Final Report

Evaluation of Fostering Wellbeing

Professor Alyson Rees and

Bridget Handley

July 2022

CASCADE Infrastructure Partnership

Our expertise brings together an exceptional partnership. CASCADE is the leading centre for evaluative research in children's social care in the UK and sits within the School of Social Sciences (SOCSI), a leading centre of excellence in social sciences and education research with particular expertise in quantitative methods. The Centre for Trials Research (CTR) is an acknowledged national leader for trials and related methods, the School of Psychology was ranked 2nd for research quality in the most recent Research Excellence Framework and SAIL provides world-class data linkage. Together we believe we can create a step-change in the quality and use of children's social care research that is unparalleled in the UK. Specifically, we can deliver high quality trials and evaluations; link data to understand long-term outcomes and involve service users (our public) in all elements of our research. Our intention is that these three strands will interact to generate an unrivalled quality of research.

Contents

Acknowledgements

We want to thank the local authority regions involved in the Fostering Wellbeing training programme, their foster carers, teachers, health professionals, social workers and senior local authority staff, all of whom gave up their time to make this evaluation possible.

Terminology

Children looked-after – The definition of children looked-after (children in care) is as in the Children Act 1989. A child is looked after by a local authority if a court has granted a care order to place a child in care, or a local authority's children's services department has cared for the child for more than 24 hours. The Local Authority can have either full or shared parental responsibility.

Children in public care are placed with foster carers, in residential homes or with parents or other relatives (under certain circumstances).

Wellbeing – We use the Fostering Network's definition which refers to the five basic needs: social, physical, emotional, cultural and learning.

Co-professional – We use the term co-professional for those professionals who were involved in the study, who were not foster carers.

Executive Summary

This is an evaluation of a pan-Wales pilot of the Fostering Wellbeing programme.

For the evaluation:

- We have interviewed 26 delegates one month after attending the masterclasses.

- We have interviewed three managers one month after attending the masterclasses.

- We have observed each of the five masterclasses.

- We have surveyed 105 participants who attended a masterclass.

- We have interviewed five facilitators.

- We have had access to attendance and attrition data.

- We have had access to the evaluations collected by The Fostering Network.

- We have re-interviewed 12 delegates, 12 months after attendance at the masterclasses. to see how far they have been able to embed and implement the learning in practice.

- We have re-interviewed the three managers, 12 months after attendance at the masterclasses.

- We have run two focus groups with pioneers.

- We have interviewed the programme manager of Fostering Wellbeing.

Findings

1   The masterclasses commenced face to face but were stopped due to Covid lockdown restrictions. During the initial lockdown phase, the masterclasses were honed, recalibrated and regionalised so that they could be delivered on-line, and represent an excellent example of effective virtual delivery.

2   The delivery team attended social pedagogy training during the initial lockdown period and this has been embedded far more clearly within the content.

3   The content has been overwhelmingly well received and is supported by a range of handouts and supplementary materials. The content is much improved on the 2019 pilot.

4   The facilitation is experienced as engaging and interactive. The skill and passion of the facilitators has been positively commented on.

5   The on-line delivery has made attendance much more feasible for busy foster carers and co-professionals.

6   The presentations by Heads of Service have been widely commented on and are seen to give the training gravitas and endorsement.

7   The masterclasses have drawn upon speakers who are experts from a wide range of disciplines working with children looked after, including speech and language; these have been particularly well received. Many of the speakers are local, as masterclasses are bespoke to each region.

8   There have been fewer speakers who are care experienced than in the previous pilot.

9   Many commented on the need for more time in discussion-type break out rooms.

10 On-line working provides fewer opportunities for networking.

11 The multi-disciplinary nature of the training is highly valued. Increased respect among team members is reported.

12 The main messages of the importance of bringing the foster carer in to the team around the child and related decision making has been received and taken on board. Delegates reported that both education and foster carers are now routinely included in meetings around the child.

13 There are many examples of the skills and learning being taken into practice and forming the basis of discussion between foster carers and practitioners in the field.

14 More trauma informed approaches have been adopted.

15 Delegates report increased reflexivity as a result of attending the masterclasses.

16 Delegates reported increased levels of empathy for children.

17 Delegates have a strong sense of the underpinning ethos of social pedagogy and the notion of working with the whole child. Much of the learning and understanding of the importance of children's prior experiences has also been retained.

18 The programme has embedded a clear understanding of the role of the corporate parent as being everyone's responsibility.

19 Foster carers have felt empowered to become stronger advocates for the children in their care and have been able to provide us with many examples of this.

20 Co-professionals have not attended the masterclasses as extensively as was hoped, especially those from education and health. Where they have attended, many did not attend all five sessions.

21 Management support is deemed vital for encouraging enrolment, reinforcing the value of the training and galvanising attendance. All three managers we interviewed had attended the masterclasses, leading by example. All three were promoting the programme.

22 Further follow up sessions to the masterclasses may help to consolidate and implement learning, and further extend and embed new skills and practices.

23 Service support and action plans are yet to be fully developed and implemented. This is an area of on-going work.

24 The pioneer model is in the early stages; 57 have been recruited and the majority have received training and are actively involved in developing the role. It is anticipated that the pioneer role will help to provide a network of support for foster carers. The model shows great signs of promise.

25 Fostering Wellbeing is an effective way of promoting social pedagogy, wellbeing and the team around the child, mirroring governmental priorities.

Recommendations

1 The masterclasses continue to be delivered on-line by The Fostering Network. Whether the demand will exist in specific local authorities is unclear, given it is estimated that 15% of local authority Foster Wales carers have already been trained, and far more from certain local authorities. It is likely therefore that regional delivery is more practical.

2 More promotion of the programme is required if Fostering Wellbeing is to truly realise its reach pan-Wales: this should include dissemination of some of the positive feedback already received. The promotional material should be aspirational clearly stating the potential benefits of the programme.

3 Co-professionals need to be strongly encouraged or directed to attend, and thus buy in from management is essential. Leading by example, with managers attending would be helpful to nurture a change in team culture.

4 If The Fostering Network is running the masterclasses, authorities need the dates well in advance to include on their annual training calendars.

5 Consideration should be given to the masterclasses being co-facilitated by a foster carer, modelling the messages from the programme.

6 The masterclasses should spend less time on the principles and build in more time for discussion (this has partly been implemented).

7 To help embed the learning, participants could spend a little more time reflecting during the session and then discuss their adapted practice in breakout groups at the beginning of the following session.

8 Each masterclass should include at least one input from a care experienced young person, ideally more (some of these might be pre-recorded, so people do not keep having to re-tell their stories, but regular permission be requested for their continued use).

9 The new school curriculum is introduced in masterclass four, but this topic could be covered in more depth, as many foster carers may not be aware of new Welsh curriculum and whole school approach. Additionally, it would be helpful to provide updates to delegates on the changes in education support for those with additional learning needs and the move to individual development plans. In this way information to and from education is bi-directional.

10 The masterclasses should be followed by a face-to-face event to allow for networking to take place. These could be co-facilitated by pioneers. A formalised buddy system could be implemented for delegates to pair up to discuss how to embed the learning in practice.

11 A bespoke set of masterclasses be developed for education (twilight sessions will hopefully be trialled before the end of the pilot). Teacher training days might also be identified and allocated for this purpose. It will be important to include other co-professionals, including foster carers, so that the benefit of multi-disciplinary learning is not lost.

12 The masterclasses could be offered to parents who have recently adopted children.

13 To reach every child looked after, each carer and social work team in the independent sector, including residential settings, could be offered access to the programme.

14 The pioneer model needs to have a clear regional co-ordinator with the provision of support offered to pioneers, and a financial budget allocated to it.

15 The new national brand of Foster Wales and its associated website would lend itself well to promoting the pioneer model and might be suitable platform for housing the Padlets, resources and contact details of pioneers. This would need some national co-ordination.

16 It has been suggested that there should be a minimum of three to four pioneers per local authority, with clear lines of accountability. If too many have been recruited and some means of selection will likely be required.

17 Some pioneers should bring the experience of kinship care; there is also a need for recruitment of some male pioneers.

18 More work should be undertaken by The Fostering Network to develop contacts in local authorities to help progress regional action plans to ensure local authorities and regions fully embrace the Fostering Wellbeing programme.

19 A longer-term commitment to the programme would provide sustainability and enable authorities to embed the learning from Fostering Wellbeing.

20 Review its aim as 'improving educational outcomes for children'. Given that this is not the main focus of the programme, this might usefully be revised.

Aims of Fostering Wellbeing

Fostering Wellbeing is a multi-agency programme which aims to improve the wellbeing and educational outcomes for children in care in Wales. The programme is designed for professionals working with children looked after. Specifically, the programme aims to:

1 Identify and share the core values and principles which will help children and young people who are looked after to thrive;

2 Develop skills and competencies in common which will help equip children and young people who are looked after to fulfil their potential;

3 Become confident in a shared and consistent approach to meeting the needs of children and young people who are looked after which, in turn, will fire ambition and help them to find success;

4 Be active advocates for the children and young people for whom they have a responsibility, be it individual or corporate.

Content of programme

Fostering Wellbeing is an initiative devised by The Fostering Network that has been trialled in Cwm Taf, Wales drawing on elements of the Head, Heart and Hands programme (McDermid et al. 2016) and London Fostering Achievement model (Sebba et al. 2016) set in a Welsh context. This evaluation is of the pan-Wales pilot of Fostering Wellbeing. The Fostering Wellbeing programme encompasses three strands of work:

i. A set of five themed masterclasses delivered to multi-disciplinary members working in the team around the child (social work, health, education, youth justice). A copy of an example of the masterclass facilitator framework for masterclass one can be found in Appendix 1.

ii. The development of the pioneer foster carer role to help embed Fostering Wellbeing principles across the services and support the development of mutli-disciplinary working.

iii. Service support and action plan.

Fostering Wellbeing brings together foster carers with other professionals to share best practice across service boundaries.

Figure one summarises the programme's ten principles.

Fostering Wellbeing Programme: Ten Principles

1   All the child's needs have to be met i.e. understand and respond to the whole child/young person to improve his/her wellbeing;

2   Each person's view of life and the wider world will differ, arising from their background, experiences and own mindset;

3   Good relationships are at the centre of a person's wellbeing;

4   What has happened cannot be undone but can be understood and provide lessons for the future;

5   Encouraging aspiration and ambition is essential in developing positive attitudes;

6   All those involved with a child/young person being looked after, including the foster carers and the children/young person, have equality of status in the relationship;

7   The values and attitudes of all those involved with a child/young person being looked after need to be made explicit;

8   Positive values and attitudes are best nurtured through practical activities shared between child/young person and foster carer;

9   Learning to help oneself is as important as learning to build relationships;

10 Those working with a child/young person being looked after need to know the difference between the behaviours of the professional self, personal self and private self and in what situations the appropriate behaviour applies.

Source: internal report from the Fostering Wellbeing design and implementation team

Figure 1 Ten Principles

History of Fostering Wellbeing

The Fostering Wellbeing programme is based on learning from two pilot projects. The first was the Fostering Network's Head, Heart, Hands programme which was carried out over a period of 4 years 2012-2016 and involved both foster carers and staff in fostering services. Its overall aim was to develop a social pedagogic approach within UK foster care (McDermid et al. 2016 p.3). The Fostering Wellbeing programme is also based on the London Fostering Achievement programme (Sebba et al. 2016) which was piloted between 2014-2015 in 29 London Boroughs which aimed to improve educational outcomes for children looked after. The programme included generic foster carer training on education, the provision of four half day masterclasses for foster carers, teachers and social workers involved with children looked after, direct work with school and the creation of an educational foster care champion role. It was found that the 'mix' of participants was perceived as the most valuable aspect of the masterclasses as it allowed better understanding of each other's roles (Sebba et al. 2016). Fostering Wellbeing is based on the successful aspects of the two pilot programmes, creating a hybrid model. From Head, Heart, Hands the embedding of social pedagogy and its principles across foster care practice, helping foster carers to feel more valued and endorsing their practice (McDermid et al. 2015). Fostering Wellbeing attempts to address some of the resistance found in the wider system by the Head, Heart, Hands study by sharing best practice across service boundaries and enabling all involved to be active advocates on behalf of the child. From London Fostering Achievement, the Fostering Wellbeing training takes the 'masterclasses'. One of the key objectives, and the rationale behind developing the masterclasses is to ensure continuity of support for wellbeing and learning between home, social care and school. Fostering Wellbeing also employs foster carer pioneers (known as champions in London Fostering Achievement model). The Fostering Wellbeing model is based on joint training which was found to be successful in both studies.

Background

This evaluation continues on from the two-year pilot evaluation of Fostering Wellbeing undertaken between 2017- 2019 (Rees et al. 2019 https://orca.cardiff.ac.uk/128577/). The initial pilot evaluation was undertaken in Cwm Taf. The Cwm Taf evaluation was positive but identified a range of suggestions for improvement and many of these have been acted on, with the content slimmed down, the sessions shortened and a clearer focus on social pedagogy. After the success of the initial pilot, the plan was for the Fostering Wellbeing training programme to be rolled out pan-Wales. This evaluation is of the pan Wales roll out of the programme during 2020-2022.

The masterclasses started face to face with the first set being delivered in February 2020 to Cardiff and the Vale but the onset of COVID in late March 2020 and subsequent lockdown led to a pause in the training programme, and a postponement of delivery in West Glamorgan and North Wales which had been scheduled to start in June 2020.

During the initial lockdown the facilitators took the opportunity to further recalibrate and revise the materials such that they could be delivered on-line. During this period the delivery team undertook training, completing a ten week programme through the Social Pedagogy Development Network, https://www.coursera.org/learn/social-pedagogy-europe to ensure that those concepts were fully embedded within the masterclasses. This reconfiguration also allowed the facilitators to further tailor the materials to the different regions. This activity is captured in The Fostering Network reporting documentation August- October 2020. The on-line delivery started in February 2021. The content of the masterclasses is undoubtedly improved from the initial localised pilot undertaken in 2019. During a period of isolation and uncertainty for foster carers, the training provided a sense of community, structure and support.

Data collection undertaken

The evaluation has consisted of the following 13 workstreams:

1   Review of literature

This provides a brief summary of the relevant literature.

2   Surveys

Surveys were collected from foster carers and co-professionals who attended masterclass 1 (T1) between February 2021 and June 2021 (rounds one, two and three). The survey collected some demographic data about delegates and was mapped to the programme objectives. We have collected and collated 105 surveys.

3   Attendance and Attrition

We have received the attendance and attrition data from The Fostering Network regarding masterclass training which took place between March 2021 and June 2021 (rounds two and three).

4 Interviews after one month

Semi-structured interviews have been conducted with a sample of participants from Gwent; North Wales; Mid and West Wales; Neath Port Talbot and Swansea; and Cardiff and the Vale who have attended the masterclasses. Interviews were undertaken one month after completion of masterclass five (T2). Participants were asked about their level of engagement with the programme (to explore factors which helped or hindered engagement with the programme). Interview data at T2 was used to ascertain perceptions of the training and beliefs about what participants' wish to change. We interviewed 26 participants (N= 26), 18 foster carers and 8 co-professionals at T2.

5 Interviews with senior managers after one month after masterclasses

We interviewed three senior managers one month after attendance at the masterclasses (T2) to explore their experiences of the masterclasses, to help consider the relationship between management support and attendance.

