

Impact case study (REF3)

Institution: University of East Anglia		
Unit of Assessment: 20 - Social Work and Social Policy		
Title of case study: Transforming the lives of children in state care: implementation of the UEA Secure Base model of therapeutic caregiving in the UK and internationally		
Period when the underpinning research was undertaken: 2000 - 2010		
Details of staff conducting the underpinning research from the submitting unit:		
Name(s):	Role(s) (e.g. job title):	Period(s) employed by submitting HEI:
Professor Gillian Schofield Dr Mary Beek	Professor of Child and Family Social Work Research Fellow	1990-2020 5 separate fellowships 1997 - 2020
Period when the claimed impact occurred: 01/08/13 - 31/12/20		
Is this case study continued from a case study submitted in 2014? No		
<p>1. Summary of the impact</p> <p>Children in state care are among the most vulnerable in society, nationally and globally. Previous experiences of physical and psychological trauma, loss and separation mean that children require therapeutic care if they are to recover from developmental harm, achieve happy, stable adult lives and fulfil their potential. To guide and support caregivers and professionals in meeting these children's needs successfully, the free to access Secure Base model of therapeutic caregiving was developed by Professor Schofield and Dr Beek in the School of Social Work at UEA from their highly regarded long-term fostering research (published 2000-12). The Secure Base model has been widely implemented in child welfare agencies across the UK and internationally, including, since 2014, playing an important role in the development of foster care as an alternative to institutional care in Thailand, China and Ukraine. This research-based practice model has therefore been instrumental in transforming children's lives in very diverse cultures and contexts.</p>		
<p>2. Underpinning research</p> <p>The underpinning research was conducted during a period of serious concerns regarding outcomes for vulnerable children in care in the UK and is still relevant for public policy and social work practice today. The number of children in care has risen 30% from 60,000 in 2006, when the Secure Base model was developed, to 78,000 in 2019. Coming into care can be a positive turning point, but without good quality caregiving children with unresolved trauma and emotional difficulties as a result of previous maltreatment are at risk of placement instability, educational underachievement, poor mental health and youth offending.</p> <p>Four research projects on the care of foster children were led by Professor Gillian Schofield (PI), with Dr Mary Beek (Research fellow), and funded by the Nuffield Foundation.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Growing up in foster care</i>: three linked projects (R1, R2 and R3) followed a cohort of long-term foster children and their foster families longitudinally. • <i>Care planning for long-term foster care</i>: the fourth project (R4), was a cross-sectional study of a cohort of foster children across six local authorities, their families and support services. <p>These studies have led the field by investigating pathways and outcomes for children with a long-term foster care plan through to adulthood and combining this with practical applications of attachment theory. The research has been of UK and worldwide significance in offering a positive approach to children growing up in long-term foster care.</p> <p>UEA research used quantitative and qualitative methods (developmental measures, analysis of case records, interviews with children, birth parents, foster carers and social workers) to investigate the quality of relationships in foster placements and the caregiving qualities which enabled children to recover from previous trauma and abuse and fulfil their potential.</p> <p>This research identified five caregiving dimensions which promoted good outcomes in terms of stability, security, identity and emotional well-being for children from backgrounds of maltreatment and trauma. These dimensions are <i>availability-helping the child to trust</i>, <i>sensitivity-helping the child to manage feelings</i>, <i>acceptance-building the child's self-esteem</i>, <i>co-operation-helping the child to feel effective</i> and <i>family membership- helping the child to belong</i>. The first four dimensions were linked to attachment theory, with UEA research making the important new contribution of</p>		

both identifying the developmental benefit of each dimension *and* demonstrating how attachment concepts originally relating to infancy in intact families were relevant for older children and adolescents being parented by foster carers. The fifth dimension, family membership, was added, as it is an important psychosocial contribution to a secure base, especially for children in foster care who belong to both foster and birth families. Findings provided valuable additional evidence of how foster family relationships provide a sense of belonging as part of the family, as well as offering the benefits of emotional security.

The research identified that the five caregiving dimensions interact; for example, trust is linked to raised self-esteem, and acceptance is necessary for a child to feel a sense of belonging. Together these dimensions form the Secure Base model, represented in the form of a star, with language that is positive, child focussed and accessible to professionals and carers.

3. References to the research

Publications and funding listed below are linked to projects (R1-4) described in section 2.

UEA authors are in bold.

