

Understanding recurrent care proceedings: Competing risks of how mothers and fathers enter subsequent care proceedings in England

Bedston, S^{1*}, Hu, Y¹, Philip, G², Youansamouth, L¹, Brandon, M², Broadhurst, K¹, and Clifton, J²

¹Lancaster University

²University of East Anglia

Background

Despite progress in understanding mothers' (re)appearances within family justice, fathers have not yet received due attention in research on recurrent care proceedings.

Aims

1. Compare parents' gendered risks of entering subsequent care proceedings;
2. Map family relations underpinning recurrent care proceedings;
3. Investigate the role of family members' life course characteristics (e.g. age, number of children) in shaping the risk of returning to court.

Methods

Analysis drew on 2007/08-2017/18 administrative records from the Child and Family Court Advisory and Support Services (Cafcass) in England. From a sample of recurrent parents (N = 24,460), a latent class analysis established profiles of who they returned with. A competing risks analysis of all parents (N = 165,550) modelled the risk of returning into each profile given index characteristics.

Results

Overall rate of return for mothers was 1.7 times that of fathers: 22% after 5 years, compared to 13% for fathers, and 29% and 17% after 10 years, respectively.

Five distinct profiles of recurrent parents were established: 'recurrent family', 'recurrent couple', 're-partnered couple', 'complex recurrence', and 'lone parent'. The vast majority of fathers who entered subsequent proceedings did so as either a part of a recurrent family (41%) or recurrent couple (36%).

However, these two profiles represented a much smaller proportion (25% and 19%, respectively) of all recurrent mothers, while the remainder returned with either a new partner or as a lone parent (49%), both with a new child. Complex recurrence represented a small proportion for both mothers and fathers (7% and 11%, respectively). The risk of each of these profiles is characterised by the distinct life course positions of the parent.

Conclusion

The results underscore the value of a relational approach and understanding a parent's position within the life course in social work research towards building a fuller picture of recurrence.

*Corresponding Author:

Email Address: s.bedston@lancaster.ac.uk (S Bedston)

