

REES CENTRE

Research in Fostering and Education
University of Oxford Department of Education



UNIVERSITY OF
OXFORD

Rees Centre Newsletter #6 December 2013 Guest Edited by Billy – Takeover Day Participant

CONTENTS

[Research Updates](#)

The Impact of Fostering on Foster Carers' Children – Summary of Findings

[Events](#)

'Professional foster carers and committed parents: the challenges of providing permanence in long-term foster care'

[Rees Centre News](#)

TAKEOVER DAY SPECIAL – featuring Takeover Day participant, Billy

New research study announced

Recent blog postings

Conference presentations

Future presentations

Team Parenting for Children in Foster Care: A Model for Integrated Therapeutic Care

[Reviews](#)

The Brightness of Stars by Lisa Cherry

[Foster Care in the News](#)

[Young Voices](#)

Who needs family?

[Extras](#)

Entitlements inquiry

CONTACT THE REES CENTRE

Phone: +44 (0)1865 274050

Email: rees.centre@education.ox.ac.uk

Website: <http://reescentre.education.ox.ac.uk>

Blog: <http://reescentre.education.ox.ac.uk/blog/>

Twitter: <https://twitter.com/ReesCentre>

RESEARCH UPDATES

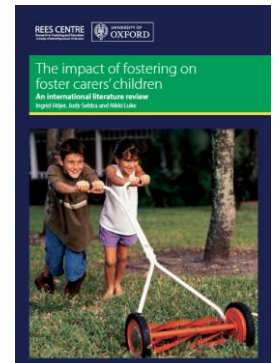
The Impact of Fostering on Foster Carers' Children – Summary of Findings

Our latest [international literature review](#), published in October, looks at findings from 17 academic studies across Europe and North America. The report finds that:

- Overall the children of foster parents are positive about their parents' decision to foster. However, the extent to which children were involved in the decision to foster varied a great deal and the perceptions of foster carers and their children in this regard did not always match.
- In one study, whereas 90% of foster carers reported having discussed fostering with their children, only 64% of the carers' children said this was the case. Older children were more likely to participate in the decision-making.
- In another study, around 75% of foster parents' children reported they had a 'very good' or 'rather good' relationship with foster siblings. Carers' children reported that families felt closer after they started to foster because they perceived themselves as part of the fostering team. According to the parents, fostering increased the caring and empathy skills of their own children and taught them about responsibility.
- Some of the studies give a more negative picture, with carers' children reporting that it was sometimes very hard to be in a family that fosters because fostered children took up a lot of family time. Carers' children sometimes tried to help their parents by not telling them about their own problems. Most children of carers (70%) said they had experience of knowing things about their fostered sibling that they could not tell their friends.
- The review found that meeting the children of other carers was helpful. It also found that the children of foster carers could have benefitted from more information from social workers about the specific behaviour of foster children, as well as how family life would change as a result of foster care.

Hard copies of this review can be requested from the Rees Centre.

[See other Rees Centre publications](#)



EVENTS

Monday 17 February 2014

5-6.30pm, Rees Centre, 15 Norham Gardens Oxford OX2 6PY

'Professional foster carers and committed parents: the challenges of providing permanence in long-term foster care'.

Professor Gillian Schofield, University of East Anglia

The seminar is open to all, free to attend and will be followed by drinks. No need to book.

Thursday 16 January 2014

'Core concepts for parenting and fostering teenagers in the future'.

First in the series: *Teenagers in Foster Care: The critical role of carers and other adults.*

By invitation only.

For further details, please contact rees.centre@education.ox.ac.uk.

REES CENTRE NEWS

What is Takeover Day?

Takeover Day gives children and young people the chance to work with adults for the day and be involved in decision-making. Children benefit from the opportunity to experience the world of work and make their voices heard, while adults and organisations gain a fresh perspective on what they do.

We hope this will help break down barriers between generations and encourage children's active involvement in their communities.

You can read all about Takeover Day on this website - http://www.childrenscommissioner.gov.uk/takeover_day

My name is Billy and I am currently doing Takeover Day at the Rees Centre. I have enjoyed it so much and would love to stay longer. I have interviewed Judy Sebba about what the Rees Centre does and how it helps everyone in care, including the carers themselves. This will be available to watch on the Rees Centre website soon. I have also been interviewed about what it is like to be a teenager and what other people think of teenagers. This will be part of the seminar series on teenagers in foster care.