6 Interviews with trainers of the programme

We have undertaken interviews with five trainers to look at perceptions of how the training changed across cohorts and the receptiveness of the different audiences (N= 5).

7 Observation of masterclasses

We have also observed each of the five masterclasses.

8 Interviews at 12 months

We interviewed twelve masterclass delegates, twelve months after completing the masterclasses at T3. These interviews were used to explore the impact of the training over the 12-month period and map baseline data to reported change over time.

9 Interviews with senior managers at 12 months

We interviewed the same three managers again after 12 months T3, to explore engagement with masterclass materials, service support and action planning.

10 Focus groups with pioneers

The pioneer role has been developed since early 2022 and we ran two focus groups with pioneers in May 2022.

11 Interview with programme manager

We interviewed the Fostering Wellbeing programme manager in April 2022, to give an overview of how the pan-Wales pilot Fostering Wellbeing scheme had operated, identifying learning, challenges and aspirations for the future of the programme.

12 Evaluation of masterclasses

We have collated the evaluations disseminated by The Fostering Network.

13 Development of logic model

We have developed a logic model for the intervention.

All interviews and focus groups across the study have been transcribed by an independent transcription service. In order to analyse the data, the two researchers followed the six-stage framework suggested by Braun and Clark (2015) of (i) Familiarisation with the data (ii) Coding (iii) Searching for themes (iv) Reviewing and cross-checking for themes between the two researchers (v) Defining and naming themes (vi) Writing up of the data.

Research Questions

1   *Question One* - Examine the Fostering Wellbeing programme to assess whether masterclasses are being delivered to a satisfactory standard

2   *Question Two* - How has attendance at the masterclasses changed practice with children

3   *Question Three* - Determine whether Fostering Wellbeing has led to greater engagement between foster carers, and the team around the child?

4   *Question Four* - review the role of the pioneer and its implementation?

5   *Question Five* - Assess levels of service engagement and future sustainability with the programme

Literature review

Role of Foster Carers

Fostering is a rewarding role (Wilks and Wise 2011) and the challenges of providing 'sensitive and structured support' for children in foster care frequently extend beyond normative experiences of parenting (Murray et al. 2011, p. 149). Many children in care have been exposed to abuse and neglect, parental alcohol/drug misuse and have witnessed domestic violence (Welsh Parliament 2018). Furthermore, many enter care with poor physical health (Halfon et al. 1995) and may have poorer educational outcomes compared to the general population (Sebba et al. 2015). This combination of negative life experiences can lead to emotional difficulties, yet many children find it difficult to access provision for mental health (Tarren-Sweeney 2008). The complex needs of children can provide a challenge for foster families, often compounded by the transitory nature of the relationships (Nutt 2006), difficult relationships with birth parents (The Fostering Network and AFA Cymru 2019) and sometimes with the children's social care practitioners resulting in high levels of emotional stress (Wilson et al. 2000).

Foster carers play a significant role in the lives of children in care and have the ability to help support emotional and mental health through their expertise in understanding the individual child (Fergeus et al. 2017). The quality of daily care provided by foster and kinship carers is acknowledged as a major factor for improving wellbeing and mental health (Development Services Group 2015) but this is not always fully recognised by social care practitioners (Maclay et al. 2006). Targeted training to optimise support for foster carers is necessary (Fergeus et al. 2019), however, much of the formal support and training that foster carers' receive is perceived to have a limited impact on behaviour (Everson-Hock et al. 2012).

Foster carer' perceptions of support and training were investigated in a New Zealand based study looking at how foster carers are supported to manage their 'high burden of care' (Murray et al. 2011). The foster carers perceived themselves as skilled in parenting but recognised the realities of highly stressed environments created by the complex difficulties experienced by many children in care. The effectiveness of emotional support was found to be greater in secure placements where trusting relationships with foster carers become established. In addition, the beginning of placement was described as characterised by intensive caregiving to scaffold transitions into the home and to aid recovery. The participants outlined a need to understand the reasons for behaviour and how to manage and respond to mental health difficulties through the provision of intensive support and training (Murray, 2011).

Learning and Development

'Foster carers operate in a distinct space,' where professionalism is delivered in a family home (McDermid 2019, p. 23) but they are not recognised by a distinct professional designation. Furthermore, despite fulfilling statutory regulations (The Local Authority Fostering Services, Wales, Regulations 2018) there are no UK wide mandated requirements or prescribed qualifications (McDermid 2019). There is some call to recognise their professional status but McDermid et al. (2012) report conflicting evidence over the impact of increased professionalisation.

Induction and ongoing training for foster carers has become more established in Wales. The All Wales Induction Framework for Health and Social Care was introduced in April 2018 (Social Care Wales 2022) but this is no longer part of core requirements for foster carers. The pre-approval training is viewed positively by foster carers, but the post approval training was recognised as inconsistent across Wales (TFN and AFA Cymru 2019). This inconsistency in training is addressed by The National Fostering Framework (NFF) which is a Post-approval Learning and Development Framework for foster carers across Wales (https://fosterwales.gov.wales). The core knowledge is mandated learning for local authority foster carers, endorsed by the All Wales Heads of Children's Services, and aims to achieve three principles. Firstly, it aims to create a pathway for learning and development. Secondly it aims to create opportunities for foster carers and families to benefit from shared learning experiences, together with professionals, as part of the team around the child. Thirdly, the training aims to achieve consistent quality and content. The Foster Wales Regional Development Managers organise localised implementation of this framework using a combination of in-person, online learning, peer mentoring, self-learning and practice learning (TFN and AFA Cymru 2019).

The establishment of local authority learning, and development plans are progressing, as outlined in the State of the Nation Foster Care 2021 report (The Fostering Network 2021) which surveyed 3,353 foster carers across the United Kingdom, including 256 Welsh fostering households (192 local authority foster carers and 64 foster carers who foster for independent fostering services) and 99 fostering services. The report indicates that 57% of local authorities in Wales had an agreed learning and development plan, whereas 31% did not have one, and 12% did not know. In contrast 66% of Independent Fostering Services had an established framework, 22% did not and 12% did not know. Furthermore, this report highlights foster carers would appreciate increased access to trauma informed training, peer support and out of hours guidance within a system that increases the status of the foster carers. A commitment to a Foster Carers' Charter is also suggested as a means of improving status.

Social Pedagogy

Social pedagogic approaches to training for some foster carers and staff in children's residential care have been applied to a range of interventions (Cameron 2016). A synthesis of ten evaluative studies that assessed UK based social pedagogic interventions found that a social pedagogic training and development approach can promote reflective practice and substantiate relational attitudes to help children thrive in public care settings (Cameron 2016).

Social pedagogy aims to support the integration of individuals into a society, so that each person may fulfil their potential (Cameron 2016). It is an established approach throughout European children's and adult services (Petrie et al. 2006), yet each country adopts contextualised approaches that reflect varying national traditions (Hamalainen, 2003). A comparative study of European countries (Petrie et al. 2006) identified the common principles of social pedagogic practice as including a rights-based approach that develops the relationships amongst the whole team around a child, young person or adult. Furthermore, they found that it is characterised by a holistic focus that promotes shared equality, reflection and a practical approach to support.

For social pedagogy to become established, Ruch et al. (2017) found that everyone in the team around a child or young person need to engage holistically in the support process. This engagement

involves the integration of theory and practice by utilising the Head, Heart and Hands to work with people (Cameron and Moss 2011). The application of social pedagogy combines the benefits of professional knowledge by drawing on the social sciences, and critical self-reflection (Head), empathy and the personalised use of one's own experiences (Heart), and practical actions (Hands).

However, interest in social pedagogy within the United Kingdom is still embryonic (McDermid et al. 2019) with only a few policies influenced by social pedagogy, for example, Every Child Matters (2004), and Care Matters (2007). The subject has been incorporated within some degrees and Master's programmes with other complementary subjects (Hatton, 2013) and the Social Pedagogy Professional Association has been established to set up quality assurance practice and social practices (https://sppa-uk.org/).

Questions exist over the compatibility of social pedagogy with British social policy and services (Petrie 2013). The practice is well regarded, but the limited reach of social pedagogic theory and few available qualifications limit the establishment of this approach. Petrie (2013) outlines that policy, theory and practice need to synchronise, '… to develop social pedagogic theory that is both informed by European thought *and* interrogates British society with its particular pedagogic institutions and policies (p.10).'

Both theory and practice are being promoted in a selection of pragmatic stakeholder interventions. One example of a 'bottom-up' intervention (Petrie et al. 2013, p. 10) to apply social pedagogy is the Head, Heart, Hands programme led by The Fostering Network over four years (2012 to 2016). The programme involved foster carers and staff in fostering services and agencies with the overall aim 'to develop a social pedagogic approach within UK foster care, thereby increasing the numbers of young people in foster care who achieve their potential and make a positive contribution to society' (McDermid et al. 2016 p.3). The final analysis of Head, Heart, Hands (McDermid et al. 2019) found that course attendance enabled a small group of foster carers to make some changes that had positive results on individual fostering households. Many of the course participants also reported an increased confidence in their fostering practice that resulted in a more reflective approach when communicating and managing conflict and other difficult situations. However, '…even those who were definitely enthused by social pedagogy – still felt by the end of the programme that the wider system within which they offered care to young people was not well-informed about social pedagogy and not always supportive to attempts to provide care that was social pedagogically informed' (McDermid et al. 2019, p.22). Similarly, previous studies have concluded that interest in social pedagogy can be focused upon an individualistic understanding, rather than on the development of social theory (Cousee et al. 2010).

To enhance the future implementation of social pedagogy, McDermid et al. (2019) recommend that courses aim to reach the optimum number of people in the team around the child to educate all children's social care staff on social pedagogic principles. McDermid et al. (2019) advise that such courses explore the synergies between social pedagogy and existing practice to establish the service commitment to this approach within a sustainable framework.

Team around the child

Well-being of children in care is a key priority for improving outcomes as outlined in The Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act (2014) which requires social care and health professionals to work together to establish good health and wellbeing of children in care which is regularly assessed. The Mind Over Matter report (Welsh Parliament 2018) outlined the changes required to support the emotional and mental health for children and young people in Wales. The report emphasised the importance of services working together (including health, education, social services, advocacy, youth services, police and others) to create preventive care pathways. To meet this requirement Mind over Matter recommended training for all staff who work with children and young people to raise awareness and increase skills to improve the provision of emotional and mental health support.

The review of Mind over Matter (Welsh Parliament 2020) acknowledged progress in the provision of emotional and wellbeing services in education, but the report criticised the pace of change in health and local government (including social services). 'Significant and urgent progress is needed there to ensure that the foundations of the whole system approach we have called for are in place by the end of this Senedd' (p.21). The report advocates collaboration between agencies to develop a shared language and understanding to deliver trauma informed services across the whole system.

Schools

The Mind over Matter report (Welsh Parliament 2018) recommended that the Welsh Government give priority to the emotional and mental wellbeing of children and young people through the provision of adequately resourced school-based centres for emotional resilience and mental wellbeing provision. Progress in education 'is visible and can be evidenced' (Welsh Parliament 2020, p.21) and is prioritised in the new Welsh curriculum.

The new Welsh curriculum is being introduced in primary schools from 2022 and will become mandatory in secondary schools from 2023, beginning with a roll-out to years seven and eight. The new curriculum is organised into core purposes and areas of learning. The four core purposes aim to develop children who will be (i) ambitious and capable learners, who are (ii) enterprising and creative, (iii) ethical and informed citizens and (iv) healthy confident individuals. The knowledge is organised into 6 areas of learning and experience with a focus on progressive, developmental learning that is collaborative (Welsh Government 2020). As health and wellbeing is one of the six areas of learning, it is expected that a whole-school approach will be adopted to embed emotional and mental wellbeing throughout the curriculum (Welsh Government 2020). It is hoped that this extends to and embraces children in care.

Concerns exist over whether the new curriculum will help to address educational inequalities. These concerns are discussed by Power et al. (2020) who critique the variations '…in the way in which the curriculum is operationalised that may systematically and disproportionately affect socio-economically disadvantaged schools and learners' (p.322). They discuss the realities of providing resource-intensive pedagogies and the challenges of an 'educational' home environment that can support a holistic curriculum experience. Power et al. (2020) recommend that investment is required to provide teachers with a deeper understanding and skills to provide an equitable

curriculum that is accessible for disadvantaged communities. Furthermore, the importance of building a collaborative approach between health, education, social services is outlined in Mind Over Matter (2020).

Summary

Research recognises the challenging but rewarding role of foster carers (Wilks and Wise 2011). Numerous studies have emphasised the positive impact that foster carers can have on supporting children's wellbeing and mental health, but this skilled support requires effective interventions to help foster carers understand behaviours, and to promote responsive support to facilitate recovery (Fergeus 2019). Pre- and post-training frameworks have been developed across Wales (TFN and AFA Cymru 2019). Evidence suggests that the adoption of a social pedagogic approach to training interventions promotes reflective practice (Cameron 2016), and support for children in care will be most effective when embedded within the whole team around a child (Welsh Parliament 2018). Many Welsh schools have been recognised for improving their emotional and mental health provision (Welsh Government 2020) and these approaches to embed emotional and mental health can be strengthened through targeted training for staff working in education (Welsh Government 2020). An understanding of the difficulties faced and needs of children looked after is essential for all members of the team around the child, and training together provides a consistent message and approach.

Findings

Attendance and attrition rates

In round one, across all regions, 94 delegates started the first masterclass, in round two 111 started, and in round three 137 delegates started the first masterclass. Attrition rates are difficult to report for round one which was impacted by the start of lockdown. In total across all the training rounds 757 people have started at least one masterclass.

Table 1 shows the number of delegates attending each of the masterclasses during round two which demonstrates a pattern of attrition. In round two, the highest attrition levels were in Gwent with an overall attrition rate of 44%. The next highest are in Neath Port Talbot (NPT) and Swansea at 42.1%. Mid and West Wales reported an attrition rate of 36.4%. The next highest levels are in Cardiff and the Vale, with an overall attrition rate of 36% between masterclass one and five. The Cardiff and the Vale masterclasses were halted at the start of Covid lockdown and attendance re-started on-line sometime later; it is perhaps not surprising that attendance fell away for the Cardiff and Vale cohort. The lowest attrition rates were North Wales at 25.9 %. Attrition is an area of concern which will need to be addressed going forward. Attrition was similarly identified in the previous pilot (Rees et al., 2019). It is important to note however that even when delegates did not attend the full five masterclasses, benefit and learning was derived.

Region	Master class 1	Master class 2	Master class 3	Master class 4	Master class 5	Attrition (between masterclass 1 and 5)
Gwent	18	19	16	13	10	44.4%
NPT Swansea	19	14	14	14	11	42.1%
Mid & West Wales	22	17	17	17	14	36.4%
Cardiff & Vale	25	21	15	13	16	36%
North Wales	27	21	21	21	20	25.9%

Table 1: Attendance levels round two

The following table shows the average attendance per professional grouping across each region also for the round two masterclasses. We can see that health and education were not always represented.

