

Assessing parental engagement in child and family social work: Learning from a UK research study

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from the Engaging Parents and Protecting Children Study

led by Donald Forrester

Types of question our study will answer



- Does motivational interviewing (MI) training lead to better engaging families in CP work?
 - Does better engagement lead to better outcomes?
 - Do workers with better MI skills achieve better outcomes for children and parents?
 - What factors are linked to good or poor outcomes?
- ... and many others

This presentation: parental engagement



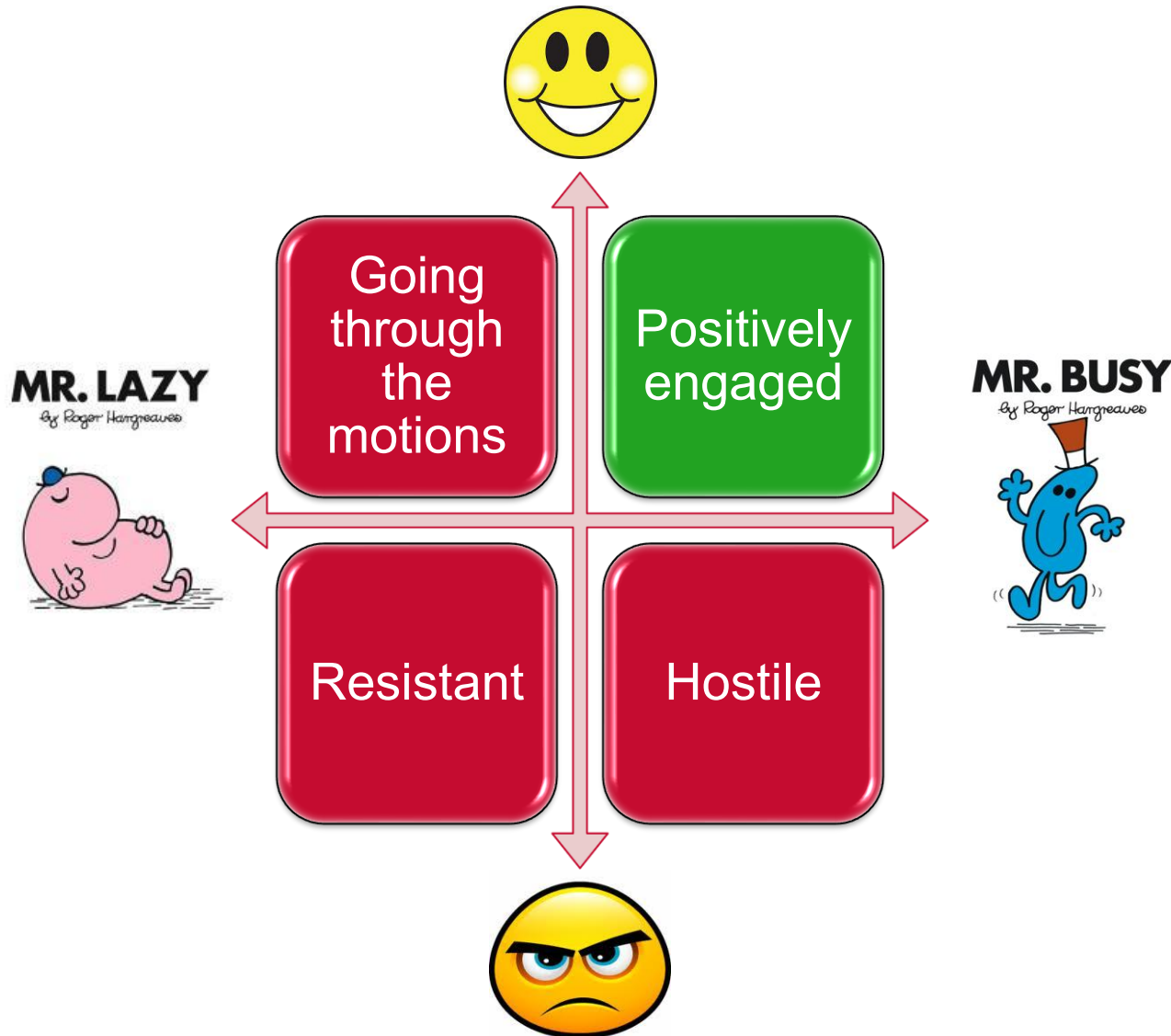
- Concept of parental engagement
- Engagement measures used in research studies
- Our study
- Peek at initial findings in relation to engagement

What is parental engagement?

