

Experience Relevant to Age Assessment
Dr Diana Birch

1. I have wide experience in assessment of children and young people and draw on this expertise in conducting age assessments.
2. Of particular relevance are qualifications and experience in –
 - Psychological assessment and therapy with young people
 - Developmental Paediatrics
 - Adolescent health and development
 - Population studies.
3. These areas are expanded below.
4. I have assessed and reported on approximately 300 cases of age assessment per year and my reports have been used widely in age assessment disputes and court hearings.
5. I bring nearly 40 years of experience working with children and adolescents. This wide experience enables me to assess age using a holistic method as advocated by the Royal College of Paediatrics.

Psychological assessment and therapy with young people

6. I am qualified in child and adolescent developmental and cognitive assessment and was approved assessor for special needs and designated medical officer for advice to several Education Authorities in London including Lambeth, Southwark and previously Wandsworth.

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7. I am qualified as a medical psychotherapist and hold a Master of Science from St George's Hospital Medical School Psychiatry Department. I am regularly used by the courts for expert opinion on families and my qualifications and experience are regarded as parallel to those of a child and adolescent psychiatrist in this respect.

Developmental Paediatrics

8. As above – I have qualifications in Developmental paediatrics and regularly assess children and young people both cognitively and psychologically.
9. I carry out Paediatric, adolescent, family, and public health work on an international basis at senior consultant level and have worked with deprived groups in diverse settings and across varied cultures including refugee youth and regularly perform age assessments for young asylum seekers.

Adolescent health and development - Involvement in Adolescent Medicine

10. Adolescent Medicine does not exist as a speciality in the United Kingdom as it does in the United States, Canada and Australia for example. I have had a major interest in adolescent medicine and health since the eighties when I was involved in a major study of school age pregnancy and initiated developments in medical involvement in secondary schools and youth counselling. My study of school age pregnancy was the first major one in this country and I received a Doctorate of London University for this work.
11. From a basis of original training in general medicine (FRCP) and paediatrics (DCH and FRCPCH), I followed the format of the training as offered to adolescent medicine specialists in the USA and ensured that I covered all relevant areas albeit as separate modules rather than as a programme as would have been available in the USA. This included sexual health and family planning including the training doctors certificate and was on the Medical board of the Brook advisory services. I also obtained training in psychiatry and psychotherapy at St George's Hospital Medical School (MSc). I was qualified in assessment and cognitive and

developmental testing. I also attended courses on alcohol and substance abuse and trained in Psychodrama which is useful when working with teenagers.

12. I am a Fellow of the Society of Adolescent Medicine (FSAM)
13. I pioneered adolescent health in the UK and established the charity Youth Support which held regular training programmes for social workers, health and education professionals and International conferences held at the Royal College of Physicians and the Royal Society of Medicine. At the same time my 'peer group' was an International professional body and I attended meetings and conferences in the USA on a regular basis (more than once a year for twenty years) and have worked and lectured on a wide international basis. For many years I was the chairman of the International Regional Chapter of the Society for Adolescent Medicine.
14. I interact and work with youth on a daily basis and ran a residential unit for disturbed young people for many years. I work with young people on an international basis and we have branches including Italy, Jamaica and USA where we have also held meetings and joint research projects. One of my special interests is communication with young people from different cultures and backgrounds through creativity and non verbal methods. This has resulted in series of workshops for youth and the production of 'story telling' documentaries and teaching material with youth participation including award winning short film 'Asylum'.

Publications and Presentations on Refugee and Asylum Seeking Youth

1. Fact finding and field work in Iran including a blind age assessment study and data collection on child and adolescent development in the field.
2. 'Age Assessment – A holistic Methodology' On line discussion and discussion at Society for Adolescent Medicine Meeting March 2008.
3. 'Age Assessment - Medical Assessment and Dilemmas' Paper given at the Liverpool Safeguarding Children Board - Training Sub Group 'Moving Forward Together' - How

to Develop the Age Assessment Process for Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children. NSPCC Centre Liverpool May 2008.