Mid and West Wales		
Profession	Numbers	Average number of classes attended
Foster carers	17	4
Social services	6	2.5
Health	1	3
Educators	0	0
Cardiff and Vale		
Profession	Numbers	Average number of classes attended
Foster carers	14	4.2
Social services	4	2
Health	0	0
Educators	8	2.6
NPT and Swansea		
Profession	Numbers	Average number of classes attended
Foster carers	11	4
Social services	4	4
Health	0	0
Educators	1	3
North Wales		
Profession	Numbers	Average number of classes attended
Foster carers	14	4.5
Social services	11	3.2
Health	2	3.5
Educators	0	0
Gwent		
Profession	Numbers	Average number of classes attended
Foster carers	6	3.8
Social services	6	3.7
Health	0	0
Educators	5	4.6

Table 2: Number of masterclasses attended round two.

Survey data T1

We started our data collection process with a much longer, in-depth survey, but found that very few delegates completed it. This may have been because the survey was too lengthy. However, we quickly revised the survey, to make it far shorter and far easier to complete, although as a result we were not able to collect such fine grain data. The survey was given out during the first masterclass (T1) for rounds two and three.

Numbers completing the survey

Area	%	Numbers
Cardiff and the Vale	16.2%	17
Gwent (and Cwm Taf)	14.3%	15
Mid and West Wales	20%	21
North Wales	47.6%	50
NPT Swansea	1.9%	2
Total	100%	105

Table 3: Survey responses

Professional Role

Role	%	Numbers
Foster carer	60.6%	63
Kinship carer	3.9%	4
Educator	6.7%	7
Social worker	14.4%	15
Health worker	5.8%	6
Other	8.7%	10

Table 4: Professional role

From our survey data which had 105 responses out of a possible total of 302 returns, most attendees were foster carers (60.6%), with only four kinship carers attending the masterclasses. Seventeen percent of foster carers in Wales are kinship carers in 2020, suggesting that the percentage of kinship carers in attendance was low.

(https://corambaaf.org.uk/resources/statistics/statistics-wales)

Fifteen social workers completed the survey (14% of delegates) and only seven professionals from education and six from health across all of the regions.

Members of the team around the child attending

Thirty-five percent of delegates identified that they were the only member of the team in attendance.

Numbers of children in foster care being cared for

Of the 63 foster carers who attended the masterclasses, 15 had no children placed with them at the time of completing the survey, 23 had one child, 25 had 2 children and 9 foster carers were caring for 3 or more children.

Experience of accessing the masterclasses on-line

Of the 105 delegates completing the survey, when asked how easy it was to access the training on-line, out of a potential 100% (totally accessible), the average rating given was 95%, suggesting the vast majority of people found it extremely easy to access the training for the first masterclass, and we can assume that this only became easier as the survey was undertaken from March to June 2021.

Team working

When asked about their experiences of working in the team around the child, there were varied responses. In terms of whether the communication in the team around the child was effective, 39 people (37%) were either neutral or disagreed.

When asked about all members of the team being listened to equally, 39 (37%) answered as neutral or disagreed. This suggests that there is some further work to improve communication within the team around the child, and to ensure that all members of the team are listened to.

Gender and ethnicity

Of the delegates who completed the survey, 88% were female and 12% male. Of the male participants, there were nine foster carers, one social worker and one kinship carer. All the remaining delegates who completed the survey were female. All delegates identified as white.

Age

Thirty-five of the delegates were 55 years or over (33%). Twenty-seven foster carers were 55 or over (40% of the foster carers who completed the survey) which suggests the need for some succession planning for foster carers. Seven co-professionals (19% of co-professional respondents) were 55 or over.

Reasons for attending the masterclasses

Delegates gave a range of reasons for attending the masterclasses and these included the following:

- To provide improved support to children and young people
- An invitation received from a mentor or manager
- Feedback from others who had attended this course
- To inform role
- To gain new information and continue learning

Several people had the training recommended to them by a line manager, or by their supervising social worker. Others stated their motivation was,

"Being involved in bringing this into the LA with The Fostering Network. Keen to progress professional development for Foster Carers and collaborative conversations to support the needs of the child".

"Invited to attend along with other professionals - good opportunity to cascade training to other colleagues".

When anticipating which aspects would be most valuable

Delegates noted a range of potentially valuable aspects of attending the training, including the following,

- Sharing and discussing expertise with other participants
- The guest speakers (especially PACE)
- Hearing from young people
- Developing ideas to improve support, relationships, and wellbeing

(NB: These comments were provided after attending day one of the course.)

Interviews with delegates one month after attending masterclasses T2

Twenty-six delegates were interviewed one month after attending the final masterclass (from rounds two and three) ; 19 of these were foster carers and the remaining eight were co-professionals (three from health, three from social work and one from education).

On-line working

Most delegates enjoyed the on-line nature of the masterclass delivery, comparing it favourably to other on-line training. Delegates particularly valued the interactive nature of the classes, with helpful breakout rooms. It was felt that the relatively dynamic nature and fast-moving pace kept participants engaged and interested,

this was a more interactive… which obviously makes you learn better. (FC)

Although, actually I would say this that you've delivered was more interactive, more balance of, you know, different presentations like the guest speakers, the breakout rooms, you know, that whole variety was there with {the masterclasses}. (Co-P)

The busy lives of foster carers and practitioners made on-line attendance much more achievable,

I mean, you know, it's a long day, particularly when you've got children that you've gotta get them up early, the older one, at seven o'clock to get the taxi, and then he's not back till half past five and you've got that thinking of giving them meals. Whereas now it's mid, late morning, they're in school, college, my husband's out sorting out, cos we've got a smallholding, sorting the animals. You know it's fantastic for me. (FC)

Foster carers who were working in addition to being foster caring found it easier to juggle their responsibilities,

"…I work full-time. My partner works part-time. We run a farm as well, so it's … there's quite a lot going on, and it's quite … quite nice just to go out and feed the sheep and come back in, do the course and go back out." (FC)

In Wales, many people are living in more rural areas and this means travelling further and taking more time out of their busy day to attend any training programme,

And you've got the stress of maybe getting caught behind a tractor or something and then not getting there and you've got to park and find your way in. (FC)

Some foster carers felt that being on-line meant that they made less connections with others in the team around the child and this potentially limited the networks that could be forged during the masterclasses,

> *There were a couple of foster carers there who I'm like, I would have really liked to have had their contact details, because of... cos that's where I wanna go with fostering and they, they, I really feel they could get me prepared. But if you were face-to-face you'd do that, in a break you'd go and find them and you'd ask them and you'd get their number. (FC)*

When it was suggested that a blended approach might be helpful for future delivery, some carers agreed that either an initial or final face to face meeting might be helpful so that they could make deeper connections and develop a framework of support,

> *I think it would be nice if you were going to bring people together right at the very end face-to-face as well... (FC)*

Overall, however, all participants were very positive about the on-line training provision.

Organisation and Delivery

All delegates were positive about the delivery and organisation of the course,

> *It's one of the slickest online training events I've been on. I've been on a few, with fostering and with my normal day job. It's, it was so, it was run, it was so slick. The housekeeping of it was amazing. (FC)*

> *It's very well thought out. Well planned. (FC)*

> *I just thought that it was one of the best ones I've ever been on. I just remember thinking, "Wow, if only all training could be like this". (FC)*

Delegates were particularly positive about the facilitators, noting how they were passionate and also engaging,

> *{The facilitators} are obviously very passionate about what they do, and it showed. (FC)*

> *Great sense of humours, so which made it really good fun. (FC)*

They were very calm and very informative, and they held everything together, and they had a really good working relationship… (FC)

Delegates particularly liked it when one of the facilitators was a foster carer, as this provided a confident and professional role model for both foster carers and co-professionals.

Participants noted the benefit of the regionalisation of the materials and course delivery,

but I think the fact that we were all localised to an extent, you know, especially as north Wales is starting to do some kind of, you know, regional stuff. I know that we're looking at regional recruitment and things like that and, and kind of creating a brand across north Wales. So I think that's really good, kind of having that, that kind of cohort across that area is good. (Co-P)

Meeting co-professionals in their own teams and regions was seen as particularly important,

…and actually having an expert come and talk about real cases or real experiences, really helps. And, and now that they've started to embed the programme even more, they were all local as well… we've already heard or met the psychologist so it's great to hear from her. (Co-P)

Participants also commented on pacing, level, and pitch of the training,

And it was just spaced out nicely (FC)

I think it was definitely at the right sort of pace in terms of you weren't being spoken at the whole time but {between} the five… it did give time for pause and reflection.(Co-P)

I thought it was pitched at the right level for foster carers, and I think, you know, it treated them as professionals and you know, I think… I think that was… that was good, they felt valued very much from it, and… and that the actual… the content was good.(CoP)

Many delegates found that the course acted as a refresher and provided an opportunity to reflect on their own practice and in doing so highlighted aspects that they could strengthen or do differently.

Many identified that the masterclasses would be particularly good for new foster carers as it was comprehensive and set the context for fostering,

I think all new foster carers should definitely go on it. (FC)

The handouts underpinned the masterclasses and were seen as valuable supplementary materials which many of the delegates mentioned,

all the sheets were sent, and I've saved them all and I'm like, that's what... so when I now want to, want to look at the four F's again, I know exactly where to go and find the four F's. When, when I need the three P's I know exactly where to go. (FC)

All delegates valued the breakout rooms which gave them time to discuss and reflect. It was felt that the groups were better when a facilitator was able to pop in and keep people to task. Some participants felt they would have benefitted from more time in breakout groups,

So that was quite, you know, we didn't get around to everybody. So no, I would say no, there wasn't enough time. (FC)

But we were just getting into our stride, and then it would be... the clock would be ticking to go back. And in a way, that was a shame, because there were some really valuable sort of comments and things that, you know, maybe others wouldn't have even thought of.
(Co-P)

It might be that for those who would like it, the possibility of meeting up outside the training to reflect further and develop networks may be helpful.

In the previous evaluation of the pilot programme many delegates commented on the emotional impact of speakers who were experts by experience, but this was not commented on in the current evaluation.

Practical tools and skills

Delegates felt that they took away a range of practical tools and skills that they were starting to use in practice,

So, I feel like I've got one of those tool belts round me now and I feel like I've got different tools in, in there ready for the job. So, I should be able to pull something out when I need it each time, I need something, I'm, I'm hoping.
(FC)

Some of the skills helped participants to become more attuned to young people, to attentively listen, spend more time with children in their care, and reflect on the child's needs,

Now I'm thinking about why it's happening and what's behind it, and why ... why you don't want to go and visit, and how to deal with you when you've said you don't want to visit, but actually you really do. (FC)

*We're gonna talk tonight, it's not about you coming this weekend and doing
what I say, it's gonna be a weekend of let's do some things together and if it's
something new, it's something, if it's something you want to try, we'll do it.
(even if it's a deep-fried Mars Bar) (FC)*

This led delegates to have more empathy for the children,

*the main message I took away was sort of looking at behaviour, realising you
can't change what's happened, but ... sort of trying to understand it and be
alongside the child if they go through it. (FC)*

And others noted they wanted to spend more time listening to children,

And listening is the biggest gift that we can give. (Co-P)

Particular aspects of the training were seen to strongly resonate with participants, for example, the
common third,

*I mean for instance, he's made a sort of a place outside in the garden and
he's filled it with moss and mud and old vehicles and it's supposed to be a war
zone. Well, completely out of my realm. You know I had three girls to bring up
[laughter] so we're learning together and he's teaching me. So that really
resonated, that common third. (FC)*

The speech and language presentation was particularly well received, with people reflecting on the
taken for granted aspects of caring,

*lots of speech and language, little tips. Not finishing off the sentence for the
child, being really patient, not asking what's wrong with you, what has
happened to you, and various other things that were, you know, really...
considering she only spoke for about 45 minutes, maybe even less than that,
it was incredibly concentrated, and she obviously was pitching it at what,
what, what would be useful for us. (FC)*

The importance of relationships was emphasised throughout the masterclasses and getting to
'know' the child, and this was reiterated further through understanding the impact of trauma,

*You know, those key relationships, knowing your child... the child that you are
caring for, and sort of... you know, and sort of... and actually understanding
trauma. I think that's what really came through from foster carers. (Co-P)*

Many of the skills were already known but forgotten or not in the fore of their thinking,

*The breathing, getting a child just to breathe really slowly when they need,
you're trying to calm them down. I didn't realise I'd forgotten about that really,
using that as a tool and we had quite a long chat about that. (FC)*

Inter-disciplinary working

One of the major innovations of the training is the inter-disciplinary delivery. Many participants commented on this and its importance for strengthening the team around the child.

> *I loved the fact that everybody... there's different professions there, so hearing their input, not just from those that presented it, those who were just there in the breakout rooms as well. So, hearing from a school nurse, hearing from a social worker, (FC)*

Delegates found that training together created a shared language and understanding of principles and approaches,

> *I find it's really valuable if everyone around the child shares the same language as well... Because ... often, they get really confused when they hear different terms and different narratives from different people. (FC)*

This helped all members of the team around the child to come together and work in the best interest of the child, creating a collegiate and shared approach. Understanding the perspective of other professionals was particularly helpful,

> *Well, it's all about the holistic approach, I think, because you have got everybody round the child, haven't you? And we have all got the best interests of the child, but I think you get a better perspective of different people's roles, and how their piece of the jigsaw fits together around the child in the middle. Do you know what I mean? We are like pieces of a jigsaw around a child, aren't we? And I think the fact that you've got different... the different professionals, you know, you have got the foster carer, you have got health, you have got maybe Social Justice, Youth Justice, you've got education, you've got schools, you've got the whole gamut, I think... I think that's good because it's that collegiate, isn't it? We are all in this together around this child. (Co-P)*

One co-professional noted the increased confidence in the foster carer and the improved rapport as a result of them both attending the training,

> *..actually, the most recent LAC review that I've been in was on Friday before we finished for the weekend, and it was interesting, because he had a different... a different rapport with me in that meeting, I think... and he used my first name, and he was very... and I thought 'yeah, that's because you've seen me in the training, and you've... you've heard me,' because obviously on the first one, I did a short presentation about my role. (Co-P)*

Similarly, a foster carer noted how supportive it is to have other members of the team attend the same training,

> *So also on the training was my supervising social worker, and our teenager's social worker was also on it as well. So that was really handy, and there was a lot of other foster carers on there that I do know. But yeah, having those two especially on it, we had little chats, so we had our meetings as well about the different things that came up ...(FC)*

However, despite being positive about a shared professional approach, delegates noticed the limited numbers of co-professionals attending the master classes, and this left people less convinced that inter-disciplinary was working and a more equal approach was possible,

I was in the first round; we didn't have anyone from health or education attend. So, I think, well like one of our carers has been here 26 years and she was like, yeah, it all sounds great, but are education actually going to listen? And if they were there, she may have bought into it a bit more...... (Co-P)

I felt there was a... there was a lack of teachers involved, if that makes any sense. (FC)

The co-professional went on to note how in her experience, social workers sometimes did not want to include foster carers in their discussions,

a perception from social workers that, oh well we don't want foster carers to come cos we might wanna talk about them. And actually I think that should be eradicated entirely. And it, yeah, there's just so much benefit to having them all together and I think, yeah, that was a really lovely aspect to, to the course. (Co-P)

One delegate, a social worker, noted that sometimes a range of co-professionals wanted to exclude foster carers, and since the training she had worked hard to ensure that this was not the case,

I had a group of professionals, as in, you know, colleagues, saying, we don't need the foster carer at this meeting. And it was, it was an issue about school that the, that the foster carer had raised herself and me and the foster carer had requested the meeting. So I was like, I really don't understand what you're, what you're saying. You know the foster carer has requested the meeting, there's an issue in school, how in any way or form do we not need the foster carer at this meeting? ...And school just kept putting the blocks up saying, we can only do this one time in the whole week, so if the foster carer can't do it, and she couldn't cos she was working, they were like, well we need to go ahead. And I sat for about four hours with the child care social worker, fighting to arrange this meeting at another time. Emails and calls going back and to, going, I don't understand it. And someone emailed me and said, well we'll just say that it's a professionals meeting then, and then that's our reason for not inviting the foster carer. (Co-P)

The social worker notes how, as a result of the training, they fought for the foster carer to be included,

And I was like, the foster carer is the professional, like how can you have this conversation saying that there's us and them. And I actually went, I've just been on the foster carer masterclasses and we talk about these wellbeing things and one of the main things is that everyone's got equal status in the relationships, and that includes foster carers and professionals. I

said, so I've just done five weeks of this where we're saying everyone's equal in these conversations and then to sit in an email chain and phone conversations where you're saying that we're above the foster carer, really, really grates on me. (Co-P)

Certainly, this co-professional had taken on board the messages from the masterclasses and was keen to ensure that foster carers were not excluded from decision making in the team around the child.