- It's not just about attendance or compliance
- 'Cognitive-behavioural phenomenon'
- Being 'on board'
- 'Positive involvement in a helping process'

"The mutual, purposeful, behavioural and interactional participation of parent(s) and/or carers in services and interventions provided by social work and other relevant agencies with the aim of achieving positive outcomes" in child welfare (Platt, 2012, p.142)

'It' involves activity AND attitude



A difficult concept in child and family social work

- A tricky context:
 - ‘Non-voluntary’ clients
 - Indirect: often seeking change in the parent to improve child welfare
- Complicating ‘system’ factors, including:
 - Fragmented families
 - Influence of ‘significant others’
 - External events e.g. housing issues

Engagement measurement instruments

Working Alliance Inventory (WAI)



- Based on Bordin's theory of working alliance (Bordin, 1979)
- Well researched and utilised in psychotherapy and other fields
- 12 questions tap into 3 dimensions:
 - Goals
 - Tasks
 - Bond

Yatchmenoff's Client Engagement in Child Protective Services

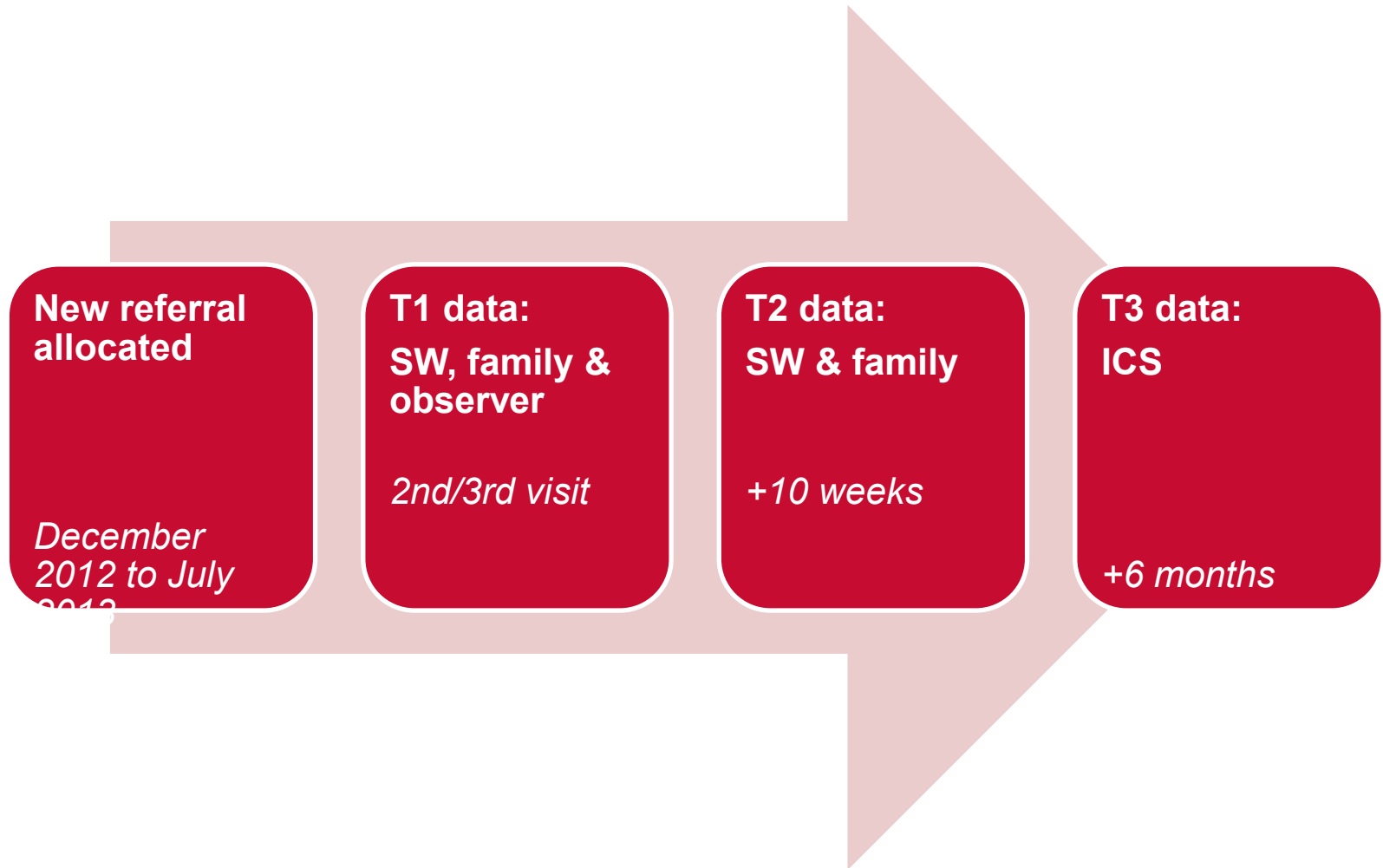


- Developed in the US for CP social work (Yatchmenoff, 2005)
- 19 questions cover 4 inter-related 'dimensions':
 - Receptivity
 - Buy-in (comprising expectation and investment)
 - Working relationship
 - Mistrust – negative dimension

What do other child welfare studies report?

- Strong correlation between worker & client scores (≈ 0.6)
- BUT workers tend to rate higher than parent self-report
- ALSO variable congruence of matched pairs (Yatchmenoff, 2008)
 - High parent rating: in 78% of cases workers also rated high
 - Low parent rating: only 34% of cases workers rated low

Our study: 3 data collection points



Engagement data being collected

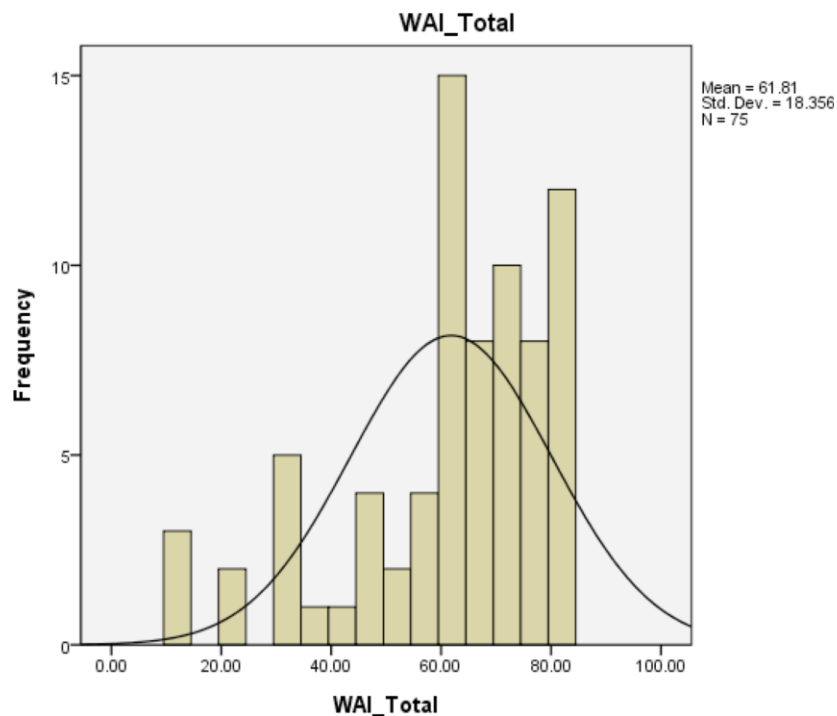


- Parent/carer - T1 and T2 family interviews include:
 - WAI (client)
 - Yatchmenoff
 - Global engagement question
- Social worker - T1 and T2 questionnaires include:
 - WAI (therapist)
 - Global engagement question
- Researcher – T1 WAI (observer)

