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RESEARCH UPDATES

Fostering providers sought for study

'Perspectives on assessing foster carers: A cross-country comparison of the factors that are associated with successful placements' (doctoral student Vânia Pinto).

The Rees Centre is currently looking for fostering providers (local authority/independent) to take part in this research.

Data will be collected from a total of 650 foster carers and supervising social workers in both England and Portugal. We will ask carers and social workers to fill in questionnaires looking at carers' skills and experiences, their characteristics, and their relationships with children and young people. We would like to see which of these factors are related to children and young people's well-being and the potential for placement stability. Our aim in doing this is to improve the selection and training process of foster carers. Participating foster carers will go into a draw to win one of ten £50 vouchers.

To register your fostering provider (we cannot work directly with individual foster carers) or for further information, please contact vania.pinto@education.ox.ac.uk

EVENTS

Monday 25 April 2016

4.30-6pm, 15 Norham Gardens, Oxford OX2 6PY (Seminar room A)

Department of Education Public Seminar

Supporting the development of looked-after children: what we know and what we need to do.

Dr Sara McLean, psychologist and researcher at the Australian Centre for Child Protection

Monday 13 June 2016

4.30-6pm, 15 Norham Gardens, Oxford OX2 6PY (Seminar room A)

Department of Education Public Seminar

The findings of an RCT evaluation of the effectiveness of the Letterbox Club in improving reading and number skills of foster children ages 7-11 years old.

Dr Karen Winter, Queen's University Belfast

Drinks will be served after each of these events.

REES CENTRE NEWS

Jan Rees OBE New Year's Honours List 2016

The Rees Centre was named after Mrs Jan Rees, foster carer and co-founder of the Core Assets group. Jan was awarded an OBE for services to children and families in the 2016 New Year's Honours List.

Dr Karen Winter, Visiting Research Fellow



Dr Winter is working with the Rees Centre team from February to August 2016 during her sabbatical from Queens University Belfast. She is a researcher in social work for children in care. Her recent research includes:

Evaluation of the Effectiveness and Impact of Nurture Provision in Primary Schools in Northern Ireland funder DENI, Belfast.

Communicating with Vulnerable Children: Understanding the Everyday Practices of Child and Family Social Workers, funder ESRC. [Further information](#).

[Effects of the Letterbox Club on the Educational Outcomes for Primary School Children aged 7-11 years in Foster Care in Northern Ireland](#), funder Fostering Network Northern Ireland.

Gill Plumridge, Visiting Practitioner, Evidence Informed Practice in Fostering Services

Gill is an experienced social worker who is currently working with the Rees Centre as a Visiting Practitioner. She will build on links between the Rees Centre and fostering services in order to strengthen evidence informed practice. Gill is focusing particularly on the development of knowledge claims (statements describing types of practice that are well supported by research evidence). This work is funded by the Higher Education Innovation Fund (HEIF) Feb-July 2016.

From the Rees Centre Blog – Finding Foster Carers: Meeting the Challenge

In 2013 a group of church leaders approached Southampton City Council to ask how they could help in a climate of local authority budget cuts. The council set them a challenge: recruit foster families. So they did...

[Read full blog post](#)

Presentations

Professor Judy Sebba, Professor David Berridge (University of Bristol) and Dr Nikki Luke have presented findings from *The Educational Progress of Looked After Children in England* study to Virtual School Headteachers/OFSTED Conferences for NE England (20 Jan 2016) and for NW England (2 Feb 2016). In addition, Judy presented to Coram BAAF research group on 28 Jan 2016, to the Ealing Looked After Children Designated Teachers' Network on 24 Feb 2016 and to Knowsley Childrens' Services on 26 Feb 2016.

Nikki will be speaking at the Research In Practice [Responding to Adolescent risk](#) conference on 9th March 2016 on *Supporting the mental health of adolescents in care*.

FOSTER CARE IN THE NEWS

[Children who return home from care: improving practice](#), *Research report, Department for Education, December 2015*

[Same sex fostering: one parent didn't want their child raised by us](#), *The Guardian, 6 January 2016*

[Children's social work reform inquiry launched](#), *Commons Education Select Committee, Department for Education, 18 January 2016*

[Morgan criticized for foster care slur](#), *Children and Young People Now, 15 Jan 2015*

[Children's homes costs three times Eton College fees](#), *BBC News, 27 January 2016*

[Timpson names Councils with low Staying Put take up](#), *Children and Young People Now, 2 February 2016*

[Government set to boost mental health services for children in care](#), *Children and Young People Now, 4 February 2016*

[Foster carers and children 'prevented' from keeping in contact after separation](#), *Community Care Now, 3 February 2016*

[University of Strathclyde signs Scottish Care Leavers Covenant](#), *University of Strathclyde, 19 February 2016*

[How social workers can keep children in contact with foster carers after adoption](#), *Community Care Now, 26 February 2016*

BOOK REVIEW

A guide to the education of looked after children England

By Bernadette Alexander & Doug Lawson, [The Fostering Network](#).

