

1: Our lives in foster care: what it feels like to be given a new family | Opinion | The Guardian

Findings from questionnaire responses from 1, children and young people living in a children's home, and 1, children and young people living with foster carers include an increase in the number of children saying they had been helped to understand why they came into care - this was greater for those living in children's homes.

It can also be a good thing, as weird as that sounds. Some children come from terrible situations within their biological families and they will be helped in a home where there is love and support; at times foster care can provide more opportunity and a better quality of life than a traditional family. For me, it was a mixed bag. I had both good and bad experiences during my 12 years in state care. I went into my first long-term placement when I was 7 years old. At first, I was the only girl in the home, with three boys. By the time I was moved, five years later, there were six boys there, and I was still the only girl. Only one of the boys was my biological brother. During my time in that home, I was physically and sexually manipulated. So many things went on there, but only my outbursts were reported to my social worker. I even was put in the home of a different member of that family so that the foster parent would continue getting paid. I spent the rest of my seven years in state care constantly being moved from home to home. In at least five of my homes, I lived with foster parents who were newly licensed or ones who had never had foster children, much less a teenager who had been emotionally, physically and sexually abused. But I had a few good short-term, or respite, foster parents, and they are the ones who are still in my life today. I was 18 and pregnant when I went into her home. She made me feel so welcome. I was moved from her home after a different parent had finished her training hours to be licensed and wanted to try fostering. I still spend holidays and special occasions with her, and she is still a positive role model in my life. Throughout my time in care, I also developed close relationships with some of my social workers. I had one who talked to me as if I were a younger sister and I found I could trust her. That was a big deal for me, because one of my biggest challenges was learning to trust people. My advice to anyone going through the foster care system is to utilize the services offered to you. Counseling is beneficial, and although different cultures speak against emotional therapy, it can have a major impact on success after care. For me, I would never talk to anyone and I channeled my anger through defiance and opposition. Talk to a therapist so that you can be placed with the best available family and possibly be adopted. Although I have the privilege of being an adult now, sometimes I wish I could be a kid again. One day you will be able to make your decisions for yourself and you will be accountable and responsible for doing so. My life could have turned out differently had I not made the best of the better circumstances. Had I not kept in contact with those few good apples, I could have become a victim of the system but instead I remain victorious. Today I am an undergraduate at the University of Alabama, majoring in social work. I hope to earn my Master of Social Work degree, and do some public speaking and coaching for teenagers in foster care. I want to show them that no matter where they came from, they can succeed.

2: Fostering - Children's views

Each year, thousands of children get put into the care of local authorities, with the majority ending up in foster families. We asked our readers to share their experiences of fostering and tell.

Many concerns are expressed about foster care. Attachment issues, cost effectiveness, training, parental visitation, and other areas keep foster care workers concerned about the work they do. Everyone wants to minimize the number of placements for children, but this becomes difficult when foster homes are in short supply and placements break down for one reason or another. By understanding their positions, perhaps foster care placement breakdown can be avoided. Biological Children Denise Poland and Victor Groze based their study in literature that reported that the reaction of biological children to foster children was often responsible for specific placements being unsuccessful and for foster parents leaving the foster care program. These authors interviewed parents and their children about the foster care experience to try to find out how children had been prepared for the placement of a foster child, what difficulties arose in the family, and what suggestions they had for other families planning to foster a child. Both parents and children agreed that the most difficult issue was sharing parental time between children and foster children. The average age of the children answering the questionnaire was 11. This age is interesting because one might imagine that older children would not be as concerned with parental attention; this appears to be a faulty assumption. The children also wanted more information about what having a foster sibling would be like. Specifically, they did not feel prepared for the behavior problems many children brought to care. Both parents and children noted that the experience had helped biological children appreciate their own homes more. Children reported learning about how to care for children younger than themselves and generally, enjoying meeting and coming to care about children outside of their family. Some said they wanted to become foster parents themselves. Both parents and children felt that pre-training just for children should be offered prior to placement. Parents also suggested that children be allowed to meet other children who had had foster siblings in order to understand and discuss feelings about the process. Foster Children Another, often silent, partner crucial to understanding the foster care process is the foster child herself. In a article published in Child Welfare, Penny Ruff Johnson and colleagues describe interviews they conducted with 59 foster children about their feelings regarding foster care. All children were between 11 and 14 years of age and had been in placement between six months and two years. Many had had stable placements but a significant number had had multiple placements. For these children, the positives of coming into care far outweighed the negatives reported in this article. Very few reported serious problems in placement and almost all felt their foster parents were working hard to help them adjust to the placement. They saw both their neighborhoods and schools as superior in foster placement. Over half were involved in extracurricular activities in their school. These foster children spoke poignantly of the role of their case worker. One child was quoted as saying, "She saved my life by taking me out of my real home. In addition, they reported missing their old friends more than anyone else. Generally, these children saw their parents as needing a combination of material goods and temperamental changes before they could return home. Another area of concern to these children was the way they were taken into care. Many described being removed from school with police officers and case workers present. This was highly embarrassing to them and they felt that they were the ones who had done something wrong. One child remembered, "it seemed like we were going to jail. While many agreed that the state sometimes needs to intervene in families on behalf of children, they were deeply troubled by the way this was done. Family foster care placement: Child Welfare, 14 5 , Effects of foster care placement on biological children in the home. Child and Adolescent Social Work Journal, 10 1 ,

