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What is the relationship between being in care and the educational outcomes of children? Systematic review published

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“my pathway plan is not a true representation of my actual needs.”

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Education Select Committee Inquiry into mental health and wellbeing of looked after children

The Who Cares? Trust has a new website Propel to help care leavers into higher education

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RESEARCH UPDATES

International Systematic Review: What is the relationship between being in care and the educational outcomes of children?

Our latest international review used systematic review principles to explore the effect of the care system on educational outcomes. Twenty eight relevant studies (including two reviews) from the UK, USA, Australia and Canada were identified.

Overall the review found that there is a correlation between being in care and educational outcomes, but that this relationship is mediated by a number of individual, family and environmental risk factors. Although the evidence is mixed, there was little support for the claim that being in foster or kinship care per se is detrimental to the educational outcomes of children in care.
The finding that care does not appear to be damaging, on average, to children's education should focus efforts on proactive strategies aimed at providing services for children which will enable them to thrive. It is important that we hold the care system accountable for providing young people with opportunities to succeed.

The full report and the Key Messages can be viewed and downloaded from our website here. We are also happy to post out hard copies for free. Please email your request to: reescentre@education.ox.ac.uk

**Perspectives on assessing foster carers: A cross-country comparison of the factors that contribute to successful placements (doctoral student Vânia Pinto)**

This research study aims to investigate and describe the characteristics of foster carers that are associated with better outcomes for children and young people and will collect data from young people, foster carers and supervising social workers in both England and Portugal.

The **pilot study** was completed last month. 15 focus groups took place with a final sample of 27 supervising social workers, 26 foster carers, 10 care leavers (within five years of leaving care) and 7 young people in care (16-17 years old). This part of the project has helped us to better understand each group’s perspective on what is meant by a successful placement. It has also led to revisions of the research instruments for each country context.

The second and **main part of the study** will start in November. A total of 700 foster carers will be involved along with their supervising social workers. Fostering providers will be selected throughout England and in Portugal.

By using standardized measures, it is hoped that this research will contribute to the selection of good foster carers in different cultural contexts.

Further information from vania.pinto@education.ox.ac.uk

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**UPCOMING EVENTS**

**Public Seminar: Educational Progress of Looked After Children in England - Linking Care and Educational Data.**

**Monday 30 November 2015**

5-6.30pm followed by drinks.

**Seminar Room A, Department of Education, University of Oxford**

15 Norham Gardens Oxford OX2 6PY

Speakers will be Professor Judy Sebba and Dr Nikki Luke from the Rees Centre, Professor Steve Strand, Department of Education, University of Oxford and Professor David Berridge from the School of Policy Studies, University of Bristol. 

Respondent: Emma Ing, Her Majesty’s Inspector (HMI), Ofsted

Further information: [http://reescentre.education.ox.ac.uk/our-events/](http://reescentre.education.ox.ac.uk/our-events/)
Áine Kelly (doctoral student Rees Centre) has recently been appointed as an independent advisor for the BMJ Patient Panel. She is also an independent member of the Fostering Panel for Buckinghamshire County Council.

Conference presentations
Dr Nikki Luke and Dr Christina Plafky presented at the 8th International Foster Care Research Conference, University of Siegen, 17-18th September. Also presenting were Rees Centre doctoral students Aoife O’Higgins and Vânia Pinto.

Japanese Lecture Tour
Judy visited Japan 3rd-9th September 2015 giving lectures and seminars and attending meetings at the central government office, Nippon Foundation, Ritsumeikan University and Mie Prefecture.

Rees Centre Blog
We welcome your comments on the latest posting to our blog: How did I get here? Journey from care to PhD student

FOSTER CARE IN THE NEWS

Massive rise in number of children in care under coalition Children and Young People Now, 23 June 2015
Children in care should stay until 25 - children’s commissioner BBC News, 8 July 2015
How good is the social care sector at building an evidence base? Guardian Social Care Online, 7 July 2015
Evaluation of the Face to Face service: using a solution-focused approach with children and young people in care or on the edge of care (PDF) NSPCC 6 July 2015
Achieving emotional wellbeing for looked after children: a whole system approach (PDF) NSPCC 6 July 2015
Leading charities warn over 10,000 children at risk because 91% of the UK adult population don’t know what private fostering is BAAF, 6 July 2015
Care leavers transition to adulthood National Audit Office 17 July 2015
Councils ‘turning their backs on care leavers’ BBC News, 17 July 2015
Most vulnerable care leavers receive less support BBC News, 8 August 2015
What can be done to support young people leaving care? Guardian Social Care, 18 August 2015
Life story books giving adopted children memories of their past The Guardian, 31 July 2015
Good childhood report Children’s Society, August 2015
Children in care and care leavers survey 2015 Office of the Childrens Commissioner 14 August 2015
Only a quarter of young people in foster care stay put past 19 Children & Young People Now, 22 August 2015
Institutional language has no place in children’s homes Guardian Social Care Network, 26 August 2015
BOOK REVIEW