Non member price £25.00, member price £12.50

Reviewed by John Fallowfield, Independent social worker

This guide from The Fostering Network is their latest addition from the popular 'all you need to know' series. As a fostering social worker, the Fostering Network is a rich source of information, advice and guidance.

I was looking forward to reviewing this new publication and had high hopes. The authors aimed to demystify the complexities of the education system and explore how the legal requirements should influence practice. They have certainly delivered.

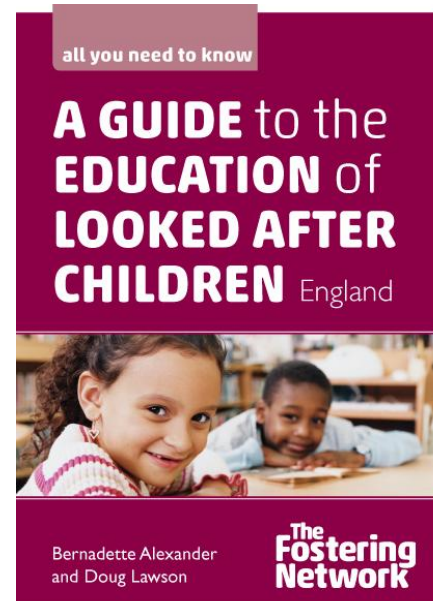
We know that looked after children who receive support and encouragement from home and school are more likely to succeed in education. We also know that the modern education system can seem like a strange world of acronyms and procedures that can seem daunting and sometimes make us feel like pupils again ourselves.

Aimed at social workers, foster carers and other key professionals in the child's world, this guide helps the reader navigate the way around the 'who's who' and 'what's what' in the education system. The guide shines a light on what a PEP and IEP are and who the DT and VSH are and how they can help a looked after child settle and thrive in school.

The guide also informs the reader so they can feel confident to ask the right questions at school and to make sure your child or young person has the right provision. Perhaps a few more practical tips for foster carers would be welcome in future additions. Also, the guide clearly explains the theory, policy and procedures but I would welcome more exploration of some of the common pitfalls and many challenges of policy and procedure consistently translating into practice.

It's well laid out with useful 'key points' and 'things to think about' concluding each chapter. Having read it through once, it is an excellent guide to dip into for information and guidance on key areas. It is a handy A5 size publication and will fit perfectly into an already full work-bag.

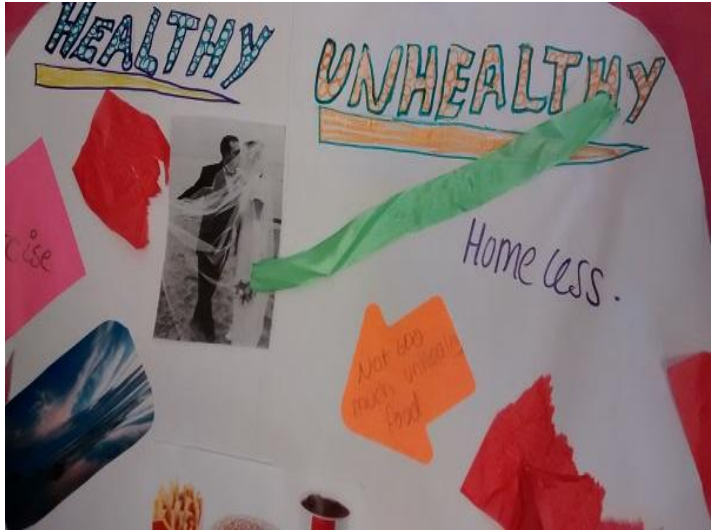
In summary, another excellent publication from the Fostering Network and one that will be used time and again in my work with looked after children and their foster carers.



YOUNG VOICES

What does health mean to young people who have experienced care?

The images below are a selection produced by young people using photos, collages and drawings to describe their health beliefs and experiences. Áine Kelly, who is running this project, is completing her doctorate at the Rees Centre and would like to thank the young people involved in this project for all their contributions and hard work.



EXTRAS

The Relationship between Poverty, Child Abuse and Neglect: An Evidence Review has been published by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation:

www.jrf.org.uk/report/relationship-between-poverty-child-abuse-and-neglect-evidence-review