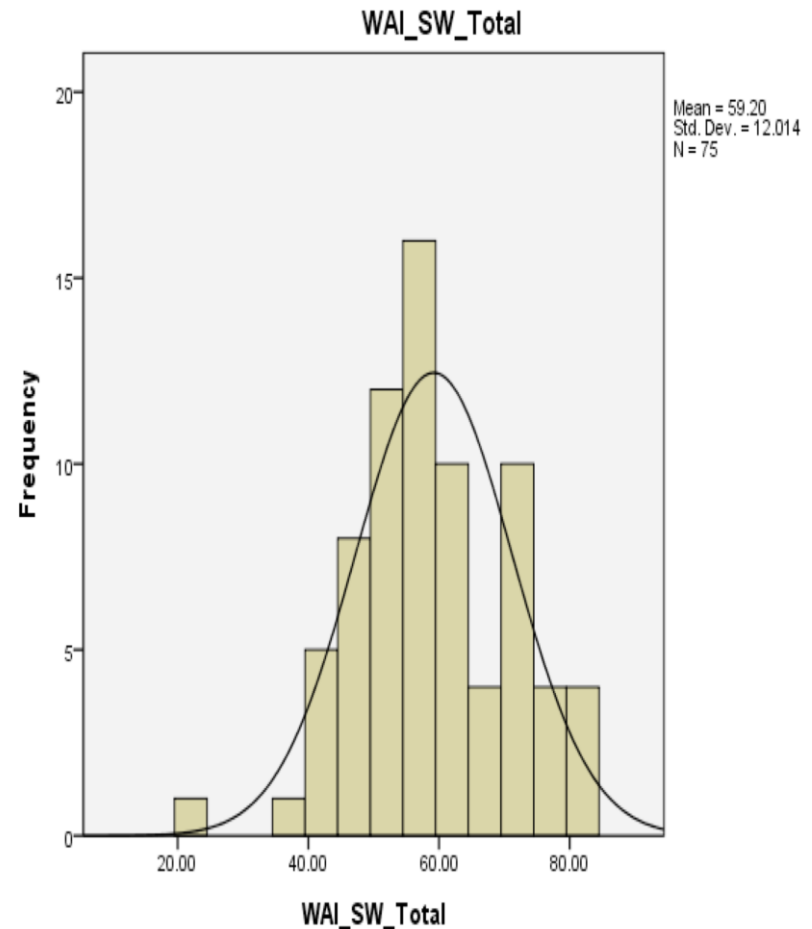
Peek at first 75 cases



WAI parent v SW at T1: difference not yet significant



Parent: mean 61.81, SD 18.36



SW: mean 59.2, SD 12.01

Yatchmenoff parent ratings: consistent with other studies

Study	Sample size (n)	Mean score	Standard deviation
Our study	75	70.07	15.14
Gladstone <i>et al.</i> (2012)	159	65.6	17.74
Jenkins (2011)	150	63.76	15.38
Yatchmenoff (2008)	135	66	-
Yatchmenoff (2005)	287	65.4	17.2

All demonstrated reliability: Cronbach's $\alpha \geq 0.93$

WAI correlations: Parent and observer relationship strongest

	WAI parent	WAI social worker	WAI observer
WAI parent	1	.464**	.608**
WAI social worker	.464**	1	.396**
WAI observer	.608**	.396**	1

Sample size is 75 for parent, social worker and observer

*** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)*

Relationship between Yatchmenoff and WAI ratings

	Yatchmenoff (parent)
WAI parent	0.773**
WAI social worker	0.444**
WAI observer	0.544**

Sample size = 75

*** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)*

- Instruments provide an overall measure of engagement – not variability across services or ‘critical events’
- US-style language can be difficult with families
- WAI and Yatchmenoff appear to measure 2 similar but different ideas
- Yet both capture ‘affinity’ – central to effective work
- Both measure collaborative goal-seeking – yet little clarity between parent and social worker

Final thought

- Is there a need for an engagement measurement instrument in practice?
- Yatchmenoff's CECPC offers a framework for a collaborative goal-seeking conversation

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