- *Growing up in Foster Care*
Schofield, G, Beek, M, Sargent, K. and **Thoburn, J.**
British Association for Adoption and Fostering (BAAF), **2000**, ISBN: 9781873868935 (R1)
- *Providing a Secure Base in Foster Care*
Beek, M. and **Schofield, G.**
British Association for Adoption and Fostering (BAAF), **2004**, ISBN: 978-1903699409 (R2)
- Providing a secure base: parenting children in long-term foster family care
Schofield, G and **Beek, M.**
Attachment and Human Development, **2005**, 7(1) pp.3 26,
DOI: 10.1080/14616730500049019 (R2)
- *Attachment Handbook for Foster Care and Adoption*
Schofield, G. and **Beek, M.**
British Association for Adoption and Fostering (BAAF), **2006**, 2nd edition **2018**, pp 443,
ISBN: 978 1 903699 96 6 (R1, R2, R3)
- Growing up in foster care: providing a secure base in adolescence
Schofield, G. and **Beek, M.**
Child and Family Social Work, **2009**, 14(3), pp. 255-267. DOI: 10.1111/j.1365-2206.2008.00592.x (R3)
- Part of the Family: Planning for permanence in long-term family foster care
Schofield, G., Beek, M. and **Ward, E**
Children and Youth Services Review, **2011**, 34, pp. 244-253,
DOI: 10.1016/j.childyouth.2011.10.020 (R4)

Research funding

Project: *Growing up in Foster Care*. **Schofield, G.** (PI)

Funder: Nuffield Foundation. Grant value: GBP97,207. Project dates: 2000 –2003, 2005 –2007.

Project: *Care Planning in Long-Term Foster Care*. **Schofield, G.** (PI)

Funder: Nuffield Foundation. Grant value: GBP151,679. Project dates: 2008-2010.

4. Details of the impact

The primary beneficiaries of the UEA Secure Base model have been vulnerable children and adolescents in care in the UK and internationally who need sensitive, therapeutic caregiving to recover from harmful early experiences. The model has enabled foster carers, adopters, residential workers, social workers, teachers and other professionals to identify the needs of vulnerable children more accurately and provide a therapeutic caregiving environment that promotes healthy emotional development, supporting children to fulfil their potential in the family, at school and in pro-social activities in the community.

The Secure Base model was actively taken up in the UK and internationally from 2007, but there was a particular growth in its impact on improving the lives of vulnerable children from 2014–20.

This was due to the range of new materials available (e.g. training programmes), the diverse practice agencies using the model (e.g. residential care and schools as well as fostering and adoption), and new countries embedding the model in practice (e.g. projects in China, Thailand, Ukraine, in addition to the UK and Europe). Schofield was awarded an OBE in the Queen's Birthday Honours 2020, with the Department for Education recognising her '*outstanding contribution to children, families and social work, including developing the Secure Base model, a framework for understanding and caring for children who have been affected by abuse.*' (S1)

Impact on policy and practice in the UK

- **Developing and improving caregiving training and practice**

UEA's Secure Base model provided an authoritative, research based, practical framework that has enabled social workers, foster carers and adopters to apply complex attachment theory. '*The Secure Base Model has established itself as a key framework and tool for social workers and other professionals...The model has undoubtedly been one of the most influential developments for [the] child placement sector over the last 6 years...*', (CoramBAAF Director of Policy, Research and Development). (S2)

Following the recommendation of the Secure Base model by the Department for Education and Skills in the White Paper, *Care Matters* (2007:44), the Fostering Network (the national organisation for UK foster carers) commissioned Schofield and Beek to include the Secure Base model in the revised core training *Skills to Foster* (2009, 2014) thus benefitting all new foster carers. (S3)

The UEA *Providing a Secure Base* website made updated practice materials available free of charge in the UK and internationally from 2008. The addition of detailed training programmes to the website (2015) enabled agencies to deliver training direct to foster carers, adopters and social workers, increasing the reach. The website has been widely accessed e.g. 85,846 hits in 2017/18 (Google analytics).

Since 2014, a wider range of fostering, adoption and residential care providers in the statutory and voluntary sector in the UK report have benefitted from the Secure Base model, as below. Schofield and Beek have supported these developments, including holding Annual Secure Base Network meetings in London, with agencies attending from all four UK countries.

- **Local authority implementation of the Secure Base to improve outcomes (S4)**

Local authorities have implemented the Secure Base model, including at policy level across children's services e.g. the **London Borough of Southwark** Director of Children's Services made the model one of their three policy 'pillars', with Schofield launching it in 2014 to an audience of 250 professionals and caregivers. In 2017 the Director concluded, '*Secure Base implementation has been observed and based on feedback is having a really positive impact on supporting foster carers and enabling them to provide greater empathy, understanding, sense of belonging, support and stability to the children they look after.*'

Local authorities have been creative in implementing the model e.g. **West Sussex** Children's Services delivered the Secure Base training programme to staff and carers, set up Secure Base workshops and established a Secure Base stories library, some written by children. The practice tools had good feedback. A trainer reported: '*The Secure Base Checklist has been very well received... because carers agree that it very quickly "paints a picture of a child/young person"*'.

