers 3.1 – 3.4 have had an impact on vulnerable witnesses and victims of crime (children with and without Autism) by helping to ensure they are supported to give evidence within the CJS. The research (3.2) has informed the forthcoming edition of *Achieving Best Evidence in Criminal Proceedings: Guidance on Interviewing Victims and Witnesses, and Guidance on using Special Measures* (soon to be published by the Ministry of Justice).

5 Sources to corroborate the impact (indicative maximum of 10 references)

- 5.1 Autism and policing events summary of feedback 2015, 2016, 2019
- 5.2 Autism and policing awareness event 25.04.19 delegate feedback
- 5.3 NAS guidelines Autism: A guide for police officers and staff, Wilcock is named contributor. <https://www.autism.org.uk/shop/products/books-and-resources/autism-a-guide-for-police-officers-and-staff>
- 5.4 Letter from a senior representative of Intermediaries for Justice citing papers 3.2 and 3.3, stating that in part they led to a request for increased registered intermediaries and in turn recruitment and training of registered intermediaries. Dated 12.8.2019.
- 5.5 Letter from a registered intermediary, stating research is included in RI training and the associated reading list including reference to papers 3.2 and 3.3. Dated 14.10.2018.
- 5.6 Increase in requests of RIs from the Ministry of Justice; data provided by an RI. Dated 25.02.20.
- 5.7 A voice for the voiceless: The victims' commissioner's review into the provision of

registered intermediaries for children and vulnerable victims and witnesses.

January 2018. Paper 3.1 is cited. <https://victimscommissioner.org.uk/published-reviews/a-voice-for-the-voiceless-provision-of-registered-intermediaries/>

5.8 Improving witness testimony. Parliamentary Office of Science and Technology note, 607, July 2019. Paper 3.3 is cited.

<https://researchbriefings.parliament.uk/ResearchBriefing/Summary/POST-PN-0607>

5.9 Witnesses and Defendants with Autism: Memory and Sensory Issues (toolkit3) April 2015. Planning to Question Someone with an Autism Spectrum Disorder, including Asperger Syndrome' (toolkit 15) December 2016.

<http://www.theadvocatesgateway.org/toolkits>

5.10 Letter from a National Vulnerable Witness Advisor citing papers 3.1 and 3.2 saying that the research informed the next edition of Achieving Best Evidence in relation to requesting Registered Intermediaries (yet to be published) and has been helpful in addressing negative misconceptions regarding the abilities of autistic child witnesses. Dated 26.7.2019.