I would like to thank all the staff at the Rees Centre for allowing me to take part in 'Takeover Day' at the Rees Centre. It has been a fantastic experience and I can use some skills I learned and take them forward with me in later life.

The Educational Progress of Looked After Children in England: Linking Care and Educational Data. Funded by the Nuffield Foundation February 2014 – April 2015.

The study will explore the relationship between educational outcomes, children's care histories and individual characteristics, and practice and policy in different local authorities. Interviews with 36 children in six local authorities and with their carers, teachers, social workers and Virtual School staff will complement the statistical analyses. The project should identify ways to improve educational outcomes, influence resource priorities, policy, and the future development of databases used to monitor outcomes.

The research will try to identify the key factors contributing to the low educational outcomes of children in care in secondary schools in England. It will do this by linking national care and educational databases which will help us to understand how to improve attainment and progress. The project will look at how school outcomes are influenced by individual child characteristics (e.g. gender, ethnicity and socio-economic status), placement stability, school stability, length of time in care and the characteristics of foster carers. It will also investigate what local authorities, schools, Virtual Schools, social workers or foster carers can do that appears to improve the attainment and progress of secondary school pupils in care and what differences the relationship between these services can make to outcomes.

If you would like to know more about this research, please get in touch with the Rees Centre.

Rees Centre Blog

We welcome your comments on the following topics:

- How can service managers make children's lives better? – by Ian Sinclair
<http://reescentre.education.ox.ac.uk/about-us/how-can-service-managers-make-childrens-lives-better/>
- Young people's difficulties with executive functioning – by Mimi Kirke-Smith at City University
<http://reescentre.education.ox.ac.uk/about-us/young-peoples-difficulties-with-executive-functioning/>
- How can fostering providers support carers' children? – by Harry Edworthy, 5Fostering
<http://reescentre.education.ox.ac.uk/about-us/how-can-fostering-providers-support-carers-children/>

Recent Conference Presentations

16 November 2013/Irish Foster Carers' Association Conference – Judy presented a keynote and a workshop on current Rees Centre research and participated in a panel debate on the Future of Fostering.

October and November 2013 – Judy presented at two conferences for social workers on 'What have we learned about fostering services from the research at the Rees Centre?'

In September, Nikki spoke about the work of the Rees Centre at the International Foster Care Research Network conference in Padova. The many excellent talks at the conference included one by Roger Bullock on a comparison of data on children entering the care system in 1980 and 2010, and Roger has kindly given us permission to report the key details here.

CARE COMPARISON 1980-2010

The report, co-authored by Sarah Blower, has now been published in BAAF's *Adoption and Fostering* journal ¹. The authors compared the use of different types of placement for samples of children and young people entering care in England (and in one case Wales) in 1980 (450 children) and 2010 (430 children).

A number of key differences were shown:

- Fewer children in the sample left care within six months of entry in 2010, but more left after 6-12 months; there was no difference in the proportion staying for over a year.
- The proportion of children at the extreme ends of the age range had risen, with around twice as many under-1s and over-15s entering care in 2010.
- The use of children's homes – both when first entering care and following the disruption of foster care placements – was far lower in 2010 (2% of placements compared with 23% in 1980).
- Alongside this, there has been a rise in the use of foster care (from 42% to 75% of placements) and kinship care (from 3% to 10%), with more choice of specialist provision including parent-and-baby placements.
- There was no difference in the overall number of placement moves for short-stay children (those in care for under 6 months).
- For those still in care after 12 months, there had been a small but significant reduction in placement moves, from 77% in 1980 to 62% in 2010. However, there was no change in the proportion of children who experienced three or more moves in that time.

The authors caution that the context has changed for some groups; for example, young offenders would have gone into care in 1980 but are now the responsibility of other agencies, whereas the category of 'asylum seeker' did not exist in 1980. They also note shifts over time both in the complexity of cases and the responsibilities of foster carers. Finally, they raise the question of how the findings resonate with Governmental guidelines requiring the agreement of permanency plans by the time of the child's four-month review.