Local authorities have committed resources to support successful implementation e.g. **Manchester Children's Services**, Southwark and West Sussex, all created designated staff posts for implementing the Secure Base model. A review of Manchester's fostering services 2017/18 concluded: '*There is an ongoing focus on rolling out Secure Base training to our foster carer pool over the reporting year... Feedback... from foster carers so far has been very positive about the impact the training has had on their ability to meet children's complex needs.*'

- **Independent agencies using Secure Base to improve fostering and residential care (S5)**

Successful embedding of the model to improve caregiving was described by **Acorn Care**, an independent fostering agency. '*At the Acorns we use the Secure Base model to focus on each and every interaction that occurs between our caregivers and children/young people that we work with. The Secure Base model also helps us consider how these relationships can enable the child to develop competence in the outside world of school, peer group and community.*'

Schofield has worked since 2016 with clinical psychologists, staff and carers at **Family Care**, a fostering and therapeutic residential care provider. Their website highlights the value of the Secure Base model in providing *'a framework for therapeutic caregiving which builds resilience and helps infants, children and young people move towards greater security'*.

Ofsted have recognised the role of the Secure Base model in providing high quality care. **ABC Fostering**, an independent fostering agency, which consulted with Beek and Schofield on implementation of the Secure Base model, was awarded 'outstanding' in 2016 and the Ofsted report concluded: *'Children and young people benefit from foster carers who understand the service's 'Secure Base' model and use it in their everyday parenting'*. An ABC foster carer said of the model: *'I see examples of its success every day'*.

From 2014 children's homes providers also started to use the Secure Base model as a framework for therapeutic caregiving (e.g. **Ryes College, New Reflexions**) in consultation with Schofield.

- **New UEA applications in adoption, schools and support for professional staff (S6)**

The Secure Base model has provided the foundation for the child-centred **UEA Moving to Adoption** practice framework (Beek, Neil and Schofield, 2018-20, funded by Sir Halley Stewart Foundation), now adopted by **Regional Adoption Agencies** in England. A fostering social worker commented on its effectiveness in an evaluation: *'Applying [the Secure Base model] enabled us to see the foster carers as a secure base - for both the children and adoptive parents'*.

Schofield and Beek were funded by the Alex Timpson Trust (2018-20) to develop **Providing a Secure Base in Schools** training programmes to help school staff to support vulnerable children. The **Norfolk Virtual School Head** commissioned UEA to deliver these training programmes in Norfolk (2019-20). They were well received by teaching staff in their evaluations. *'The Secure Base model is a good model to reflect upon every day to ensure good practice around attachment.'* *'The explanation of different behaviours that children might show due to lack of a secure base and what we can do to help them manage those feelings and deal with those situations was helpful.'*

The **Team as Secure Base** framework was developed by Dr Laura Biggart (UEA) (2015-17), in partnership with Beek and Schofield, to promote emotional resilience in staff supporting carers and children. In 2017 it was incorporated in the Operating Framework for **Cafcass (Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service)** (1325 social workers). The model is also an important part of the new **Practice Supervisor Development Programme**, an investment by the Department for Education in training for new social work supervisors (1000 staff in 2019-20).

International implementation and impact of the Secure Base model

Schofield and Beek have provided training and support for implementation of the Secure Base model globally, including **Australia, China, France, Ireland, Italy, Netherlands, Norway, Scotland, Spain, Sweden, Thailand, Ukraine and Vietnam**. The *Attachment Handbook* has been translated into **French and Italian**, and is being translated into **Greek, Japanese and Russian**. Online training resources are widely accessed e.g. by 20 different countries in 2018.

- **Promoting high-quality foster care in Europe (S7)**

The Secure Base / 'Trygg Base' model has been part of **Norway's** core training for new foster carers since 2008 and used in supervision of carers and staff. Schofield visited Norway biannually during this successful implementation (2007-12) and in 2014 was invited to hold a day workshop for 300 practitioners and foster carers in Oslo. The practice guide was translated into Norwegian (2015) and Secure Base foster carer support groups have continued in Norway to 2020.