Assessing Adoptive and Foster Parents: Improving Analysis and Understanding of Parenting Capacity.
Edited by Joanne Alper and David Howe  JKP £20.69 Kindle Edition £14.94

I was excited when asked to review this book as there is a paucity of literature focussed specifically on undertaking assessments of foster carers and adopters, thus any addition to the short list is most welcome

Having said that, there are in particular two notable publications which have been widely used to date, namely ‘Undertaking a Fostering Assessment’ by Roger Chapman and ‘Making Good Assessments’ by Pat Beesley; the former taking a largely checklist approach whilst the latter is a rather more in depth exploration of theory and practice.

‘Assessing Adoptive and Foster Parents’ differs from the books mentioned above as it is a collection of essays covering a range of topics relevant to assessment and parenting capacity written by some of the leading experts in the field. From Kim Golding’s explanation of how parenting children who have suffered complex trauma affects carers and Julie Selwyn’s helpful comparison of UK assessments with the approaches of other countries through to Jonathan Baylin’s article on the nature of the parenting brain, the book offers the reader an insight in to the wide range of skills required by adoptive and foster parents.

So who is this book aimed at? It would be true to say that in all likelihood experienced assessors will already be aware of the subject matter given that the contributors have written elsewhere in more depth on the topics covered; for instance, Kim Golding and Dan Hughes’ book ‘Creating Loving Attachments’ provides considerably more detail regarding parenting with PACE. However, what this book does very well is provide an excellent introduction to the key concepts social workers need to understand in order to undertake assessments that go beyond the simple tick box approach to gathering information. As such I would suggest it is particularly helpful for those social workers new or returning to the assessment process, whetting the appetite for a more comprehensive exploration of the topics covered and would therefore thoroughly recommend it.

Reviewed by Mark Reed, Social Worker

YOUNG VOICES

“I had become very good at telling people what I thought they wanted to hear so my pathway plan is not a true representation of my actual needs.”

When I was a teenager in care I didn’t like to see my social workers; I wanted as little contact with them as possible. I just wanted to be normal like my friends! As far as all my friends were concerned I lived in a normal house with normal parents and I had definitely not been abused. I rarely went to my LAC reviews because they would be during school hours and I loved going to school – school was the only place that I could forget about my home life and pretend I was normal. I also hated filling in the forms so I would always lie and say that everything was fine, even if it wasn’t. My answers would be as short as possible and straight to the point. During the most important years (leading up to my move to independence) I had too many social workers coming and going. None of them stayed around long enough to get to know me or assess my capabilities or vulnerabilities. I was very shy back then so I wouldn’t have openly talked about my feelings to anyone – not even my foster carer. I had become very good at telling people what I thought they
wanted to hear so my pathway plan is not a true representation of my actual needs.

To read more of her personal blog:

https://ainerosekelly.wordpress.com/2015/09/23/preparing-for-independence/

EXTRAS

Announcement of Education Select Committee Inquiry into mental health and wellbeing of looked after children


New website aims to propel care leavers into higher education

Propel is a new, fully searchable website, which provides care leavers with information on the support available to them from colleges and universities offering higher education (HE) courses across the UK. The website, developed by The Who Cares? Trust, a voice and champion for children in care and care leavers, aims to inspire more care-experienced young people to see that they could further their ambitions by going to university or college.

Young people considering applying for an HE course at college or university - and the professionals supporting them - will be able to access full information about each institution’s pastoral and financial provision for care leavers, as well as inspirational stories from care-experienced students. Using Propel, young people will be able to make an informed choice about the right course at the right institution for them and help them ensure that they access all the support to which they are entitled, reducing the numbers of care leavers forced to drop out.

For more information, please visit www.propel.org.uk