Forthcoming Presentations

11 December 2013, DfE Partnership Learning Day for Fostering Providers – Judy and Nikki will present a session on Rees Centre research and the importance of evaluation.

11 December 2013, BAAF Independent Fostering Providers Forum – Judy and Nikki will present a session on Research in Fostering.

¹ Bullock, R. and Blower, S., 2013. Changes in the nature and sequence of placements experienced by children in care, 1980–2010. *Adoption & Fostering*, 37(3), pp.268-283.

Team Parenting for Children in Foster Care: A Model for Integrated Therapeutic Care
Jeanette Caw with Judy Sebba Foreword by Robbie Gilligan
Book launch 20 November 2013

Around 50 people including foster carers, professionals, managers and researchers attended the launch of the book on Team Parenting by Jeanette Caw, previously Head of Therapy at Core Assets, with Judy Sebba, Director of the Rees Centre.

The book describes how professionals can work together with foster carers to create stable and therapeutic foster placements. *Team Parenting for Children in Foster Care* describes a model for supporting children in care which involves foster carers and professionals working together in the best interests of the child. This book sets out the key principles of Team Parenting – to meet the needs of troubled young people in an integrated way and incorporate therapy within a wider team of social workers, therapists, psychologists and foster carers – as well as the theory behind it and interventions used. It details how the approach contributes to the development and progress of looked after children and each chapter includes examples to illustrate how Team Parenting works in practice.

Robbie Gilligan, Professor of Social Work from Trinity College Dublin welcomed the book describing it as bringing together evidence and experience and demonstrating wisdom and passion. He noted that it was accessible without over-simplifying and had the capacity to change lives.

Copies are available from Jessica Kingsley Publications.



REVIEWS

The Brightness of Stars

Lisa Cherry

Kindle edition, £2.96

Stories of adults who came through the British care system

From the outset, I went into reading this book not quite knowing the context of the book other than stories of being in care. I read the horror stories of abuse by people whose job it was to safeguard the wellbeing of the children within their care. But the shock was the emptiness these children feel of not belonging, being on the outside, unable to allow themselves to let anyone get close; the use of words to reflect their feelings; I too can relate to this as I sometimes feel that once a child becomes ratified in court that the social workers expect them to start moving on, social workers talk about giving them support but this is often limited. I don't blame the social workers who have too many competing demands, red tape that engulfs them, spoiling the reason they came into the role - which was to work with children.

It is plain to see that these children were failed by a system meant to protect them; part of me feels ashamed that they perceived their lives as a black hole. As a foster carer it hurts me to feel that I cannot get in, but in reflecting on the book, the poignant stories show personal resilience and like a phoenix they rise up out of the fire reborn and using their life experiences to help others through the perils of being in care. I feel the book could help those working in the child care sector to understand children from a looked after perspective.

Reviewed by Alison Donnelly, Foster Carer.

FOSTER CARE IN THE NEWS

New research reveals cost effectiveness of support care, The Fostering Network, 25 September 2013

<https://www.fostering.net/news/2013/new-research-reveals-cost-effectiveness-support-care>

Fostering: Inspections of independent fostering agencies: the framework and evaluation schedule and grade descriptors, Ofsted, 25 September 2013

<http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/fostering-inspections-of-independent-fostering-agencies-framework-and-evaluation-schedule-and-grade>

£100 million to support the education of children in care, Department of Education, 1 October 2013

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/100-million-to-support-the-education-of-children-in-care>

Charity chiefs back 'once in a generation' change to fostering law, Daily Telegraph, 9 October 2013

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/politics/10364783/Charity-chiefs-back-once-in-a-generation-change-to-fostering-law.html>

Consultations on proposals to improve permanence for looked after children, Research In Practice,

<http://www.rip.org.uk/news/549-consultation-on-proposals-to-improve-permanence-for-looked-after-children>

Transforming lives of children and young people in care, Cardiff School of Social Sciences, Cardiff University, 22 October 2013

<http://www.cardiff.ac.uk/socsi/newsandevents/news/transforming-lives-of-children-and-young-people-in-care.html>