Empowering foster carers to become advocates

Many of the delegates gave examples of how, as foster carers, they felt empowered and more able to advocate on behalf of children looked after. They also realised that their own wellbeing as being of vital importance,

before I always thought of myself as the poor relative ... of the whole foster care system ... but I'm learning ... hearing from the experienced foster carers as well, they're like, no, you need to advocate for the children, you need to advocate for yourself ... and our wellbeing is just as important. (FC)

One foster carer noted how she felt empowered to go back and ensure that a child had access to dental treatment as a result of discussions she had with a health professional during the masterclasses,

You know, one of my... the boys that I look after, I cannot find him a dentist. And the looked after children's nurse is like, "No, this is not acceptable. You know, it is a right for your child to see a dentist." You know, I appreciate obviously with COVID things are difficult, but she was like, "No, push." And I pushed quite hard afterwards. I think it gave me the confidence to go back and in his review, have a bit of a moan about it. And they have managed to find him an appointment with a community dentist, so... (FC)

Co-professionals identified that the masterclasses had emphasised that foster carers are professionals, should be treated as such, and as a result should be recognised for the challenging work they do,

We need to be seeing foster carers as the professionals they are, the work they do, the challenges that they have in managing sometimes very, very difficult situations out of hours, even. So that was for me, was like music to my ears. (Co-P)

Foster carers felt more valued by being included in the training and more part of a team,

And one guest speaker they got which I was quite shocked by was... I think she's a Head of Service who I've never met before, and most of the people hadn't met before, because she's, you know, a top manager, and we never come across her. I think it felt a bit more valued, because she was willing to be there and talk to us and listen to us. (FC)

Foster carers also felt more as an equal member of the team, rather than the bottom rung of the ladder,

I came out feeling more part of a team, really, rather than sort of the bottom of the rung where the decisions are made above you. (FC)

In the past some foster carers had not felt involved in decision making, but attending the masterclasses helped them review this,

Well, sort of from my point of view, I sort of feel a lot of decisions are made that you don't really have any part of, and then you've got to slot into somebody else's sort of plan without sort of being able to feed back into it. So I think having been to this course has sort of... it... it's helped you to see yourself as a more of a team. (FC)

Attrition

Numerous delegates commented on attrition levels, noting that social workers in particular did not consistently attend,

... with the latest masterclasses, there's one set of masterclasses where a lot of social workers turned up for the first one, then they said it was great, but a lot didn't come back because they said it was more aimed at foster carers, which is such a shame because that's really undermining the programme. (Co-P)

The sense that if the masterclasses were appropriate for foster carers, they could not be relevant for social workers is concerning and an issue to be addressed possibly via management when arranging the training.

Interviews with managers one month after attending masterclasses T2

We interviewed three senior managers, one month after the masterclasses. The feedback was generally very positive.

Training and mentoring

Managers reported that the Fostering Wellbeing' masterclasses and pioneer initiative are well aligned with the Foster Wales' Learning and Development framework and core offer (https://fosterwales.gov.wales). Managers identified that the content of the masterclasses lends itself to the learning and development framework (see appendix 2). In their view the masterclasses helped foster carers meet the training requirements,

> *Any foster carers that attended the master class, that would then go towards their learning development. So we have criteria within our region, that foster carers have to do a minimum of 15 hours per year training, so yeah, so the master classes would sort ...sort of signed off as part of their training over the year. (M1)*

The managers actively supported Fostering Wellbeing, which they believed might also contribute to the local authority and national commitments of their core offer of mentoring,

> *it also fits in with one of our other work streams which is our core offer to foster carers. So as well as learning and development, it'll fit in with things like core offer, because it'll be part of our national commitment that we'll have that low-level mentoring scheme across our region for foster carers. (M3)*

Thus, managers felt the programme melded well with the new Foster Wales' development and current fostering initiatives.

Skill development

The course was recognised by managers as being informative and practical: spreading the word about Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) was seen as invaluable, especially for staff in education,

> *Practical strategies are really {best things about FW}, really important to schools as well, as well as learning and, and raising awareness of, of ACEs and learning about trauma. It's, it's really important to provide schools and equip schools with, with practical strategies that they, that they can get down and use. (M2)*

The content within the masterclasses was seen to complement the training that other professionals had already received about trauma informed approaches. The strategies were seen as useful for foster carers, and by sharing learning it was seen to make the whole team more sensitive to the needs of children,

> *I think it gives people strategies to manage. I think... and not only that; I think the foster   carers coming together and share... opportunities to share their own experiences as well, will... will impact on people [inaudible], and... and all of it does naturally, doesn't it, have an impact on the outcomes for children, and... and, you know, how people, you know, think and reflect on what they're doing and how they're maybe responding to children or how they're not, or having a greater understanding of their needs, (M1)*

Inter-disciplinary training

The whole team around the child attending the masterclasses was welcomed by managers, and the inter-disciplinary nature of the training was seen as being of great value,

> *I liked the opportunity particularly foster carers had to hear from some of the professionals, and there was a huge variety of professionals. You know we had a health visitor, we had education psychologists, speech and language therapists, so there, there was a big variety. (M2)*

This was seen as a levelling up measure, which recognised and valued all members of the team around the child,

> *I loved the perspective that it came from we're all in-, involved in the child's learning, because we are. And no, no one role is more important than the other there, is it? Whether you're, you're, you know, the carer or an education psychologist really, everybody plays a part. M2*

The close working with foster carers was seen as a positive move forward, allowing for carers to become more involved in the development of policy and practice,

> *So we've got a Fostering Network staff member dedicated to our services at the moment for that purpose, so I think that... you know, that would sort of closely link... yeah, to sort of build on that, you know. So she's working regularly with the foster carers to gain their views on sort of, you know... and sort of ensure co-production and development services and everything like that. So I think yeah, this service running alongside, if it was an ongoing thing, could only be positive (M1)*

The Fostering Network delivery team were seen as helpful in liaising with foster carers leading to the development of services.

Pioneer programme

Managers were positive and endorsed the pioneer initiative. Managers identified that they had received a high level of interest in the role, and did not anticipate difficulties in recruiting more,

We've got eight people come forward, nominating themselves as Pioneers,
which is really good. (M3)

Managers saw the pioneers as being able to cascade the information about Fostering Wellbeing, and as a conduit of expertise for others to draw upon,

the pioneer role will be to cascade down messages from the masterclasses.
So what we're looking at in our region, as well, is the pioneers sitting on any
sort of development groups, so they can make sure that the principles of the
fostering well-being are fed down into... fed through into the service
development. (M3)

The pioneer role had not been fully developed at the time of the first interviews with managers, but they were positive about its potential.

Flexibility

The flexible and helpful relationships built between the trainers, local authorities and regions was appreciated by managers,

The trainer is so helpful. Honestly, she's just... she provides so much
information. She's always available, approachable. Talks me through things,
(M3)

The responsiveness of the trainers who were willing to run classes outside of normal working hours was also acknowledged,

they're also doing an evening set of masterclasses, as well, for us. To make
the programme accessible to foster carers with daytime work commitment.
(M3)

Overall, it was felt that the trainers were available and responsive to local need.

Suggested Improvements

Whilst managers were very positive about the Fostering Wellbeing programme, they suggested several improvements. Managers highlighted the need for sufficient notice of the masterclasses to increase the likelihood of improved attendance. Managers noted that it was difficult to gain attendance from education staff and that attrition levels were high, but that this was complex and influenced by priorities of schools and demands on professionals, especially during Covid. Managers suggested that schools might benefit from a bespoke Fostering Wellbeing programme

as each school is on 'a unique journey'. Managers also suggested that future refresher courses might be beneficial.

Interviews with delegates 12 months after attendance at masterclasses T3

Twelve delegates were reinterviewed after 12 months, these were seven foster carers and five co-professionals (one from health, two from social work, and two from education). We discussed the longer-term impact of the training and any subsequent changes to practice.

Practical tools and skills

Delegates named a wide range of skills and tools included in the masterclasses that were still memorable some 12 months after attending. These included emotion coaching, with delegates identifying how they have drawn upon the training,

> *I use a lot of emotion, of the stuff from the emotion coaching and have looked for other stuff around emotion coaching and, and tried to incorporate that. So I deliver attachment training and incorporate sort of therapeutic parenting within that. So I've incorporated the emotion coaching into that. Also, we're running some sort of workshops around life story work, so we've incorporated some of the emotion coaching into those sessions as well. (Co-P)*

> *I'd never heard of emotion coaching before that and I've not seen any sort of training coming up just on emotion coaching. (Co-P)*

Other memorable topics included 'speech therapy', a session by 'play therapists', 'head explosion' and social 'pedagogy' . Delegates also mentioned different methods of working with children which they were adopting, including 'the 3Ps' , 'the common third' and 'PACE'.

One of the major memorable lessons noted by numerous delegates related to remaining calm and 'striking while the iron is cold' . The learning from this helped professionals to remain calm and not have a 'knee-jerk ' reaction to situations which arose, both with children and other workers,

> *"Strike while the iron is cold," I don't know whether you, you remember that, but I thought, well, that is so good, because often, you know, the kids do something and I want to be there saying... responding straightaway, but I actually think, no, no, just calm it down, 'cos I have to apply these things to, to ourselves as well, don't we, not just expect them to do it'. (FC)*

Here we see the delegate applying the lessons and being able to step back,

I think that it helps to take a step back. I do, do that now, you know, if I, if something happens, rather than going up the wall, I sort of take a couple of days to think about it and then come back to it, you know, much calmer and.. . I think when you think about it as well, you know, you realise it's not as bad as you think, number one. But also, number two, you know, you just have time to sort of process it in your mind, so when you talk to the person about it, you actually know what you're talking about, rather than ranting. (FC)

Other foster carers noted how the calmer approach had an impact on the whole household,

I think it must have been the masterclass that has just brought calm, the, the majority of the time, to the house, which, which has been so good, you know? So I'm glad I, I'm glad I went on the course. (FC)

Some gave examples of memorable learning that had led to greater understanding of other professionals and the pressures they are under,

the way that I approach conversations with foster carers changed. I would say that there was an impact on that and there was a... I had a much greater understanding of perhaps their perspective and how they might be feeling. So I think yeah, probably my practice in terms of, of creating relationships with the foster carers has probably developed as a result of it, yeah, definitely... I would say my practice is a little bit more reflective and a little bit more empathic maybe, in trying to put myself in their shoes. (Co-P

Similarly, foster carers could understand why social workers are asking certain questions or exploring specific topics,

So yeah, so learning about the three P's, teaching me how to, how the social workers tick and how, what they think of and why they question the way they question. (FC)

Here we can see knowledge which has been retained being applied to practice with children and the team around the child some 12 months after the masterclasses.

Child focus

One major message retained by delegates was the child focus of masterclasses,

It was really nice having all the different professionals there and all split up, that, to me, is like what child centred and child focus should be. It should, you know, it's all working together. (FC)

They remembered the importance of a holistic approach to the children in their care, which is an underpinning principle of social pedagogy,

From what I sort of gathered, it was basically like a holistic way of dealing with children to get the best from them (FC)

Two delegates discussed recognition and validation of children's feelings,

> *I do believe that the masterclass made me think, yeah, validation is such a good word, it... you know, it's... somebody might not have meant to hurt somebody, but the fact is they did, and so you have to, you have to acknowledge what somebody is feeling. (FC)*

For foster carers, this involved spending time with children, listening to them, and respecting their feelings,

> *finding time and listening to her, you know, not ignoring her feelings. You know, making sure that her feelings, she feels her feelings are valid (FC)*

The child focus was remembered as a vital aspect of the masterclasses,

> *It was really nice having all the different professionals there and all split up, that, to me, is like what child centred and child focus should be. It should, you know, it's all working together (FC)*

Several delegates commented on the importance of schools being involved, which could help them adapt and respond in a tailored way to children looked after, with an appreciation of their individual needs,

> *making sure like the school were on board and that they were perhaps thinking about strategies they can use in school, rather than the usual sort of behaviour strategies that we might use for other children who haven't experienced trauma perhaps. (Co-P)*

Delegates emphasised that despite some schools rarely have pupils in care, being knowledgeable, responsive and 'LAC ready' was seen as vital,

> *And you see the other thing as well is, is that you've got some schools who haven't got any, any foster care children at all, so they're then thinking, well do I need to do this training, cos I haven't got anybody in care anyway? But, ...you need to be LAC ready, because at any moment a child in foster care could land in your school, whether you're at full capacity or not.... (Co-P)*

Overall, there was a sense of seeing the individual, whole child and that children looked after's welfare is everybody's responsibility, not just that of the foster carer or social worker. It is to inter-disciplinary working we now move.

Inter-disciplinary working

One of the main messages that had been strongly retained by delegates was the importance of working together and that the whole is greater than the sum of its parts,

> *very strongly through all of the, the masterclasses, was this need for us all to work together. That was the big, I think, underlying message for me, that, you*

know, we're all key components in a young person's life. But it's working together that we make a difference, isn't it, not working in isolation. And I think that was quite, quite a powerful message that came through really.