3: Non-Fiction Books about Adoption/Foster Care (books)

These facts about foster children shook me to my core. 9 things to know about kids in foster care. Plus an unforgettable view into their lives.

Two members of one London foster care team. Has she had another baby? A mother who has already had five children taken from her and adopted, has secretly given birth to a sixth child, Hannah, and has managed to conceal all trace of her existence from the police and social workers for the past year and a half. The mother refused to cooperate, has given no date of birth for the child, and the social worker is sceptical about whether Hannah is the real name, since she does not respond to it. A temporary foster home was found for Hannah by staff at the fostering placement unit last night. Kerry, who sits alongside Delores, calls to check how things are going. The foster carer, who has had very little sleep because of the unexpected arrival of a one-year-old, is sounding extremely distracted; she says the child looks well cared for but has not shown much sign of distress about the move, which she thinks might be a sign of an attachment issue with the mother. Every phone call reveals detail of some family catastrophe. This is the frontline of family breakdown. One of the managers compares the unit to air traffic control, trying to give a sense of the intensity and constancy of the pressure staff are under. Except in reality, it seems much more stressful. With aeroplanes, there are at least theoretical timetables to be kept to. No one knows when temporary parents will need to be found instantly. Kerry and Delores have to be there to catch the child and lead it to a new home, as swiftly as possible. The responsibility is enormous, the pay is only moderate and the carers have a peculiar status – somewhere between kindly volunteers and professionals. But the system is under unprecedented pressure. The phone rings again and Kerry hears that Jason, an year-old boy, will need to be found new parents because his mother has decided she can no longer look after him. He has been running away frequently, sometimes taking his seven-year-old brother with him, and recently he has started being violent towards his mother, who has mental health problems and is finding it very hard to cope. They are very compassionate and they like having kids in their house," Kerry says. A new home must be found for her, but the girl just wants to wait until her parents return. Every hour, new stories of catastrophe come down the phone line. For I have led a blameless life. I have trusted the Lord without wavering. She is a bright girl," she says, genuinely regretful. I do feel very sad. Being a looked-after child, there is a significant risk of having another child in the care system," Delores, who has worked as a social worker for 14 years, says. I have seen it a lot with children who were in care, in secure units, in foster care or residential care. More than half of all children in care leave school with no formal qualifications. Since the vast majority of children in care are in foster care, any improvements to these outcomes will have to come through reform of the fostering system, but inside this busy central-London office, staff are racing to meet the immediate task of finding a secure home for children, and the longer-term issues are not a priority. At the weekly planning meeting, four foster team members sit with Biri around a low table in a shabby office, the grey-blue carpet splattered with coffee stains. It can be a tense meeting because everyone knows the borough has a deficit of available carers, and staff are left crossing their fingers that there is no influx of children on a week when carers are in short supply. This means that if a white baby comes in this week, staff will have to choose between sending it to an ethnically mismatched family or dispatching the child to an independent fostering agency – a much more expensive alternative. We have to be creative with the limited resources we have. Every year allegations are made by children against carers that need to be investigated, and this, too, puts carers out of operation. For things to run smoothly there should be around registered carers, but the number is shrinking every year. We have more children needing to be in foster placements than the number of foster parents available," Biri says. Historically, foster carers were altruistic volunteers whose children had grown up and left home, leaving them with extra time and an empty room. But now couples have their children much later, and the children continue living at home much longer. By the time they have left home, their parents are often close to retirement age and have neither the time nor the inclination to foster. We are still not able to attract young foster carers. We are short of white and Muslim foster carers and we are short of black adopters," Biri says. It is clear from the state of the office carpets that