New guidance to provide care leavers with good housing options, CELCIS, 22 October 2013

http://www.celcis.org/news/entry/new_guidance_published_to_help_care_leavers#

Government publishes Care Leaver strategy, Children and Young People Now, 29 October 2013

[Care leaver strategy: a cross-departmental strategy for young people leaving care \(PDF\)](#)

Why are love and care no longer part of child social work?, The Guardian, Weds 6 November 2013

http://www.theguardian.com/society/2013/nov/06/social-work-looked-after-children-love-care?CMP=tw_t_f

Getting It Right for Children in Need: Speech to the NSPCC, Department of Education, 12 November 2013

<https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/getting-it-right-for-children-in-need-speech-to-the-nsppc>

Curriculum guide for planning and supporting permanence, College of Social Work, 14 November 2013

<http://www.tcsw.org.uk/Curriculum-Guides/>

"If Only Someone had Listened", Office of the Children's Commissioner Inquiry into Child Sexual Exploitation in Gangs and Groups, 25 November 2013

http://www.childrenscommissioner.gov.uk/content/publications/content_743

Care Leavers' Stories Project Maps Changes to Welfare State, The Guardian Social Care Network, 25 November 2013

<http://www.theguardian.com/social-care-network/2013/nov/25/care-leavers-stories-project?CMP=>

YOUNG VOICES

From Scott, a care-experienced member of *A National Voice*.

Who needs family?

I come from a dysfunctional family who has no idea what it means to care for a child. Growing up without family I was always trying to find a substitute. Something inside me felt the need to trace my birth family and try to make them love me, I just wanted to belong. After 18 years of searching, 18 years of birthdays and Christmas just waiting by the letterbox for a card or a gift to receive nothing, I finally found my family. They did not accept me, they wasn't proud, they didn't love me and they didn't appear to have missed me. I blamed myself because it was only me that they didn't want and I questioned "why me?" I was upset for a long time simply because I felt unwanted and rejected but then I asked myself "what is family?" Were these insidious people who rejected me at birth my family? No, family are the people who claimed me. In good, in bad, in parts or in whole, they were the ones who showed up, who stayed in there, regardless. It wasn't just about blood relations or shared chromosomes, but something wider, bigger. We have all had many families over time. Our family of origin, the family we created, and the groups we moved through while all of this was happening: friends, lovers, sometimes even strangers. None of them perfect, and we couldn't expect them to be. You can't make any one person your world. The trick was to take what each could give you and build your world from it.

So what I had been searching for I had all along but I was blinded by a burning desire to find my creators. That's another question in itself – "who created me?" My parents? No, they merely created my physical form and nothing more. Who I am inside and who I have become was of no credit to my genetic creators, but instead my friends.

Being in care is very distressing and many of us put on this "suit of armour" which projects a false image to the world. This suit hides our true self and tries to protect it from harm. This suit often projects anger and avoidance and society judges us based on the actions of our suit. But some people see beyond our suit and look deeper, they see us for who we are inside and stand by us. They look beyond our behaviour, beyond our front and they believe in us, and see the locked up potential within us. These people come in many forms; teachers, social workers, youth workers, regular citizens and also friends. These people help us to break free of our barriers and over time allow us to remove our suit and be proud to be who truly are.

So, to summarise. Being in care and having no family sucks, but if enough people are there for us, fight for us, stand by us, hold us and just reassure us that we belong then the desire for blood family will fade away. We may be in care, we may be "messed up", "weird" or whatever labels society feels they need to stamp us with but before all these labels we are people, we are human beings and all human beings need and deserve to belong and be loved. Without a place to belong and without people to belong to we will always wear our suit but with a family of if friends and people who understand, and provide unconditional regard and / or love, our potential is infinite.

EXTRAS

http://www.thewhocarestrust.org.uk/data/files/Entitlements_Inquiry/Entitlements_Inquiry_Summary_Report_-_FINAL.pdf

Above is the link for the new entitlements enquiry. A new project that went together to see if looked after young people knew their entitlements. Very interesting report with some shocking outcomes.

Illustrated by Billy, 15. Takeover Day Participant