(Co-P)

Here the delegate highlights that all members of the team around the child are key, whilst other delegates noted the holistic approach that working together encouraged,

Working together, sort of you know that idea of everybody trying to work together to promote the wellbeing of the child. So, all professionals thinking about the whole child, not seeing things as separate (Co-P)

This delegate also retained the importance of seeing the whole child, reflecting something of the underpinning ethos of social pedagogy running throughout Fostering Wellbeing. Foster carers in particular felt much more part of the team around the child as a result of the masterclasses,

knowing that school are taking some of this training onboard and social worker is taking some of this training onboard, it just makes it feel a lot more like a team. Yeah, I just, we all just need to work together. I hate how everyone's so separate (FC)

Foster carers also felt that their views as members of the team were more valued as a result of the multi-disciplinary approach,

Because I think it's given me a feeling of being more, you know, as part of a team, more as I say that, you know, what I think means just as much as what they think (FC)

Here we can see the foster carer feeling their views were as important as those of other members of the team. Similarly, knowing that other professionals were taking the same message on board, further contributed to feeling collegiate and part of a team,

knowing that school are taking some of this training onboard and social worker is taking some of this training onboard, it just makes it feel a lot more like a team. Yeah, I just, we all just need to work together. I hate how everyone's so separate (FC)

Some delegates felt that the training had lessened the sense that Social Workers are the only experts,

you know, the foster carer is very much part of that team, and should be respected as such. It's not, it's not, you know, one expert...... You know, it's not easy, and I think moving away from this old model of the social worker being the expert (Co-P)

The joint training had been enlightening and reassuring for foster carers, who learned from training with social workers,

> *Yes, in the sense of I've never really been on training with, like I know that social workers go on training. But you don't see what the training is. You don't see how much they engage. You don't see if they answer questions and stuff. To actually see them on this training, seeing them engaged, seeing them going, oh, yeah, that and stuff, I think that is really reassuring to see. (FC)*

Co-professionals also mentioned that they continued to ensure all members of the team, including education were invited to meetings, which was a change in practice as a result of the masterclasses,

> *I do now try and invite the school, although it hadn't been practised before, I try to invite the school to be able to have them on the same page. (Co-P)*

Empowering foster carers to be advocates

Foster carers in particular became more aware of the range of members in the team around the child, and continued to feel more confident to advocate for children in their care; some identified other professionals who they had approached,

> *And so I immediately asked for a referral to the dietician, and things like that, as with before, I wouldn't really have known there was a dietician available. And obviously, speech and language he was already under them. But I suppose, I'm, I am more aware of the team and who's there to support. (FC)*

Another foster carer also noted how other delegates had learned about new professionals they could call up on, or that they were not aware of previously,

> *Then they had guest speakers of people you could ask for, like the LAC nurse. You know lots of them didn't realise that they could ring the LAC nurse and speak to the LAC nurse, you know. But actually no, your LAC nurse is there and she's important, she's your link to the health service and, and school, so. (FC)*

One foster carer noted, not only were they advocating on behalf of a child, they were doing this far more quickly,

> *I want him to have his eyes tested before then. So things like that, I suppose I am pushing for that to be a bit quicker (FC)*

Others felt that understanding how social services worked, helped them feel more confident to speak out,

> *But like I said, actually the course gave me the confidence to be able to speak out a little bit and understand the structure of social services really (FC)*

Once they had more confidence, foster carers felt able to question and challenge some decisions, when working in the best interests of the child,

But yeah, definitely helped me a bit more in having the courage to ask why, why they're particularly doing things and what's going on really...So it gave me the, the courage to say, "No, we really don't need any more adults in this mix. No, you can't come to my home for a review, because this is their home," I said, "and I don't want five or six people sitting round the table discussing them." FC

This increased confidence led to closer working relationships between foster carers and other co-professionals, for example, with schools,

I emailed the school and, you know, just said that and the teachers suddenly have all sort of dropped in and they've been emailing me back, and they now let me know if he's, you know, dropped behind on anything ….So, you know, they have, suddenly, been very, very helpful, which is great. (FC)

Re-visiting course materials

We asked delegates whether they had utilised or re-visited the course materials. Some had drawn on the materials, especially co-professionals,

Amy's video, that was really powerful, I've used that. I used the CASCADE video. (Co-P)

I have looked at some of the emotion coaching stuff and I do use that, that principle. I've looked at some of the play therapy. I recently did some work with some foster carers and I, I revisited the stuff around play therapy. I've done theraplay training, so I incorporated both theraplay and what was in the, the play therapy session, so revisited that. (Co-P)

Some foster carers too noted that they had utilised the materials,

I've put, some things I've printed out. And I've got, and I do look at them, yes. (FC)

It is to the role of the pioneer that we now move.

Pioneer role

Delegates were asked about the pioneer role, and their thoughts on it. Both foster carers and co-professionals were positive about such a development, although the model had still yet to be be fully developed. Foster carers identified having someone to check things out with, like a pioneer, would have been helpful when starting fostering,

I thought, you know, it's an interesting idea and I think when I started fostering, we didn't really have anybody that... . I didn't feel like there was anybody I could ask about things, so you know, the idea of having somebody, a mentor or whatever, that, you know, could answer questions for you, I think would be a really useful...(FC)

Co-professionals identified similar models in other professions,

I can imagine for somebody newly coming into foster, you know, fostering, a bit like when you start out as a teacher, you go in as a newly qualified teacher, you have a mentor, don't you? You have somebody to, to hold your hand and lead you through the process ...and there's certain things that are expected of you and, and the process and everything, to walk you through. And it's exactly the same, I would imagine, with, with foster carers, that they need that, that go-to person to just say, am I doing this right, is this okay? And I think that's really, I think that's massively useful, because it, it's not, it's not an easy role to fulfil (Co-P)

Some foster carers were clear that they did not have the time to be involved in becoming a pioneer, others were not aware of the development or thought it was unlikely to happen in their area,

I'm not 100% sure Hornchurch will do it [laughter]. I don't think they like it, so... and I've heard nothing back from them. (FC)

I did give is some thought...and I thought, oh, I'll have a little one and I won't be able to give that the time. (FC)

Recruitment and attrition

Lastly, we asked delegates how they had reflected on the difficulties in recruitment and attrition across the professional groupings. Some noted that certain teams did not have the right culture,

I think it's about cultures as well, you know, you've got those teams that will really embed training and see it as an important part, an integral part of the culture within the team. And then you've got other teams that are just very much... haven't got the headspace (Co-P)

Several noted how difficult it was for education staff to attend because of timetabling and lack of teaching cover,

And also I think it's the time aspect for schools as well, I don't know if you can make, I don't know, like a shorter session for schools, I don't know. Just yeah, like add on sessions at the end of the day, I'm not sure, but it's just sort of everybody's just so strapped for time and at such low capacity as well, it's just getting them on and engaging and looking at all the different strategies as well. (Co-P)

Others also noted the difficulties recruiting social workers and social care staff,

I think workloads are very particularly high at the moment, lots of staff sickness, and I just think at the best of times… I mean I'm from a workforce background and at the best of times it's trying to get social workers or social care staff to attend training was sort of an uphill battle really. (Co-P)

I think sort of they look at the, the childcare social workers as well at the moment and they're just, they haven't got time to bre-, they haven't got time to breathe… daresay it's the same culture throughout, trying to get them to even do one or two, you know, mornings would be, you know, difficult, but six, you've kind of got no chance really. (Co-P)

There were no comments on the lack of attendance by health staff, although given some of the training took place during a global pandemic this is perhaps not surprising.

Summary

The delegates had taken on board and utilised a wide range of tools and skills as a result of the masterclasses. Some of the major messages retained from the masterclasses related to the importance of keeping a child focus, of responding calmly, spending time with children, listening to and respecting their feelings. The masterclasses had made delegates more aware of each other's roles, taking on board the notion of the corporate parenting responsibility being everyone's business. All felt that schools in particular had benefitted from learning about the role of the foster carer. Delegates noted being more aware of the team around the child, and as a result, they now ensured that schools and foster carers were always included in meetings about the child. Foster carers noted how they had felt more empowered to advocate on behalf of the child, feeling more confident to speak out. Delegates had kept the supporting masterclass materials, and some had drawn upon and utilised them subsequently. There were numerous comments about the lack of attendance by co-professionals at the masterclasses, whilst recognising the current pressures on all staff. All were in support of the pioneer role, although not all foster carers felt able to dedicate time to it, and some were unclear about how the role was progressing in their area.

Interviews with managers 12 months after the masterclasses T3

We interviewed the three managers again, 12 months after the masterclasses

Course values

Although not mentioned much in the first interviews, after 12 months managers commented on the values the programme had imbued within services, which fitted well with corporate principles,

> *it's the, the shared values and principles part really, and I, I guess that's standing out at the moment because we're in the middle of doing self-evaluations, and one of the first things is to map out our, our purpose, our vision and our values. So, I've gone back to this and thought, well actually, this is so relevant, and it's relevant across, and we're asked to think about how our service principles and values reflect that of the, the, the corporate principles and values. Well, if, if the corporate values are about wellbeing and promoting wellbeing, this, this fits in really well, doesn't it? (M1)*

> *to me it's about holding wellbeing at the centre, because if, if we - if the child has good wellbeing, then they're more, more likely to be able to settle to learn, aren't they? So everybody's got a better understanding of that. (M2)*

Multi-disciplinary working

Multi-disciplinary working was still recognised as vital and remembered as a core component and major message from the programme,

> *It's about that collaborative approach, and to form a collaborative approach you need to have good relationships, and everybody has a part to play in forming those good relationships. (M2)*

Similarly, the message that corporate parenting is everyone's responsibility was stongly embedded,

> *Because everybody has a role to play in that, isn't it? It's not just the school's responsibility, it's not just the, the carer's responsibility, it's not just the social worker, it's everyone. (M2)*

The messages around the importance of working together had been retained, which has continued to help support the model of the team around the child,

one of the main things that's come out of it for us around the working together and the work that needs to be done around that to include how the colleagues feel because it is about the team around the child. (M3)

There was seen to have been a particular impact on professionals who attended from education, and an increase in their awareness of the needs of foster carers,

I suppose school-wise I can say, 'cos those schools who've participated have certainly increased their wider awareness of the role of the foster carer, and are more sensitive to the needs of the foster carer if that makes sense, and the - you know, and the thoughts and the, the opinions of the foster carer. It's really about working as a team isn't it, rather than one, one person or institution being responsible for a child's education. So there's a more - a collective approach, I suppose is what I'm trying to say.(M2)

This seemed to have led to more of a collective understanding and approach to working with children. This manager also noted how education staff had become more sensitised to children in care when moving schools,

So that there's sort of a more careful introductory approach going on, you know, spending a visit first, and then spending some time with, with your TA that you know very well from your old school, so then taking the child to the new school and introducing them to the new environment that way for a short amount of time, and then a slightly longer amount of time, and then some lessons and some, some playtime, you know? And then just, you know, just a more gradual transitional approach....I think it's, it's done far more sensitively and far more empathetically now. (M2)

Managers felt that having representatives from education present was particularly beneficial so that people became aware of the services and who to contact,

I think definitely, you know, it would give people in terms of education, sort of, knowledge on, sort of, local services and things like that, you know, locally what to do in certain situations. And I think in particular {they} ..had their, you know, education coordinator there, that was probably invaluable for them, because they, you know, sort of, built that relationship up with her then.. if somebody did have a, educational issue. (M1)

Feedback and changes to practice

The managers felt that the feedback from their staff had been positive regarding the masterclasses,

> *staff members on the ground definitely have that, sort of, feeling that it was definitely worthwhile attending, that it was worth they're time (M1)*

Managers believed that knowledge about the programme was spreading and that team managers were promoting and cascading the information down to other staff,

> *Across the five teams in the placement teams, yes, I mean, they're all very well aware of what Fostering Wellbeing is, team managers, you know, promote it. And people like I said, the feedback has been good from both professional, the social workers and the staff. And I know that social workers who have attended that and team managers etc are cascading that through their teams. And yeah, there hasn't really been any negativity towards it. So we're just working on further embedding it really, and keeping it live, keeping on the agenda. (M3)*

Certain initiatives had been developed as a result of the Fostering Wellbeing programme, including *Foster Forward* , made up of foster carers and children's services' staff, developing a participation group; this type of multi-disciplinary group reflects some of the messages of Fostering Wellbeing,

> *as a result, they've got a consultant social worker in Newport, who was developing a participation group Foster Forward. So, they extended the membership of the group to include representatives across children's services as well as foster carers. After the consultant social worker attended the wellbeing programme. So the Foster Forward group now includes as well as foster carers, the fostering senior practitioners, social workers on the pathway teams, a youth justice worker, social workers in the Child Protection Team and a member of staff in the workforce devel2opment team. (M3)*

However, it was noted that although *Foster Forward* and the pioneer role were being developed, the full impact of Fostering Wellbeing had not yet been realised, because of the lack of reach of the masterclasses across the multi-disciplinary groupings and this was a current focus for managers,

> *And I think we haven't seen the full impact yet because we need to get, we've seen the impact of the masterclasses in that we've got pioneers, etc. The impact we haven't seen that we wanted was obviously the multidisciplinary, which we're going to work on now. ...So I suppose the impacts the masterclasses has been that we've got the Pioneers, and trained and ready to go and look at how we use that role in each LA. And the impacts on other professionals is that that's been less than we would like...because we didn't see the attendance that we would like from. Maybe it was not so much attendance that we would like from, from other disciplinaries. (M3)*

Pioneer programme

The managers continued to fully support the pioneer initiative, seeing it as a positive development,

> *So I think the teams are really, you know, the Pioneer element of it, they think that's, you know, really positive. (M3)*

Managers saw the role of pioneer as supporting fostering teams,

> *I think the pioneers, so I think that will probably change in a lot of practice as well going forward when those are initiated, because it gives another arm of support really to the teams (M1)*

Managers also saw the pioneer role as potentially empowering carers,

> *I've gone a step further and done the, the pioneer training as well. So I'm keen to, you know, get that going in, in our foster care service too, because there's so many benefits of, of that kind of self-help approach isn't there, really, and empowering our carers to, to support one another, which they do, do generally and informally quite a bit anyway (M2)*

Managers noted that some areas had quite a few carers coming forward to be involved who were highly invested in the pioneer role,

> *we've had quite a few people come forward as, to be Pioneers, ...So, the fact that we have, you know, a good number of Pioneers, and we're quite a small region, just shows, I think that, you know, the foster carers are really sort of invested in this (M3)*

Similarly, fostering teams were very much supportive of the pioneer initiative,

> *{Local authority} are meeting at the end of April to see how they can use the pioneer role to support foster carers and develop the service, so the same as [local authority]. So we are, you know, the placement teams have really taken this on board. (M2)*

Some areas had their own plans for mentoring and so were not necessarily taking the pioneer role on board, but it might be that both models could be merged,

> *I'm hoping to, sort of, bring TFN into the next regional managers meetings to, sort of, gee that up again. I know [name of local authority] had asked that they, sort of, hold, we hold off on the pioneers for a little bit because they were already in the process of setting up their own, sort of, peer mentoring scheme. So, the hope is that the pioneers will, sort of, mould into that as well (M1)*

There was some caution expressed by managers. One questioned how a quality assurance process might be put in place to ensure the best carers were taking up these roles,

The pioneer initiative is really good. However, you know, basing it just on carers who nominate themselves there may be some issues you know, with people nominating themselves, but you know, maybe the placement team managers feel that those people are not maybe the best people to support other foster carers and mentor them and that they need to be experienced. (M3)

Others wanted a more formalised arrangement, bespoke to the local authority,

But it would be nice to, you know, formalise this and structure it, wouldn't it? And, and, and create a {local authority} framework, how do we want to progress this in our local authority? What's best for us? What best meets our needs? And I, I think there are, you know, so many benefits here of that collective understanding, and having these principles that underline everything we do. What - you know, where do we wanna go with the pioneer programme? I would love to have that discussion. (M2)

Whilst others noted that they would not want the role to become too bureaucratised and less attractive to foster carers,

we don't want to make it cumbersome for the foster carers, we don't want to make it so that they do the pioneer role, and then think, oh, I've got to do all this paperwork, I've got to feed back for the social worker. So you know, we're looking at how we can make it not cumbersome for them, and a positive role that they can enjoy seems as they've been, you know, positive in coming forward. (M3)

Clearly there needs to be some agreement and on-going discussion between the Fostering Wellbeing staff, managers, fostering teams and foster carers about the development of the pioneer role.