money is tight. The phones are old, the computers are old, there are old grey filing cabinets, pushed together at ugly angles, there are a lot of unhealthy, deadish plants, the walls are covered with stranded spots of Blu-Tack and dried-up sticky tape. Children have made posters designed to encourage potential carers to come forward. There are bits of food, snacks and treats at every desk. Staff flow back and forth to the kettle corner to put tupperware containers of lunch in the microwave, and at midday there is a powerful smell of vegetarian stew. Sometimes a baby just ends up here, amid the benign clutter, because there is nowhere for it to go straight away. A few weeks ago, a two-month-old was brought into the office, with nothing but the nappy she was wearing. One of the unit managers was holding her in her arms, on the phone, trying to find a home for her. By unfortunate coincidence, the two have almost exactly the same name, with only one letter difference – to protect their identity, we are calling them Mike and Myke. This is a formal monthly supervision meeting to make sure that the children are thriving and that Karen is looking after them well. They discuss the health of the older child, Mike, the son of crystal meth addicts, who has been living with Karen since he was three days old. Now he is lively, handsome boy, and smiles to show nice white teeth as he plays happily on the floor, talking to the Lego bricks. Karen picks him up and puts him on her knee; he sings: It might take longer. We have seen children with much more severe disabilities be adopted," Karen says. They would have to be completely committed. The parents of the younger boy both have severe learning difficulties and appear unable to care for their child. He has been taken into care because they neglected him. All they have to do is smile and you know what kind of life they have lived," she says. Their teeth are decayed beyond their years, she explains. You can see that. In some of the meetings, [the mother] has just sat there and cried. They leave earlier than the assigned time. He is meant to have contact with his parents three times a week. He needs to be adopted quickly," Delores says. The lives people have had," she says. Her own son comes home from school and stamps around from room to room with no shirt on looking for his football kit. The two babies crawl at his feet; he smiles at them, but is focused on his football training session. When they crawl into his room, he yells for his mother to get them out. A former teaching assistant in a school for children with disabilities, Karen, 43, specialises in fostering babies from birth. But she thinks prospective foster parents should understand the profound challenges the work poses. It is a very intense process. Day three – three weeks later "So he jumped out of the bedroom window? OK, the bathroom window. Did he take his stuff with him? He refused to take anything out of his suitcase," Kerry says. The failure of a placement is very bad news for the child, because every move carries fresh trauma with it. Part of the problem with not having enough carers available is that children get bounced around – the shortage of options can make the process very hit and miss. Delores is making a check call on the baby who was hidden by her mother for the first 18 months of her life. Today, doctors will carry out a full skeletal survey to see if there are any hidden broken bones. There is a chance that she could be adopted by the family that has taken several of her older siblings and the complicated process is underway. We need to do it as quickly and as safely as possible," Delores says. She moves from this case to think about arrangements for Unborn Baby T, whose due date is in the next day or so. The teenage mother has decided she will give the child away. So far, she has managed to conceal her pregnancy from her family and wants her baby to be adopted without their knowledge. The substance of these conversations is uniformly bleak. Delores thinks London has got worse since she was a child in the s. Parents are using more serious drugs – that has a huge impact on their parenting skills. And children getting drunk is much more normal now than it was before," she says. Delores and Kerry are not sentimental about their work. Their haziness is not because they are uncaring, more a reflection of the large numbers of cases they have to think about every day. They pour sympathy and concern into their phone calls, and their compassion feels genuine. But it can feel hard to keep it; this is such emotionally draining work," Delores says. She specialises in looking after difficult teenagers for the past year she has had a teenage mother and her baby staying with her and points out that there would be many other simpler ways to make a living. Little bits of money have gone; a little bit of jewellery. I go to court with them and see them up on robbery offences," she says. The benchmarks she sets herself for success are relatively low. But you have to take that as progress," she says.

