

## Experience Relevant to Age Assessment Dr Diana Birch

I have wide experience in assessment of children and young people and draw on this expertise in conducting age assessments.

Of particular relevance are qualifications and experience in –

- Psychological assessment and therapy with young people
- Developmental Paediatrics
- Adolescent health and development
- Populations studies and statistics.

These areas are expanded below.

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.

I bring nearly 40 years of experience working with children and adolescents. This wide experience enables me to assess age using an holistic method as advocated by the Royal College of Paediatrics.

My Methodology has been peer reviewed and widely discussed with colleagues. Research papers have explored the various issues of the methodology including the mathematical processes involved and a blind study has tested the method to good effect. A study of children in Afghanistan has lent further weight to the data used and enhanced my knowledge of the lives and development of refugee children in their own countries.

Full CV is also available.

### Psychological assessment and therapy with young people

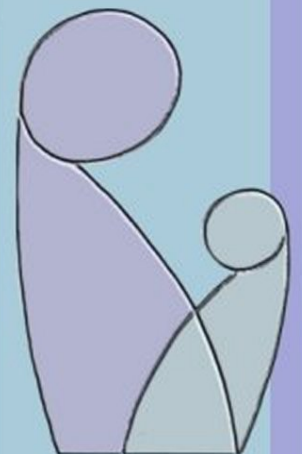
1. I am qualified in child and adolescent developmental and cognitive assessment and was approved assessor for special needs and designated medical officer for advice to several Education Authorities in London including Lambeth, Southwark and previously Wandsworth.
2. I am qualified as a medical psychotherapist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

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## **Developmental Paediatrics**

1. As above – I have qualifications in Developmental paediatrics and regularly assess children and young people both cognitively and psychologically.
2. 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**

1. Adolescent Medicine does not exist as a speciality in the United Kingdom as it does in other countries such as the United States, Canada and Australia for example. I have had a major interest in adolescent medicine and adolescent health since the eighties when I was involved in a major study of school age pregnancy and also looked into the status of medical involvement in the secondary school system and youth counselling.
2. My study of school age pregnancy was the first major one in this country and I received an Doctorate of London University for this work. I looked into the training of adolescent medicine specialists in the USA and followed a similar training programme in this country which had to be done piecemeal rather than as a programme as would have been available in the USA. I had already trained in general medicine (FRCP) and paediatrics (DCH and FRCPC) and in sexual health and family planning obtaining my 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.
3. I am a Fellow of the Society of Adolescent Medicine (FSAM)
4. 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.

5. 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.

### **Populations studies and statistics.**

1. 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 Childrens Hospital Los Angeles; and was until recently Research Director and Trustee of ICCS (International Centre for Child Studies) which worked in conjunction with 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 of the cohort studies. I have supervised PhD Students for the University of London and been a college Assessor for the Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health with respect to consultant appointments from 2004 onwards
2. 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 have 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 I also supervised PhD students working on the cohort data sets.

### **General Qualifications and Experience**

1. 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.
2. 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.

3. 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.
  
4. 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.
  
5. 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.
  
6. I am a member of the Academy of Experts and am a 'Checked Specialist' on the expert witness directory of Sweet and Maxwell.