Attendance and attrition

All managers recognised that the masterclasses needed to access a wider range of professionals beyond foster carers and fostering teams, if its full potential is to be achieved,

But I see the value in getting education, health and children's services more on board with it. Because I don't think it's something that can be achieved through the foster carers and placement teams alone, fully. I think the, you know, the full potential can't be achieved just through placement teams and foster carers. (M3)

This made progress difficult as professionals need to first attend the masterclasses to become fully immersed in the programme before they could take it forward, and there were many staff still to be trained,

But now I'm, I'm sat in limbo land waiting a little bit, because my social services colleagues didn't participate early on, and they feel unable to

progress with the development of this whole programme without first attending the masterclasses themselves. So there's, there's somebody in fostering who's been given the, the responsibility I, I guess, and somebody in training who has developed an interest because I've kinda promoted it really, and said, "Look, this is to do with you as well," but I can't, I can't do this alone, you know? I need, I need the support of others. (M2)

There is a risk that people are not all at the same stage, with some trying to promote the programme which others are not invested in. There was the feeling that children's social workers, health and sometimes education had not attended and there was still a need to get them on board,

the same thing is needing to reach the children's, social workers and education and health, because I think, you know, although it was open to them, the attendance wasn't great, from children's social workers or education or health in our region anyway, so it's, it's about getting the children's social workers on board, I think, as well as the placement team. (M3)

In other areas education had attended, and children's social workers were the group who needed to be targeted,

I was pleased there was foster carers and schools represented, 'cos that, that balance is necessary, and I, I think I thought initially that this, this was just for foster carers, but no, it was important to have, have teachers on board, definitely. But yeah, I think social workers should be, be in on the act really. (M2)

All saw this as a current mission to promote the programme across the full range of professionals working with children looked after,

So that's something that we really need to take forward is to be able to think about how we reach our multidisciplinary audience across the region. (M3)

Sustainability

It was unclear how the programme would continue and in what format, especially if the masterclasses were no longer running,

I don't know whether there's going to be any more masterclasses delivered now. So the Learning and Development Framework is like a continuous learning journey for the foster carers. So if we were to reference the masterclasses in there, if they were no longer going to be running, then that would be quite, you know, difficult. And also, the, the Learning and Development Framework is there, and I don't think could be updated. But what we do do is have really good, really good links with workforce development in each of the five local authorities, they send out newsletters, weekly to foster carers with lots of different learning opportunities, etc. And

they've been doing that with the masterclasses. And that's so that we can continue to promote as learning and development, but through workforce development. So we'll promote it in that way. (M3)

One manager noted that it was the intention to continue running the Fostering Wellbeing masterclasses themselves,

The {local authority} training officer had said that she wanted to keep running the programme herself...with the education coordinator who'd agreed she would be part of that as well, so, they were gonna keep doing that (M1)

Others noted that people in the local authority had been tasked with managing the pioneers,

So we've got a person within the team whose responsibility it is to keep that live on the agenda, manage the Temple Time Credits, the pioneers, etc. So we've got that in each LA. (M3)

This manager also felt they would need the support of The Fostering Network to organise this aspect of their work,

And as we continued on the pioneer role element of the journey, we would need continued support to set up and fully embed this into our fostering services. And I think that's the stage we're at now, you know, continuing on the journey of the Pioneer role and the embedding that into the services. (M3)

The exact direction and shape of Fostering Wellbeing had yet to be fully developed but there was a strong sense that they did not want the learning to be lost,

I've got two members of staff that are interested at the moment, they're doing the masterclasses. So I'm waiting for them to catch up, and then it's about us getting together really and, and planning where we as a local authority want to go with this, because it - I don't - I personally don't want it to be something that we've, we've all picked up and enjoyed and experienced, and then we leave it there 'cos it's been and gone, and the funding's gone. I want us to make the most of it really, and, and learn from our experiences, (M2)

Finally, managers recognised they could not be solely responsible for taking the initiative forward which requires a collective will,

and like me, I've started to build it into my self-evaluation, which sort of embeds it in approaches then doesn't it, and makes it a little bit more formal. .....I, I want to be part of this, and it shouldn't just be left to me, it, it, it takes a collective [laughs] approach and response really. (M2)

Summary

After 12 months the managers felt involvement in the Fostering Wellbeing programme had helped embed values and notions of corporate parenting and responsibility. They had noticed a particular impact on education staff that had attended the masterclasses, who better understood the role of foster carer and the difficulties they face. Feedback from staff about the masterclasses had been positive. Certain initiatives had grown as a result of the masterclasses, for example, *Foster Forward*. Managers were very positive about the pioneer project and had seen great interest and investment by foster carers in their areas. Managers had some queries about quality assurance of the pioneers, and some felt a need to formalise the role, whilst others did not want it to become too bureaucratised. All recognised difficulties in the reach of the masterclasses across the differing groups, particularly children's social workers, and felt that this meant it had not yet reached its full potential. There is no agreed view of how to take Fostering Wellbeing forward, especially as so many had still to attend the masterclasses. In one area they planned to continue running the masterclasses themselves within the local authority. Others felt they would require the support of The Fostering Network and a pan-Wales vision is yet to be fully worked out or agreed upon.

Focus groups with pioneers

We ran two focus groups with pioneers during May 2022, one of four foster carers, and the second with five participating (n=9). By the end of June 2022, 57 pioneers had volunteered and 51 had received training. The training of the pioneers had commenced in January 2022. The pioneers who took part in the focus groups were all experienced foster carers, having been fostering for between 2 and 13.5 years. They specialised in a range of areas, including teenagers, babies, respite and large sibling groups. The most experienced pioneer had cared for 53 children. All pioneers were very positive about the new role and were excited about the opportunities it offered, and all had a variety of ideas for how it could be developed. All had felt under supported during their early years as a foster carer, and more recently all had felt isolated during COVID-19, and felt the pioneer would help with these difficulties,

> *I haven't met with - well, I have, but - officially met with another foster carer now for two and a half years, and we haven't had any support groups for two and a half years. (FC9)*

Motivation

Pioneers were motivated to become involved for a range of reasons, some had been inspired by the visionary and 'infectious' staff in The Fostering Network. Others reflected on their own difficulties when first starting out, and the pressures on social workers who were unable to fully support them,

> *where new foster carers come into the system, and I think they need a lot more support, and obviously the social workers are so busy, if we can help and guide people, 'cos obviously we've been there, we've experienced it, whereas the social workers haven't, and I think there's a big part to play in supporting new foster carers coming in. (FC6)*

Some noted the poor relationship they had, had with their supporting social worker,

> *when I first was approved, I had a really bad supporting social worker who never helped me to do anything, so I basically was on my, on my own, I had to learn myself. (FC8)*

This pioneer also notes that peer support can be more useful than other types of professional support as pioneers have lived experienced of the same or similar situations. One pioneer noted the often cryptic language of social work and fostering, with the use of many acronyms, which new foster carers often experience as exclusionary,

> *I didn't know what any of the abbreviations were, and I'd get emails with, like, these abbreviations in, and I'd think, oh my God, what is that? So there's little things like that that you don't necessarily learn in the beginning, that takes you a long time to understand it. (FC8)*

You know, like what's delegated authority? What's an STO? (FC2)

Thus, developing a glossary of terms was deemed to be a good initiative that pioneers could take forward.

All of the pioneers recognised that fostering is an isolated role and one which is generally not well supported, and were motivated to try and bridge this gap,

> We speak a lot about how being a foster carer is quite isolated anyway, so in any way that we can help other foster carers, especially new ones, and old ones, it's great. (FC3)

All felt that pioneers could help other foster carers' navigate some of the challenges of fostering, and that the body of experience of the pioneers could be valuable to others,

> Well, and it just suddenly made me realise what my experiences have been are worth something, you know, and if I can help somebody else not go through the, the, the negative part of a process on their own, like allegations and things like that, you know, if I can walk through with someone, "Make sure you've done this, make sure you've done that," and, and help them, then I just think what a gift that's gonna be to other foster carers. (FC5)

This is very much in line with the messages of Fostering Wellbeing, that foster carers are experts, should be empowered and have their voices heard. Pioneers also recognised that seeking advice from other foster carers would be less intimidating and less formal than approaching social work staff.

The pioneers have set up an What's App group to communicate with each other, and highlighted that their wide range of expertise was helpful, so someone could approach the pioneers and pose a question,

> "Anybody know what to do with this? Anybody can guide me? What, what - where should I start with this?" (FC5)

One of the pioneers suggested a texting system, so that a foster carer could text the group with a query,

> like, a texting system where you could text, like, a group. And then if someone says, I have experience with that, do you want to ring me? (FC3)

Pioneers interestingly did not want to be paid as this might make the role too formal, but were appreciative of time credits beingoffered to acknowledge their contribution,

> Yeah, and I'm thinking, I'm, I'm the same, like, I wouldn't expect money for it. It might become too formal if you did that anyway because, you know, it is voluntary but, and the time credits are a ni... are nice. Well, you can go on a family trip, can't you? Or take the children somewhere. (FC1)

The major motivation was to support other foster carers so that workforce' wellbeing can be improved to avoid burnout,

I think that when you've got an experienced foster carer, they're much more calmer in the drama of looking after a child. And I think that having that calm attitude will help foster carers to not panic and not, like, again, not burn out. (FC2)

It is to training that we now move.

Training

Pioneers were positive about the training they had received when volunteering for the role, finding it informal, so that they were able to contribute their own ideas,

I've really enjoyed it to be honest, I think I've learnt quite a lot from it myself as well. There's loads of aspects that I might not have thought of before. And I also like the way it's delivered informally, that there's lots of discussions and groups. I've made some really - I've had some really good conversations with other foster carers and thrown some really good ideas around. (FC8)

The pioneers felt that via the training they became more confident in talking about the challenges they had faced, an opportunity that they rarely had in the past,

So the trainings, actually the more you do it, the more you - more you get confidence to be able to speak about your experiences, because they are so adverse and extreme...(FC9)

The pioneers were enjoying the network that had been created, feeling that they could see the role developing and taking shape,

I think that [facilitator} has done a fantastic job in kind of creating a little network of our little group of Pioneers. And in fact, you know, six months ago when we started – it was about six months ago we started it , it was quite a vague idea and it's coming to fruition now. So behind the scenes, I can see a lot of hard work's gone in. (FC2)

Pioneer role

There were lots of ideas about how the role might develop. The idea of a platform where information can be shared, for example, of 'how to access CAMHs' was seen to be potentially useful. The role was also seen as an important vehicle to share knowledge of resources, including, for example, good ideas of places and events that children children in foster care might enjoy. It seems that these could all be housed in a pioneer/foster carer resource pack. Like the facilitator interviews, some pioneers referred to Padlets of resources,

there'll be Padlets that'll help them about the issue, and they'll be like, in your
area, this is this - this support group is there, this support group is here for
that, for that - you know, and different ones in different areas (FC5)

Given that COVID has necessitated on-line working there were varied views about whether the pioneer role could take place across regions or whether it might be pan Wales, although any events, for example, 'walking together for well-being', would need to be more local.

Another idea was for pioneers to put on specific workshops or advice clinics,

I think two of the main issues that I seem to see with fostering; one is
behaviour and the other one is education. Those seem to be two issues that,
really, people struggle with. So I don't know whether it's worth being proactive
and maybe putting on things like workshops or advice clinics or
supporting...(FC1)

The idea of a face to face meeting where pioneers could be available for drop-in sessions was also suggested,

Or even like, you know, a sort of drop-in, you know, with we all have a table
and people would go and ask questions to who they wanted to, with, you
know... in a more like a marketplace type of thing. I don't know, but I think that
it could be good to be proactive (FC2)

One pioneer suggested that being involved in recruitment might also be helpful so that prospective foster carers might feel more able to ask questions, and pioneers could support them through their application journey.

Other suggestions were to form a buddying system, where pioneers might be linked to new or struggling foster carers.

It was noted that the Mockingbird model embraced by The Fostering Network provided support to certain foster carers, but only those who met the criteria, and that it was important that other avenues of support were put in place for those who did not,

I think that the more the local authorities are jumping on this Mockingbird
Scheme, that we need to make sure that the ones that don't meet the criteria
for that hub are still supported. And that's why it's important to have the
pioneers. (FC2)

We discussed the idea of having a desk in a local authority office and whether this was something that was envisioned: there were varied views about this, one group thought that given COVID and the impact on working patterns, such as hot desking, this would be unlikely. However, some welcomed the idea,

I think that would be a really good - yeah, because at least then you're sort of,
you're seen as an equal I suppose, and you're, you're in the office, you're with
them, you're building up a relationship with other social workers that you
might not have previously met. [Agreement from group] Them to understand,
like, your skillset as well, so that - yeah, I, I think that'd be really good. (FC8)

Whilst the pioneer model is still in its infancy there were some examples of it having already been implemented,

> *last month, we had all the teachers who were designated teachers in primary school, secondary school, special education, everyone [background noise] – I'm sorry. All of them on one Zoom. And then there was me and one or two other foster carers, I think, and we were specifically talking about, like, paperwork side of things to try and tidy up the forms that everyone has to do.*
> *(FC4)*

> *I've been - went over last week to another foster carer's house who had had similar experiences to me, and it was the first time she was able to open up to me about it.(FG2P5)*

Caution and barriers

The pioneers were all keenly aware that they are not social workers and there would be limits to what they could provide, including the difficulty of negotiating issues of confidentiality when foster carers are talking about their difficulties,

> *We're not social workers, we, we're pioneers (FC6)*

They identified that it would be important to know where responsibility lies, and that a pioneer should be seen foremost as a source of support,

> *My concern is the, crossing the boundaries, and the Pioneer's being looked upon as responsible for the decisions that are made by the foster carers. And I think that social workers need to look at Pioneers as a support network rather than an answer (FC2)*

They also noted that the system would only work if it had the understanding, trust and backing of social work staff,

> *the ground-roots social workers that come in our homes need to understand a bit more about the role of the pioneer, and speak to them about it really, and for us to be given the responsibility to - and the trust to, to be able to speak to other foster carers and support them as necessary. (FC2)*

And that all social workers would need to be aware of it, and should be directed to attend an information session about it,

> *working with the local authority, I think it should be mandatory that, that there's some - there, there's something, either a, a presentation by the [pioneers] - all the social workers should be aware of the - what the pioneering role is. (FG5)*

Pioneers highlighted this as particularly important, so social workers could signpost foster carers to it, rather than allowing a crisis to develop. Others identified that it would need to be pan Wales approach, with all local authorities on board, whilst heeding the differences across the local authorities,

I'm just sort of like thinking, we need to make sure that all the councils are on board (FC3)

she's meeting with the service heads of all the different areas, and she's getting a mixed response from them, and I'm like, it should be an all-encompassing and working hand-in-glove, (FC5)

The pioneers felt strongly that such an initiative would require funding,

So I definitely think a bit of funding would be good from the local authority. I don't know if there's - I don't think there's any access to it, we haven't got any. But I think a, a bit of funding would be good to maybe do, like, events and things like that, that, that are covered for by sort of the local authority. (FC2)

There was a suggestion that there should be some male pioneers,

I think as well to try and get some male foster carers on board as well. (FC2)

It will also be important to ensure that kinship carers were represented in the pioneer group.