4: About the children - AdoptUSKids

How to Deal With Living in Foster Care. In this Article: Staying Informed about Your Situation Coping Emotionally Planning for the Future Community Q&A Foster kids have a unique set of challenges to face.

Writing anonymously, they tell us their stories. The names of family members have been changed. I was supposed to stay for two days but ended up there for 10 years. But looking back I realise she got very little money to look after me and social workers should have guided her better. Being there did bring me a lovely big sister, who sadly died a few years ago, but her daughter is still in my life. I now work with children in care and with foster carers, and while I never really planned this as a career my own experience has given me the ability to see both sides and to try and put myself in the shoes of the children and young people I work with. The local authority had, and still have, a shortage of people willing to foster and I found myself moving away from the city where I grew up. This meant I lost my community, my school and also the friends I had known since nursery. Education was a particularly difficult issue as I enrolled in a school where everyone already knew one another. This combined with my inclination to withdraw emotionally on account of my early experiences meant that it was difficult to make new friends. After around 12 months I began to settle, the foster parents tasked with looking after me were in their 50s and had helped many children, some of whom had also experienced early trauma in life. Overall, looking back, my experiences are positive, although the initial transition was difficult. I wish that I had been prepared more for what happened – the move meant that my whole life was being uprooted and I went from a loss of parents to dealing with many other factors. We clicked instantly, and I ended up staying with her for two years. But after a while the difficulties of my past manifested in bulimia and depression. At age 17 I moved out. After the breakdown of the placement, Jenny made it clear that her door was always open. She was true to her word and we are still in touch today. As a child I came to her afraid, having been deprived of every liberty and associating home with violence and neglect. The secret life of a foster carer: In my first family there were only four of us, but with my second family there were seven children and it was never very personal or intimate. I felt like a leftover and like a piece of shit that was being carried around from family to family. I would have appreciated more dialogue and discussions, and explanations about what was happening. I learned a lot of bad things from the kids who were living in the same family some were from violent backgrounds and sometimes I was scared so I locked my bedroom door at night. I had two sets of carers over a year, both of whom cared very deeply for me. Did social services always get it right? Neither did my foster parents. But nobody is infallible, and on the whole, I had a good childhood. Neither sets of carers stayed within those boundaries, and it becomes extremely difficult for the person in care. I care about my foster parents deeply, but no one can replace my parents no matter how awful they were. My sister and I were fostered by a loving and caring family. I was four and she was six at the time. We do have two other brothers who were sent to two different foster carers, but we got to see them every now and then. My sister and I were in care with our family for 25 years, and we regard them as our family and love them very much. The most valuable thing I learned from my experience is that you should never give up on a child, even if they upset you. They just need the time, love, support and energy to get them on track. I did a lot of stupid things as a youngster but my mum never gave up on me.

5: Foster Care - Child Welfare Information Gateway

Children living in foster care want to feel that they have an ordinary family life. They do not like anything that marks them out as different (10). For example, they do not like statutory reviews interfering in normal life or being conducted in a place that may affect their privacy, such as at school or in the foster family home (9), (

For professionals About the children Children and teens enter foster care through no fault of their own, because they have been abused, neglected, or abandoned and are unable to continue living safely with their families According to the most recent federal data , there are currently more than , children in foster care in the United States. They range in age from infants to 21 years old in some states. The average age of a child in foster care is more than 8 years old, and there are slightly more boys than girls. Children and youth enter foster care because they have been abused, neglected, or abandoned by their parents or guardians. All of these children have experienced loss and some form of trauma. The median amount of time that a child spends in foster care is just over a year. More than half of the children in foster care will be reunified with their parents or primary caregivers, and nearly one-quarter will be adopted, many by their foster parents. Each year, approximately 20, youth will age out of the foster care system when they turn 18 or 21, or when they finish high school depending upon the state in which they live. These children are at increased risk of poor educational outcomes, experiencing homelessness, and being unemployed. Read more about why older youth need families. Young people talk about how being adopted changed their lives. Frequently asked questions about children in foster care AdoptUSKids foster care and adoption resource specialists respond to hundreds of questions about foster care and adoption, and an active community of families is always exchanging information on our Facebook page. Following are our responses to some of the questions that are frequently asked about the children in foster care. How many children are awaiting adoption in the United States? Of the , children in foster care, more than , of them are waiting to be adopted. Being an older child Having a particular racial or ethnic background Being part of a sibling group needing to be placed together as one unit Medical conditions Physical, mental, or emotional disabilities A child with special needs should not be confused with a child who requires special education. I see a lot of older children in photolistings like the one on AdoptUSKids. Why would I want to adopt an older child? Imagine being a teenager grappling with the transition into adolescence and independence all alone. That is the situation facing thousands of young people who face aging out of foster care alone every year. These teens need support, guidance, and family now and for the rest of their lives. Are brothers and sisters always adopted together? In an ideal world, the answer would be yes. Research suggests that siblings placed together experience lower risk of failed placements, fewer moves, and many emotional benefits. Even when siblings have been separated in foster care, the goal is to find them a safe, permanent home where they can grow up together. Read more about the benefits of adopting siblings. Things to do next:

6: My Experiences in Foster Care - Children's Rights

As a foster parent, you are a member of a team with the caseworker, the child's parents (if possible) and/or other relatives, and the child's law guardian, along with service providers and health care providers. This means that you are not alone in caring for the child.

Download Now 2 Ready to take the next step? Have a stable housing situation--you can either rent or own your residence--that provides enough for your foster child to grow. Demonstrate positive parenting skills that include patience, stability, maturity and love of children. Knowledge of child development is helpful, but not required. Willingness to work with foster care staff towards achieving identified goals for your foster child. A sense of humor and a lot of love! Support for Foster Parents Fostering can present challenges as you work towards healing for the child in your care. Bethany recognizes this and provides you with the tools and support you need to help your foster child thrive. This support can include: An orientation session Training on child development and trauma-informed parenting skills Ongoing support from a trained Bethany caseworker Foster parent support meetings hour crisis intervention services Respite care In addition to these services, Bethany provides you with monthly reimbursement expenses based on the level of care you provide. As you develop a relationship with your Bethany caseworker, be sure to communicate your educational and support needs so that we can ensure you thrive as a foster parent. We understand that fully-supported foster parents ultimately leads to a more stable and loving environment for the child in your care. Bethany is committed to ensuring that you have what you need to be the best foster parent you can be! If you have a home, and you like children, and you know how to treat children, I would say do it. You might be happy that you did. That is my passion. Over the next several years, they formed a relationship built on love, trust, encouragement, and stability that continues even after Vernon aged out of foster care. He knows he always has someone to come home to. Join us today in our effort to bring and keep more families together. DONATE Find a Location Contact a location near you to learn more about our adoption information meetings, local programs, and how you can get involved with your local branch.

7: 3 Ways to Deal With Living in Foster Care - wikiHow

Each year Ofsted asks children and young people, parents, carers, foster carers, adopters, staff and other professionals for their views about children's social care services.

Attending weekend events and summer camps connects kids and teens in foster care with peers who share similar experiences. Often, the relationships that form at Under One Sky endure while other connections “such as foster families, schools and activities” undergo constant changes. The Asheville-based nonprofit serves children in foster care and those who have been adopted. It happened over and over again during the four years he was in foster care. During that period, he had 11 different placements, he says. He recalls a day when he expected his foster mom to pick him up after school. By the time most kids are done with the system, having some kind of attachment anxiety is inevitable. As an adult, he continues to be involved with the organization as a counselor, speaker and advocate for kids in foster care, alongside his work for a property management company. Nothing horrific had happened to me, but we connect on a much deeper level when people around us are going through the same kinds of experiences. The kids see the same faces at camp and at long weekends, providing stable relationships in their changing lives, Delafield says. Under One Sky also strives to maintain a consistent staff. The organization employs three permanent staff members and 15 seasonal workers. They shake it off so quickly. Diane Delafield, right, describes her work with Under One Sky as a calling to provide children in foster care such as Robin, left, and Jayden, center with opportunities to build skills, form lasting relationships and find joy amid trauma and disruption. Photo courtesy of Under One Sky Village Foundation But the campers needed even more than a permanent family to heal all the ways they had been harmed by their experiences, Delafield says. Lacking the skills to bond with a new family, the campers needed opportunities to develop those capacities. Most of all, she explains, they needed one another as a sounding board for sharing experiences, hopes and fears. North Carolina has about 10, children and teens in foster care, an increase of 25 percent since Most of these young people have experienced more than one kind of of trauma, including parental incarceration, parental opioid addiction and family separation resulting from immigration laws. Neglect remains the primary reason children enter the system. Less than half the children return to their families of origin. Sadly, not all the kids feel homesick. He recounts a time when he craved Frosted Flakes, and his mom thought he ought to eat less sugar. She chose low-sugar Cheerios. While it may seem like a small compromise, it felt huge to him as it triggered memories of all the other losses he had suffered and how little control he had over the circumstances of his own life. Choose joy In addition to the seasonal camps, the children and teens meet between camps for adventures together, such as waterfall hiking at DuPont State Forest and visiting a trampoline park. One favorite outing was a trip to the French Broad Chocolate Factory. An Under One Sky participant describes their experiences in the program. Photo courtesy of Under One Sky Village Foundation The Junior Journey program offers skill building and fun to children ages seven to 11, and the Journey program goes from 11 to Referrals can come from social workers, agencies, teachers or the children themselves. This program develops emotional resilience in children so they can grow up to be resilient adults. Mind the gap Since Jan. General Assembly in To meet some of the needs of this group of young adults, Under One Sky created its Second Wind Transitional Program, which fills gaps left by the absence of family. Staff members take teens on campus visits, teach them to write resumes and connect them to work opportunities. Nivens became a participant in Second Wind and later a counselor for the program. Nivens likes to play piano, and he enjoys being a karaoke DJ. With Delafield, he leads workshops to teach children in foster care how to find needed resources such as laptops and mentors so they can rise above the circumstances of their brief lives. Among other donations, one patron gave the program Sky Lodge, a vacation rental in Mars Hill.