New agencies in Europe continue to approach UEA e.g. from 2020 **Cornerstones Fostering**, in the Netherlands, are implementing the model throughout their organisation, with consultation from Schofield, and have reported, *'...experiences with Secure Base Teams are very positive and social workers and care professionals feel connected and empowered in their work.'*

- **Deinstitutionalisation in Asia and Europe through developing foster care (S8)**

UNICEF estimated in 2017 that at least 2.7 million children were in institutional care. Since 2013 the Secure Base model has been used to support the international goal of de-institutionalisation. From 2013-15, Beek worked in **Thailand, China and Vietnam** with Care for Children, a UK based

charity, to develop training materials used by local staff to recruit, train and support local foster carers to care for children. These training programmes have continued in use to 2020.

In **Thailand**, the Secure Base model became part of their core foster care training programme, with 29 (of a total of 30) government child welfare homes and 786 staff attending Secure Base workshops, including teachers, nurses, psychologists, social workers and government officials. Trainers used a culturally sensitive representation of the Secure Base model to communicate to Thai foster carers. This training has also benefited children in institutional care as well as children moving to foster care, with a residential staff member commenting: *'I learnt a lot in this workshop and I'm going to change the way I care for the children because of it. I know we will be able to use it with the children in the orphanage and when we are giving advice to foster parents.'*

In **China**, the Secure Base model became widely used by Care for Children. In 2016, the year after Beek completed work on training programmes, 30 workshops were delivered by local trainers in cities across China for 1,310 foster carers, residential staff and professionals and is now well established. In 2014, the Secure Base model was extended to **Vietnam** and presented by Beek to 200 participants (government officials, orphanage directors, child protection managers) at a Conference in Hanoi organized by the Ministry of Labour, Invalid and Social Affairs, UNICEF and Care for Children, chaired by Prince Michael of Kent. The model has been implemented in training local staff, with child welfare homes pioneering the introduction of foster care in Vietnam.

From 2016, after consultation with Beek, the Secure Base model was introduced by **Care in Action**, a German based charity, in **Ukraine**, where foster care is promoted as an alternative to institutional care. Care in Action describe this approach on its website (2019). *'We have equipped specialists across Ukraine with the internationally recognised Providing a Secure Base model of care, so they can train and support foster parents. Because when children are well cared for they develop the relationships and abilities that will help them to succeed at life.'* Also on the website is a foster carer's comment: *"After the training I began to analyse myself, my actions and S's behaviour, and began to change my attitudes. With understanding and calm we found a solution."*

Beek was consulted by colleagues in **India**, after which the Centre of Excellence in the Alternative Care of Children and the National Commission for the Protection of Child Rights, recommended the Secure Base model in their first national **User Guide on Foster Care** (2018).

- **The Secure Base model applied to schools internationally (S9)**

Schofield and Beek provided Secure Base training and development in Melbourne (2016-17), influencing foster care, but also education, as this teacher reported: *'The teaching and support staff here have enthusiastically grasped your model and are excitedly developing pragmatic ways in which to engage with our students and help them to trust and feel safe while they are here... we are already seeing results which are observable in our behaviour and attendance records.'*

5. Sources to corroborate the impact:

S1 Letter from the DoE regarding Schofield's OBE award (10.10.20).

S2 Letter from Director of Research, Policy and Development, CoramBAAF (15.9.20).

S3 Fostering Network UK, Skills to Foster- core foster carer training, 2014, pp. 114-118.

S4 Local authorities: (1) Southwark (report, 01.3.17); (2) West Sussex (e-mail, 04.11.19); (3) Manchester (report, 2017).

S5 Independent fostering and residential care agencies: (1) ABC Fostering Ofsted report, (18.1.16), p. 4; (2) ABC Fostering, Foster carer e-mail (10.11.15). Websites from: (3) Acorn Care; (4) Family Care; (5) Ryes College; (6) New Reflexions (websites accessed 13.11.20).

S6 UEA applications: (1) Moving to Adoption (website & evaluation report, 15.6.17, PDF p. 6); (2) Application in Schools (website & Norfolk report, May 2020); (3) Cafcass Operating Framework (April, 2019); (4) Team as Secure Base booklet (websites accessed 13.11.20).

S7 European foster care: (1) Norway (website accessed 13.11.20); (2) Netherlands (e-mail, 24.6.20).

S8 Deinstitutionalization in Asia and Europe: (1) Letter from CEO of Care for Children (3.8.20); (2) Care in Action (website accessed 13.11.20); (3) India (Practice Guide, 2018: pp. 80-82).

S9 E-mail from Student Wellbeing Worker, Primary School in Victoria, Australia (10.3.20).