Lastly, the Pioneers felt that there would need to be some overall co-ordination,

I suppose it'd be really helpful to have a coordinator that we can make contact with if we needed to, if we have any ideas, or if we can have some kind of meeting, hopefully in personal, person as time goes on, you know, to discuss our ideas and so we have someone coordinating it, if you like. (FC1)

Summary

The pioneer role was warmly embraced by both focus groups, and there was a range of innovative ideas suggested. The peer support model sits well within the Fostering Wellbeing principles and framework. It has the potential to provide much needed support to foster carers, which could, if successful, add some ballast and durability to the workforce. Pioneers thought there should be three to four pioneers per region, so there are not too many to manage. It is unclear how the model would be co-ordinated or manged, whether it be at a local, regional or at a pan-Wales level. It certainly would need some co-ordination and pioneers would need to be supported. This could require the on-going involvement of The Fostering Network or could be managed locally. The model also needs some funding for events etc. over and above the vehicle of time credits. As the pioneer model is in its infancy, it will be interesting to see how it develops, but shows much promise at this stage, especially as foster carers are highly invested in it.

Interviews with facilitators of the masterclasses

The interviews with facilitators were undertaken during August and September 2021.

Response to Covid

The facilitators were very aware of the impact of Covid on foster carers, who were already working in isolated situations. Ideas for how to adapt the masterclasses were generated as a result of discussions with Welsh Government, with some of the materials deliberately linked to the pandemic experience. Facilitators wanted to develop materials that foster carers could utilise from home,

> *within the education one, we looked at things like the Learning Zone and the Common Third, and how you can build activities at home… (T5)*

They also wanted to draw on the increased empathy that they perceived had occurred as a result of lockdown,

> *I also think that quite a few of the principles of the master class kind of resonate a bit more now, having gone through COVID because it's evoked quite a lot of emotions in people. (T2)*

> *So {after Covid} I think we can all have some kind of empathy for children who experience those detachments from those people that they care about and the impact that has on them. (T2)*

In this sense, facilitators felt that the audience was more receptive to some of the main messages of the masterclasses because of the Covid lockdown.

Perceptions of the masterclasses

General perceptions

Facilitators were very clear that one of the main purposes of the masterclasses was to bring foster carers into the team around the child and increase the respect for the foster carer,

> *the programme's aim, is to bring foster carers into that team around the child and be really valued, but actually, to see the other side and for them to understand.... I think that's specifically true for foster carers, is that they are just as important, if not... you know, the key person in that situation and that they should feel that, and that the other professionals should consider that too. (T5)*

Facilitators felt this purpose had been achieved, seeing foster carers develop and flourish during the masterclasses,

> *And see them grow in confidence to actually share their experiences, rather than just say, "Oh well, I'm... you know, I'm just a kinship carer, so I wouldn't know. (T5)*

The joint training also provided a shared language which foster carers became more confident with,

> *you know, use words like "holistic support" or "working together", you know, to actually be able to talk about that a bit more confidently...(T5)*

One facilitator noted the lack of care experienced people speaking on the programme,

> *I think we need more actual people who've experienced care, like real-life people talking. Which is very difficult to have, because obviously, like, if they're still in care, there's a lot of, like, issues around protection and stuff. And people don't always want to talk about their experiences.... I feel like the child's voice still needs to be a little bit more involved. (T4)*

Facilitators were positive about the co-host arrangements where trainers worked in pairs, which provided good support and a back stop when delivering the materials,

> *you can have one person managing the content, and one person sort of checking that everyone's okay and dealing with... dealing with the little... the sort of little things that come up with online delivery and, you know, setting up the breakout rooms and things like that. (T5)*

There were varied ideas about the optimum number of participants when working on-line, with facilitators suggesting anywhere between 12 -30 made for a successful group.

There was some discussion around the principles and whilst valuable, there was consideration of whether too much time was spent running through these, and several felt this could be reduced,

I probably wouldn't spend as much time on the principles each session, going through them. I'd probably use that time for more interaction with participants, more... more... maybe more activities. (T1)

it could be done in a maybe sort of a slightly different way where people are reflecting on the principles that we've... we've discussed in a... in a previous session... (T3)

On-line delivery

All facilitators saw the benefits of on-line delivery because of ease of access for delegates,

I would say foster carers have been really great at attending. I do think virtual makes it easier. They're less likely to have something happen over the school run and be delayed and things. (T5)

Most facilitators did not see any reason to go back to face-to-face delivery,

{To} go back to face-to-face would actually need a lot more people facilitating because of the... the travel and the logistics. (T5)

... I don't see why we would go back to a face-to-face delivery on the training, because it just... you know, the money saving that has happened because it's delivered virtually is huge. (T1)

Whilst others thought that face to face delivery provided more potential for building relationships and networks,

I think they should be face to face. That would be my preference. Just in terms of building relationships, I think it's easy... the whole thing is about building relationships and building that team around the child, so I think face-to-face is easier for that. (T4)

Some facilitators suggested a blended approach,

I can definitely see a value in potentially meeting every now and then .....because there's that personal element that's missed sometimes through this way of working so I think it could be intermingled with some opportunities to meet in person. (T2)

On-line delivery allowed for the recruitment of the live high quality of external speakers that could be drawn upon, even for just short presentations,

And... and also for getting the guest speakers in, because if they can just, like, tune in from their office...(T3)

We were able to get a whole range of people from the educational psychologists or the vulnerable support teams, and they were fitting it round their appointments, so they would say, "I can join this 15 minute," which is all we need from them. (T5)

One facilitator worried that having in-depth conversations about trauma whilst in the home with children around might place children in some difficulty, which will be worth further consideration,

And there's some pretty heavy discussions going on, not part... particularly about individual children, but actually how... how safe are these children being protected at home while, you know, these heavy conversations are going on? (T3)

Attrition

Facilitators also noted the difficulties with attrition,

I think they could be improved by getting a few extra bums on seats with regards to South Wales, so I would like to see that going forward (T2)

One facilitator identified that whilst it is easier to attend a virtual session, it is also easier to drop out of a virtual session, and those who did so were mostly co-professionals,

the ones who drop out often do seem to be the professionals more than anyone else (T4)

It seemed that where social work professionals attended the first session, they were unlikely to attend all five masterclasses,

where we've had good engagement from social work teams maybe from the first session, that's not necessarily carried through all five. (T4)

Regional differences were noted, with some regions having bought into the Fostering Well-being programme in advance of the masterclasses,

some regions have been much more engaged with that process before the master classes start. (T5)

Having buy-in from senior managers was thought to have had a significant impact on attendance,

I had one response from Sofia, who's... who's head of service for Llan, and since then, Llan's numbers have definitely increased {if} it's not endorsed

or led by the strategic managers, so they're... they're just seeing it as training opportunities for foster carers...(T1)

Where management buy-in was not evident or the region did not fully understand the aims and purpose of the programme, it was only seen as a training opportunity for foster carers,

to have it per local authority, because that local authority then took ownership of what needed to be done, and ensured that, you know, everybody in that team around the child attended. (T1)

Future

When discussing ideas for the future, facilitators noted the need for a curation of the resources and supplementary materials in some sort of Padlet,

Padlet that people could access and in there would be lots of different links to wellbeing resources and services. (T1)

Facilitators were conscious that at the point of interview, the pioneer role had not been developed and this might be better initiated face to face,

I think potentially, the face-to-face stuff would be better with the pioneers, so I think, you know, if you're trying to develop a pioneer role within each local authority, actually being able to kind of meet somewhere and, you know, have that kind of community feel, rather than it being a virtual... because you're... you're kind of... you're more based within that community. (T1)

One facilitator suggested the need for more speakers who were care experienced for future delivery of the masterclasses as highlighted in the interim evaluation. Others noted the need for a follow up session for consolidation of learning and future networking opportunities,

follow-up opportunity to maybe meet and discuss how they've implemented the programme, maybe something like that. (T2)

Interview with Programme Manager

The programme manger for Fostering Wellbeing was interviewed in April 2022.

Course development

The programme manager noted that whilst the masterclasses started face to face, because of COVID-19 the delivery was paused in March 2020. This gave the team time to undertake a ten week training course in social pedagogy run by the Social Pedagogy Development Network, and ensure that those concepts were fully embedded within the masterclasses.

The programme manager has taken time to map the masterclasses to the post approval Learning and Development Framework for foster carers (https://fosterwales.gov.wales) and content very much complements and responds to this agenda,

> *we mapped fostering wellbeing against the framework, so, and we provided a detailed version of that for services, they could really look at exactly what elements we were hitting. But we also provided like a quick revision for foster carers so if they came to masterclass one, they could see straightaway which areas of their framework they could turn to and fill it in*

The programme manager noted that the material is relevant for all children and young people, not just those who are care experienced and fits well with the Welsh Whole School approach to mental health and well-being agenda within schools. The programme manager indicated that the masterclasses provide opportunities for delegates to reflect on their practice, and to become more reflexive practitioners going forward. The masterclasses also offer some consistency of learning across Wales, albeit with some regional adaptation and tailoring.

On-line delivery

The pause in delivery caused by COVID-19 provided the opportunity and the time for the team to amend the programme materials to make them suitable for on-line delivery, adapt them to the context of the pandemic, and further hone the masterclasses, stripping out some of the excess. She noted the success of the change to on-line delivery, especially as this meant increased accessibility for delegates,

> *I know from pre-pandemic, it was quite hard to get all those people together in a room and the virtual delivery actually makes it a bit easier*

It also improved their ability to recruit a far wider range of speakers, who did not have to devote a whole day to attending the masterclasses. On-line delivery also made management of the programme far easier,

> *I think for the masterclasses, virtual works. It enables us to do so much more than we could have done if we all had to travel around and booking people*

However, the programme manager also noted difficulties with recruiting care experienced young people, as highlighted as an omission in our interim report ,

because we didn't feel confident in our ability to be able to support young
people to share their stories remotely

It is clear that Fostering Wellbeing has a commitment to supporting those presenting their lived experiences and intend to include this aspect more widely going forward.

Engagement with the sector

On-line delivery led to increased engagement with over 500 people having attended the masterclasses at the point of interview, (and we are informed 757 have attended at least one masterclass at the point of writing this report), with the programme manager anticipating reaching around 15% of local authority carers during the pilot,

We'll reach say, 15% of the foster carer population, in local authorities
through this pilot

The programme manager noted that they have established contacts in all local authorities. One of the strengths of the Fostering Wellbeing approach is its multi-disciplinary focus and bringing all the members of the team around the child together. It was however especially difficult bringing health in to the masterclasses during a national pandemic. Similarly, education were also struggling during this time as many staff were 'redeployed'.

The programme manager discussed difficulties with education attending masterclasses more generally, because of the school timetable, and they are considering ways in which the programme could be developed, potentially as a hybrid model to address this. However a hybrid model is challenging, as it will be important that they still retain the presence and voice of foster carers,

some sort of hybrid model maybe, that we can give the support to schools, get
the information into schools, but not lose the element where they have those
discussions and hear foster carers talking about their experiences, because
that's where they're going to, hopefully, the light bulb moment will happen

The programme manager highlighted the strength of Fostering Wellbeing is their knowledge of local authorities, and being able to draw on key people,

the programme's real strength is on bringing together regional voices and, and
speakers from across the region and you know, guest speakers from
professions across the region

She also felt that having the endorsement of senior management and being able to build on regional networks was vital to promote and organise the masterclasses,

{We have} forged in for some really key people who are helping us develop the
programme in their areas...... it's been endorsed from the top, and everybody's
seen that.

The main messages of the programme also contribute to its success, those being the focus on holistic support, child centred planning and ways of working. In addition, the focus on team work and championing the role of the foster carer was a message that is highly relevant and well received.

Interim Report

The programme manager discussed our interim report and any changes that had been made to the programme in response to it. She felt that the interim report had been a useful way of gaining feedback from delegates, which is often more difficult to gauge when working on-line. Feedback relating to the over-focus on the ten principles had led facilitators to reduce the time spent on this, and allocating more time for discussion. Additionally, the delivery team found the feedback confirmed many of the things they were doing well,

it really gave us that information and we could see that a lot of the things, that basically what they were saying is exactly what we, they, we would have wanted them to say, and we didn't know that until we read the report maybe on that scale. So that was the first thing is that we just were like, this is working in the way we wanted it to. So that was really important. I think it was interesting to see the stuff people focused in on and we had some really good kind of live feedback

Pioneers

The pioneer training had started at the time of the interview, with most regions having at least one pioneer trained.The training for pioneers includes sessions on mentoring and self-care. The programme manager described a huge appetite for peer support, especially given the additional isolation that foster carers experienced during COVID-19,

a lot of services telling us their foster carers are asking for peer support...because they felt quite isolated doing Covid, or conversely during Covid, it was other foster carers that were really, you know, someone who was, knowing who they could go to was really beneficial. So that is something that's coming through quite strongly from quite a few of the areas is they would like the Pioneer group to have that sort of focus

The programme management team were intending to create a reference guide for services to outline the range of activities that pioneers might be involved in,

what we'd like to be able to do quite soon within this fourth year, is have some sort of easy reference guide for services to sort of say look this, this is what a Fostering Wellbeing Pioneer does

The management team along with pioneers were developing a Padlet of resources to be widely available to all foster carers.

Service Planning

The programme manager noted that regional action plans were being developed to take the Fostering Wellbeing programme forward. She also highlighted a need for a regionalised, collaborative approach, perhaps with Fostering Network co-ordinating and taking this forward. This work is an area of on-going development.

Future aspirations

The progamme manager indicated that she would hope for multi-disciplinary working to become fully embedded and 'routine' in future, and their intention to continue with virtual delivery of the masterclasses, followed by a networking in-person event.

Masterclass observations

One of the researchers sat in each of the five masterclasses pan-Wales and made some overall observations.

Overview

Positives:

- The masterclasses provide a wide range of rich, engaging material delivered by excellent presenters.

- The 10 principles provide a constructive, sequential structure for the classes. There is a clear progression of content.

- The use of local expertise gives the delegates a range of useful signposting.

- Time is used efficiently to balance an ambitious range of activities.

- Participants from different professional, geographical and life experiences provide a diverse range of opinions.

- As the classes developed, an inclusive friendly culture was established.

- Facilitators were charismatic and consistent anchors.

  During each session the participants were asked to use SmartSurvey to complete a sentence. These replies were shared in the 5th session to provide a stimulating source of discussion and reflection.

- The supporting handouts and resources provide a rich source of reference material.

- It can be hard to ascertain virtually how much people were engaging but the discussion in breakout groups and visible body language suggested a good level of engagement.

Possible Improvements:

- The course expectations could have been more clearly explained to create a more aspirational culture. Ideally, each delegate should feel privileged to attend such a well-resourced and unique course. An explicit discussion of expectations might have reduced attrition.

- Each course could start with some feedback from the previous one. This could highlight a listening culture and remind participants of the course value.

- To promote recall, the ten principles could have been presented with less text and an icon for each one.

- On occasions the time in the discussion groups could have been extended, although it is tricky to balance the limited time with people's need to reflect. Delegates also stray from the allocated topics, but this discussion helps to create bonds and the sharing of expertise.