8: Foster Care - Bethany Christian Services

Children in foster care are more likely to have been exposed to substances in utero, have a higher rate of family psychiatric problems, are more likely to experience substance use in parents and caregivers (2- to 3-fold higher in victimized vs non-victimized children), are less likely to have had consistent prevention and primary care services.

Advanced Search Summary This paper reports some of the findings from a study Farmer et al. This is the first published study to ask children and young people placed with an independent fostering provider IFP about their views on the care they have received. Lord estimated that, in , there were eleven IFPs in operation. In , a national survey found ninety Sellick and Connolly, and, by , Fostering Network identified Independent fostering agencies assess, train, pay and support foster-carers and provide placements with their foster-carers for a fee. This fee is thought by local authorities to be significantly greater than the costs of providing an in-house placement and the use of IFP placements has put pressure on local authority child-care budgets. While local authorities have found it difficult to recruit and retain foster-carers, the number of carers joining IFPs has grown and studies have shown that their carers are generally satisfied with the support received, the fee and their professional status Bebbington and Miles, ; Ogilvie et al. Sellick and colleagues Sellick and Connelly, , , , ; Sellick, , have challenged negative views of IFPs. They have also drawn attention to how little is known about whether IFPs produce good outcomes for children and whether these outcomes are as good as or better than the outcomes of children living in local authority foster-care. Other studies have suggested that the participation of children and young people results in better decision making McNeish and Newman, However, a consistent finding is that children feel they have little say in decisions about their placements Fletcher, ; Buchanan, ; Lansdown, ; Morris, ; Morgan, Reaching the population of looked after children poses significant research challenges because obtaining adult the local authority and birth parent consents is difficult, the population is mobile and there may be a tendency for greater participation from children with better outcomes. The methods used e. Observing that greater dissatisfaction was expressed in a questionnaire that followed up an interview, Ward and her colleagues speculated that, due to the age and power differences between children and adults, youngsters might find it harder to express dissent during interviews. A few large-scale surveys of the views of looked after children have used the Who Cares? Trust, ; Timms and Thoburn, As with most surveys, although each attracted a reasonable response over , 2, and , respectively , return rates could not be calculated, as it was not known how many out of the total number of looked after children the magazine had reached. Other research studies Buchanan, ; Farmer et al. Morgan, , Although most of these studies and reports have small numbers of respondents, findings have been consistent. For example, when asked to express views about their placements, children and young people are surprisingly positive: Nevertheless, many children expressed ambivalence about being looked after: This paper reports some of the findings from a study Farmer et al. The views of children and young people were also sought and this article focuses on this part of the research. It is the first published study to ask children in IFP placements their views about the care they have received. Methodology This exploratory study utilized a prospective, repeated-measures design and was based on a consecutive sample of new placements of children aged five to fourteen who were placed by local authorities in England and Wales with one IFP, Foster Care Associates FCA , over a one-year period starting on 1 April The age range was chosen to exclude older adolescents, who might leave their placements before outcomes could be assessed one year later, and also very young children, as there was insufficient funding to prepare special materials for them. This may have excluded young people with more critical views. Placements lasting for less than eight weeks mostly respite and bridging placements and those used for the assessment of teenage mothers were also excluded from the study. The children were followed up one year after their initial placement or at the point of a move or disruption if this occurred earlier. Every local authority in England and Wales that made placements with FCA was sent information about the study and asked to allow brief postal questionnaires to be sent to each child. There was also a letter for social workers to send to birth parents, explaining the study and the child questionnaire. Social workers were invited to notify FCA if parental consent was withheld. Seven local