4. Young People and War / Human Conflict' Discussion at Special Interest Group International Meeting Society for Adolescent Medicine Los Angeles March 2009.
5. Psychodramatic Workshops with Refugee young people London Feb 2009; March 2009; April 2009; Birmingham April 2009; Liverpool April 2009.
6. Emotional Development and the Challenges Facing Young People Growing up in a Global Society. Gulf Conference for Ministry of Health Kuwait. Kuwait City October 2009.
7. A book 'Asylum Seeking Children; Including Adolescent Development and the Assessment of Age'. April 2010 ISBN 1 870717 22 8
8. Award winning Short film - 'Asylum' The Pressures and Problems facing Asylum seeking minors. Documentary presentation 2010
9. 'Children and Young People growing up in areas of Human Conflict' International Meeting Society for Adolescent Medicine Toronto Canada April 2010.
10. 'Holistic Age Assessment - Validation of use of Five Categories of Parameters to produce a more accurate assessment - A Monte Carlo Simulation' Birch DML; Sutton B;
11. 'Age Assessment of Young People – A blind study of Afghan Children' Birch DML; Brassett-Harknett A; Jabarkhel S
12. 'Asylum Seeking Children - A Wasted Resource' presentation to meeting to Discuss the Health and Welfare of Young Asylum Seekers – October 2010 with Ken Livingstone.

13. 'Views from a Practitioner: the Holistic Approach' - in the IGC (Intergovernmental Consultations on Migration, Asylum and Refugees) Workshop on Strategies and Policies for Age Assessment of Unaccompanied Minors Geneva June 2011.
14. "Unique Challenges to Professionals Involved with Asylum Seeking Adolescents". Grand Round Los Angeles children's hospital October 2011
15. Challenges to Professionals Involved with Asylum Seeking Adolescents - a special International supplement to the Brazilian journal for adolescent health: REVISTA ADOLESCENCIA & SAUDE (Adolescence and Health) 2012
16. 'Age Assessment – A practical Methodology' Presentation to British Association for human identification (BAHID) Nottingham University April 2012
17. Age assessment of young people - preliminary findings of A blind study Birch; MacKenzie and Iverson CHLA Platform Presentation Atlanta – Society for Adolescent Health and Medicine 2013 and Abstract publication Journal Adolescent Medicine.
18. In preparation – 'further findings Blind Study of age assessment – Afghan study ' Birch; MacKenzie and Iverson CHLA
19. Health Issues for Adolescent and Young Adult Male Refugees; Birch; MacKenzie Sept 2016 – Submitted to Special Edition Journal Adolescent Medicine

Population studies.

20. I have been a Research Fellow at the Institute of Education (London University); Director and Trustee of YSUSA (International Youth Service and Research Group) which works in conjunction with Children's Hospital Los Angeles; and was until recently Research Director and Trustee of ICCS (International Centre for Child Studies) which worked closely with the Institute of Education and the Institute of Child Health and has been responsible for the Child Cohort Studies and evaluation of the development of children from birth to adulthood including the Millennium Cohort study. I supervised research studies on the Cohorts and attended the

administrative meeting on the 1956; 1970 and 2000 cohorts, prepared material for the public including literature and a documentary 'Generations' on the cohort studies.

21. My involvement with the Child Cohort Studies at London University has meant that I have had to evaluate data on the many thousands of children involved over the years; I worked closely with Professor Neville Butler who instituted most of this work and I took over from him as director of his research. In that capacity part of my remit was to supervise students (including PhD) working on the cohort data sets.

General Qualifications and Experience

22. I am a Paediatrician with special interest in Adolescence and Child Protection and am the Medical director of Youth Support - a charity specialising in the assessment and care of single mothers, families, young people and children.
23. Hold full Licence to Practise (GMC) and have undergone successful revalidation with annual appraisal as required by the GMC.
24. I hold the qualifications of MBBS; DCH; MSc(Psychotherapy); MFCH; FRIPHH; FRCPC (Fellow of the Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health); FRCP (Fellow of the Royal College of Physicians) ; MD (Doctorate in Medicine at London University) and am also FSAM a Fellow of the American Society of Adolescent Medicine.
25. I am a leading authority on Adolescence, teenage pregnancy and early parenting and experienced in working with young people and families particularly in child protection, family disturbance, substance abuse and domestic violence and I have conducted Longitudinal studies over a twenty year time span and am working on the British Cohort studies (London University). I have worked with psychopathic personalities and a variety of disorders such as borderline personalities, learning disabilities and with children in situations of physical, emotional and sexual abuse as well as Factitious and Induced illness (Munchausen) type syndromes. I have

experience of working in custody disputes and care issues including family alienation cases.

26. I am highly experienced in the diagnosis and treatment of child abuse and protection cases and in the rehabilitation of single mothers and families where child protection has been an issue. I am a leading authority on teenage mothers and their treatment and rehabilitation with their infants. I am a qualified medical psychotherapist and specialise in the therapy of single mothers, abuse victims and disordered families.

27. Prior to working for the above Charitable trusts I was responsible for Child protection work in Lambeth, Southwark and previously Wandsworth boroughs at Consultant Community Paediatrician level.

28. I am a member of the Academy of Experts and am a 'Checked Specialist' on the expert witness directory of Sweet and Maxwell.