authorities refused to take part and twenty-three participated. FCA identified every child who met the sample criteria, giving a total sample of children. The researchers decided that questionnaires would only be sent to children aged eight to fourteen years, which reduced the sample to Questionnaires were given to each child eight weeks into placement and again one year later or at the time of a move. Foster-carers, FCA social workers and local authority social workers were also asked to complete questionnaires. Response rates The first questionnaire Time 1 was sent to children and young people who had been living with their FCA foster-carer for eight weeks. This was completed by children: Twelve months later, a third of the children had already left their placement, despite the sample criteria excluding all short-term arrangements. The second questionnaire Time 2 was sent to the children still fostered by FCA. This was returned by children 56 per cent , including who had remained with the same foster-carer matched cases and forty-one who had moved within the agency to another FCA carer. The average age of respondents was eleven years old. However, only fifty-four children and their carers completed questionnaires at both time pointsâ€”19 per cent of the eligible sample. The low response rates mean that the results cannot be claimed to be representative, but this is typical of studies with this design and illustrates the difficulty of following up children when placements are so insecure. Analysis It was possible to code some responses e. The data were explored using means and frequencies. A check was also undertaken to examine whether the children who remained with FCA were different in any way from those who had left. Those who had left FCA were significantly older than those who did not average age The young people who had left were also more troubled. Sixty-five per cent had scores in the abnormal range of the strengths and difficulties questionnaire Goodman, compared to 49 per cent of those who remained. There were no statistical differences between the fifty-four matched cases and the larger number of returns at Time 2. Most children and young people had responded to questions with one or two words or a single sentence. Word counts and matrices were used to develop themes and categories Dey, and these were informed by the statistical analysis. This combined approach, using quantitative and qualitative data, enabled information to be compared across cases. The views of the children and young people are reported as they were written, with no attempt to change spelling or grammar. The findings from this study are reported first from the children who returned questionnaires eight weeks into placement and the children who returned questionnaires a year later after remaining with the same foster-carer. Second, the more negative views of the forty-one children and young people who had had a change of carer are described. Findings The children and young people were asked at eight weeks and twelve months later to tick a happy, neutral or sad face to show how they felt most of the time about living with their foster-family. The vast majority 85 per cent ticked the happy face at both time points. Written comments reinforced these positive findings. Children stated that they liked their foster-carers and appreciated being loved and treated as one of the family. Often, they mentioned animals, sports, outings, food or doing things together with their foster-family. Some reflected on what was different in their new home: The family is really loving and caring they make me feel apart of the family. The youngsters were also asked if there was anything they disliked about the foster-home. A third could not identify anything they disliked and this increased to just over half with no dislikes a year later. The most frequently reported dislike was being away from home and unable to see their family or friends. A few eight in the first questionnaire and ten in the second were not getting on well with their foster-families, felt that they did not belong or complained about boredom or the behaviour of their foster-siblings. Inevitably, this prompted some sad reflections at both stages, but sometimes the difference was viewed positively: Here are two more detailed comments: Very happy and proud of myself for making it work so far in this foster home. However, 14 per cent of the responses at Time 2 were uncertain or negative: Some could not see their friends as much as they wanted to, and two expressed frustration about their friends being subjected to police checks. School Initially, 52 per cent of the children and young people indicated that they were happy with their school and this increased to 62 per cent after a year. However, at both stages, about a third ticked the neutral face to express their views about school and 7 per cent were unhappy at school twelve months into placement. Most provided one-word answers, but some offered more detailed responses: Going good with results but my behaviour and attitude needs to improve. After twelve months, one young person was still not attending school. A few emphasized that being fostered by FCA was better than being in the care of the local authority.

A few mentioned holidays organized by FCA. Sometimes, their enthusiasm was obvious: They take me out on trips and we had a football tournament that was fantastic and I won a medal and we came third. Some youngsters fourteen in the second questionnaire really appreciated being placed with their foster-family and being loved and cared for: Make me feel loved and wanted. Views about their FCA social workers were also very positive. Initially, twelve children and young people expressed negative views about their FCA social worker: However, after twelve months, there were only three negative comments e. Here are some of their comments: She is nice, laughs a lot and kind. Good he looks after me sometimes when no one else can. Yes, got me into a football team. Helped me with ma education. Yes, they have gave me contact with my sister. Initially, a few complaints were recorded about being removed from their family, about the way they had been treated e. However, at the second stage, removal from home was not attributed to FCA and complaints eleven were now about measures that had probably been put in place to support the placement: Yes I am very unhappy going to therapy! I keep having different respite carers which stresses me out.

9: Britain's foster care crisis | Society | The Guardian

Children in the foster care system are usually in state's custody for reasons beyond their control—usually abuse and neglect. Abuse and neglect have an impact on a child's behavior as well as on their mental state as studies are now confirming.

Children want different things to suit their individual circumstances, but they all desire: With some exceptions, foster children generally feel positive about being in foster care. Ask them and yourself if they are being made to feel different and how you can overcome this together. Think about how you arrange reviews, meetings, contact and everyday events like medical assessments. Offer to help children work out an explanation that they can give to school and friends about their current family situation. Ask yourself how you can help children feel listened to, empowered and in control of their own lives. Ask them the same questions too. Think about how you can help children maintain relations with their birth families. Encourage children in their pursuits and ask them if they are getting enough encouragement from elsewhere. Find out whether the children you are working with feel valued, respected and loved and think about what you can do to promote these positive feelings.

What we know from research

Ask children what they want

It is important to find out what children think about foster care. Often, children and young people may not feel free to say what they really think: Some studies have had a low response rate and in general it is often easier to find out the views of teenagers and children in permanent foster care than those of younger children and children in temporary care 7 , 8. In spite of these reservations, when children are consulted very similar themes emerge and we can be fairly confident that the views described below are true for the great majority of children 9. Because of their individual circumstances children and young people do not want exactly the same things, but in the research studies referred to above, they all report similar general needs and wishes. For many children foster care can be a good experience most of the time. Research studies show 3 that a sizeable majority of children valued being in care, did not want to return to their birth families, and did not think that being in care was the reason for their difficulties. Help children not to feel different

Children living in foster care want to feel that they have an ordinary family life. They do not like anything that marks them out as different For example, they do not like statutory reviews interfering in normal life or being conducted in a place that may affect their privacy, such as at school or in the foster family home 9 , 11 ,

Maintain relations with birth families

Nearly all fostered children want to retain a relationship with their birth family and nearly all worry about not seeing their mothers, fathers, brothers and sisters. Many feel that the relationship they have with brothers and sisters can represent what is best about their family. Additionally, many children worry about their birth families while they are away: Help them understand and explain why they are in care

Many children are worried about the reasons why they came into care and how long they are likely to be there. One study 16 shows that about two thirds of children do not know and understand why they entered care in the first place. Trying to produce an account of what has happened which can then be explained to others, particularly at school, preoccupies many children. There is also evidence that children have to accept the reason themselves, otherwise placements are more likely to break down

Listen to where they want to be

Not all children and young people want the same things, but they all want to be listened to and to feel that they have choice and control 7 ,

Children do not like being moved suddenly and they want to be involved in their own care planning 7 , 9 , 12 , 13 ,

We also know from research 3 that if children are not happy in a placement and are unmotivated to make it work, it will probably break down. If they cannot be where they want to be, they appreciate an explanation of the options. Value, respect, encourage and appreciate children

Children need to feel that: If there is serious conflict of interest between the two groups of children, or if the carer feels that their own children may be at risk in any way, most foster carers will put the needs of their own children first. This can make foster children feel that they are treated less favourably and trigger a downward spiral, which may result in placement breakdown. It is important to recognise this and intervene early.

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