- An increased representation of education would enhance the course. Ideally, more educationalists need to attend, to gain and share knowledge, and also a LACE (also known as CLA) Coordinator could provide a valuable insight.

- More opportunities could have been created to promote the Pioneer initiative.

- Greater time for discussion could help to embed learning.

- Fostering Wellbeing would benefit from more delegates. This excellent resource should be provided to as many people as possible, but, due to attrition, the courses are frequently below capacity.

- This course works best when a wide range of disciplines are represented. Levels of attrition and attendance would benefit from further consideration.

- More contributions from young people and experts from experience could enhance the course.

Evaluation Summaries

We were provided with evaluations which had been collated by The Fostering Network via the chat function in Zoom. There were 345 responses collated from the four cohorts of masterclasses (one response per person per masterclass). These were mainly from Mid and West Wales, as evaluations were not available from other regions where authorities were limited to the use of Microsoft Teams, which did not consistently enable all participants to access the chat function from their devices.

The evaluations very much echo the data from the interviews, highlighting the importance of a multi-disciplinary approach, and that this was often missing, especially from management,

{We need} A more diverse attendance of delegates.

The training needs to be completed by managers and those higher up.

Delegates valued the input of specialists, especially around speech and language,

The SALT presentation has opened my mind to be more vigilant of communication difficulties and how I can support children and young people to communicate.

Delegates noted how the training created a team culture, believing the training should continue, so that everyone would be working in the best interests of the child,

To continue to train all of those involved with the Looked After Child (Foster carers, school staff, Social and support workers), to look at the child as a whole, to reflect often, to put themselves in the shoes of the child, and most importantly to listen to the child.

Many of the takeaway messages about what needs to change were around recognising the importance of the foster carer, and drawing them into discussions when making decisions,

Better recognition of Foster Carers professional abilities.

To take on board Foster carers are more than just a carer, I'd like to see us taken more seriously in terms of decision making and become part of the decision-making arena.

Foster carers noted they were determined to become more assertive and advocate more on behalf of children,

I think I personally need to be a tad more assertive to ensure I am heard. The future of the children I care for relies on my voice, as the session verified, us carers know these children better than ANYONE.

There are numerous suggestions for more time for discussion in breakout groups and the opportunity for more interaction between participants.

Longer breakout groups and an opportunity to hear more from other foster carers, especially kinship carers.

Conclusions

The masterclasses have been overwhelmingly well received. The on-line delivery made them easily accessible, especially given a high proportion of Wales is rural, and for some attending training would mean travelling for several hours. The standard of delivery was seen as excellent, with the facilitators being seen as enthusiastic and knowledgeable. Where one of the facilitators was a foster carer this was seen as an excellent role model. The content was viewed as highly relevant. Delegates enjoyed the differing inputs by experts and the range of skills and approaches covered. The materials complemented other trauma informed training that delegates had received.

It was noted that care experienced young people were not drawn on as much as had been hoped, partly because of the limited opportunities to support young people during COVID-19. It was suggested that more time could be devoted to break out rooms for discussion and less time devoted to covering the ten principles. It was also noted that by being on-line that there were less opportunities for networking.

Masterclasses have been mapped to the post approval learning and development framework (https://fosterwales.gov.wales) which includes mandated training for foster carers who should complete a minimum of 15 hours of training per annum. The masterclasses were highly valued because of the multi-disciplinary speakers and audience, although attendance by the full range of professionals of the team around the child was limited. Attrition levels were also very high, especially by co-professionals.

Delegates talked widely about the skills and approaches learned and how they had applied these to practice. Delegates also discussed the change to ensure that both schools and foster carers were included in meetings of the team around the child. Foster carers gave many examples of how they felt empowered to 'push' and advocate on behalf of the child. Delegates were much more aware of the differing roles of other members of the team around the child, especially co-professionals who began to understand the role and difficulties that foster carers face. Delegates discussed being more child-focused and having more empathy for children and understanding of their behaviour. All received a strong message that corporate parenting is everyone's business.

After 12 months delegates remembered many of the values and underpinning ethos of the masterclasses, as well as the skills and approaches.

Managers were on board with the Fostering Wellbeing Programme and other initiatives had developed as a result of it. The buy-in of management is essential if attendance and attrition are to be addressed. One major difficulty was how to bring people 'up to speed' if they had not attended the masterclasses and could not access future masterclasses (should they not be running).

The role of pioneer is widely supported with foster carers in particular being heavily invested in this peer mentoring model. The pioneer model shows great promise. Foster carers have long been isolated and under-supported and a peer mentoring model is seen as innovative and empowering. The role is yet to fully develop. It is clear that it will need to be well co-ordinated, supported and funded. Local authorities also have a commitment to mentoring and the pioneer model fits well within this. There was caution from both foster carers and managers about the boundaries and limits of the role and that it should be essentially seen as having a supportive function. It is unclear at this stage whether this would continue to be co-ordinated by The Fostering Network or by regions

or local authorities, although we are aware that regional action plans are being developed during 2022-2023.

Research Questions

1   Question One - Examine the Fostering Wellbeing programme to assess whether masterclasses are being delivered to a satisfactory standard

The masterclasses are being delivered to an excellent standard; the programme achieved an effective balance between theory and practice with the topic of wellbeing reported as a constant. Course participants appreciated the introduction to a wide range of practical strategies which were delivered by knowledgeable trainers who created a safe and collaborative culture. The materials were delivered at an effective pace and the breakout groups were used to share expertise and make connections.   Delegates enjoyed the multi-disciplinary aspect of the training, making connections with other co-professionals. Online delivery provided a convenient medium but could not replace the social benefits of some in-person events. Participants have filed course resources for reference and some professionals have used a selection of these materials in their own training sessions.

2   Question Two- How has attendance at the masterclasses changed practice with children

Course attendance enabled participants to extend their existing skills to adopt a model of increasingly reflective practice. Many interviewees reported developed levels of empathy that enabled them to adopt a more considered approach, one where they could take a step back during challenging situations. This helped delegates   to appreciate how previous experiences could impact upon children's behaviour. Consistently, participants discussed how they had learned new strategies of being child-focussed, taking a holistic approach to help improve children's wellbeing. In addition, the importance of taking time to deepen relationships through shared experiences and respectful listening was frequently discussed. Foster carers felt better prepared and better placed to advocate on behalf of children; given they are keenly aware of the child's current situation, this should in turn improve children's wellbeing.

3   Question Three - Determine whether Fostering Wellbeing has led to greater engagement between foster carers, and the team around the child?

Participants valued an opportunity to hear viewpoints from a variety of perspectives and to witness the prioritisation of children throughout different services. The inclusive nature of the masterclasses resulted in increased levels of self-esteem amongst many of the foster careers as they felt that their expertise was listened to and valued. Participants recognised the programme as providing an opportunity to build a culture of working together through the sharing of knowledge and understanding. The programme was also recognised as an ideal medium for building and strengthening teams around the child, where team members can develop a deeper understanding of individual roles, especially at a regional level. Many discussed how they had worked more collegiately, and co-professionals recognised the important role that foster carers play. There was

a clear take away message that corporate parenting is a shared endeavour and everyone's business.

Limitation

Due to low levels of attendance by some co-professional groups and high attrition levels, the opportunities to enhance team engagement were rarely fully realised. This requires on-going negotiation with and commitment from mangers to strongly encourage or direct their staff to attend. Leading by example would be a good way to achieve this.

4   Question Four- review the role of the pioneer and its implementation?

Fifty-seven experienced foster carers from across Wales have volunteered to become pioneers and 51 have at least started the training. Their motivation for involvement stem from a wish to provide peer support, especially to new foster carers, and a desire to create a community of pioneers. Most have attended the pioneer training which combines a mixture of formal topics (including peer mentoring and the team around the child) and discursive sessions to facilitate a sharing of expertise. Members of the pioneer focus groups recommended that the role of the pioneer becomes regionally bespoke to draw upon individual, local expertise, but with some national co-ordination. Furthermore, focus group participants suggested that, following a period of isolation associated with the pandemic, pioneers can help to improve social inclusion for foster carers. Peer mentoring, signposting, along with the organisation of workshops that address topics, such as education and behaviour management, were suggested to provide further support. For this initiative to succeed, each authority needs to support and recognise the role that pioneers can play. Clear lines of responsibility, accountability and communication will need to be established across each authority and/or region. Furthermore, for the role of pioneers to become effective, the role requires a clear function which is communicated to social workers and others in the team around the child.

Limitation

Whilst the model shows great promise, the pioneer role is in its infancy with training only commencing in January 2022. The role is not fully developed, only partially in operation and is certainly not yet embedded. Currently there is no agreed national or regional plan. This will be an area of on-going work for 2022-2023.

5   Question Five - Assess levels of service engagement with the programme and future sustainability with the programme

Fostering Wellbeing provides a learning programme that is aligned to the Foster Wales Learning and Development Framework. Completion of the course is particularly valuable to new foster carers, educators and social care professionals, and the inter-disciplinary nature of the course can

contribute to the building of the whole team around the child. Pioneers can provide much needed peer support to increase the sharing of expertise and boost the wellbeing of foster carers. A commitment to Fostering Wellbeing would enable local authorities to include the training in their longer-term plans and calendars. A clear outline of responsibility and support would strengthen the establishment of the pioneer roles.

Limitation

The service and action planning has not been developed as far as had been hoped, in part this is because understandably there have been competing priorities during Covid-19. This will be a major focus for the Fostering Wellbeing programme for the period October 2022-March 2023.

We have developed a logic model for the Fostering Wellbeing programme, please see appendix 3.

Recommendations

1 The masterclasses continue to be delivered on-line by The Fostering Network. Whether the demand will exist in specific local authorities is unclear, given it is estimated that 15% of local authority Foster Wales' carers have already been trained, and far more from certain local authorities. It is likely therefore that regional delivery is more practical.

2 More promotion of the programme is required if Fostering Wellbeing is to truly realise its reach pan-Wales: this should include dissemination of some of the positive feedback already received. The promotional material should be aspirational clearly stating the potential benefits of the programme.

3 Co-professionals need to be strongly encouraged or directed to attend, and thus buy in from management is essential. Leading by example, with managers attending would be helpful to nurture a change in team culture.

4 If The Fostering Network is running the masterclasses, authorities need the dates well in advance to include on their annual training calendars.

5 Consideration should be given to the masterclasses being co-facilitated by a foster carer, modelling the messages from the programme.

6 The masterclasses should spend less time on the principles and build in more time for discussion (this has partly been implemented).

7 To help embed the learning, participants could spend a little more time reflecting during the session and then discuss their adapted practice in breakout groups at the beginning of the following session.

8 Each masterclass should include at least one input from a care experienced young person, ideally more (some of these might be pre-recorded, so people do not keep having to re-tell their stories, but regular permission be requested for their continued use).

9 The new school curriculum is introduced in masterclass four but this topic could be covered in more depth, as many foster carers may not be aware of new Welsh curriculum and whole school approach. Additionally, it would be helpful to provide updates to delegates on the changes in education support for those with additional learning needs and the move to individual development plans. In this way information to and from education is bi-directional.

10 The masterclasses should be followed by a face-to-face event to allow for networking to take place. These could be co-facilitated by pioneers. A formalised buddy system could be implemented for delegates to pair up to discuss how to embed the learning in practice.

11 A bespoke set of masterclasses be developed for education (twilight sessions will hopefully be trialled before the end of the pilot). Teacher training days might also be identified and allocated for this purpose. It will be important to include other co-professionals, including foster carers, so that the benefit of multi-disciplinary learning is not lost.

12 The masterclasses could be offered to parents who have recently adopted children.

13 To reach every child looked after, each carer and social work team in the independent sector, including residential settings, could be offered access to the programme.

14 The pioneer model needs to have a clear regional co-ordinator with the provision of support offered to pioneers, and a financial budget allocated to it.

15 The new national brand of Foster Wales and its associated website would lend itself well to promoting the pioneer model and might be suitable platform for housing the Padlets, resources and contact details of pioneers. This would need some national co-ordination.

16 It has been suggested that there should be a minimum of three to four pioneers per local authority, with clear lines of accountability. If too many have been recruited and some means of selection will likely be required.

17 Some pioneers should bring the experience of kinship care; there is also a need for recruitment of some male pioneers.

18 More work should be undertaken by The Fostering Network to develop contacts in local authorities to help progress regional action plans to ensure local authorities and regions fully embrace the Fostering Wellbeing programme.

19 A longer-term commitment to the programme would provide sustainability and enable authorities to embed the learning from Fostering Wellbeing.

20 Review its aim as 'improving educational outcomes for children'. Given that this is not the main focus of the programme, this might usefully be revised.

References

Braun,V., Clarke,V., and Terry, G. 2015. Thematic analysis. In: Rohleder,P. and Lyons, A. eds. *Qualitative research in clinical and health psychology*. Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan, pp. 95-113.

Cameron, C. 2016. Social pedagogy in the UK today: Findings from evaluations of training and development initiatives. *Pedagogia Social. Revista Interuniversitaria* 27, pp. 199-223.

Cameron, C., and Moss, P. 2011. Social pedagogy and working with children and young people: where care and education meet. London: Jessica Kingsley Publishers.

Coussée, F., Bradt, L., Roose, R., and Bouverne-De Bie, M. 2010. The emerging social pedagogical paradigm in UK child and youth care: dues ex machina or walking the beaten path? *British Journal of Social Work* 40, pp.789-805.

Department for Education and Skills. 2003. *Every child matters*. Available at: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/272064/5860.pdf [Accessed: 17 March 2022].

Department for Education and Skills. 2007. *Care matters: time for change*. Available at: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/326311/Care_Matters_-_Time_for_Change.pdf [Accessed: 17 March 2022].

Development Service Group Inc. and Child Information Welfare Gateway. 2015. *Promoting protective factors for children and youth in foster care: A guide for practitioners*. Available at: https://www.childwelfare.gov/pubs/factsheets/guide-fostercare/ [Accessed: 14 June 2022].

Everson-Hock E., Jones R., Guillaume L., Clapton J., Goyder E., Chilcott J., Payne N., Duenas A., Sheppard L., and Swann C. 2012. The effectiveness of training and support for carers and other professionals on the physical and emotional health and well-being of looked-after children and young people: a systematic review. *Child Care Health Development* 38(2), pp.162-74.

Fergeus, J., Humphreys, C., Harvey, C., and Herrman, H. 2017. Assisting carers to respond to the mental health needs of children. *Children Australia* 42(1), pp. 30–37.

Fergeus, J., Humphreys, C., Harvey, C., and Herman, H. 2019. Supporting foster and kinship carers to promote the mental health of children. *Child and Family Social Work* 24, pp. 77-83.

Halfon, N., Menonca, A., and Berkowitz, G. 1995. Health status of children in foster care. *Archives of Paediatrics and Adolescent Medicine* 149, pp. 386-392.

Hamalainen, J. 2003. The concept of social pedagogy in the field of social work. *Journal of Social Work* 3 (1), pp. 69-80.

Hatton, K. 2013. *Social pedagogy in the UK, theory and practice*. Lyme Regis: Russell House

Publishing Ltd.

McDermid, S., Holmes, L., Ghate, D., Trivedi, H., Blackmore, J., and Baker, C. 2016. *Evaluation of head, heart, hands: introducing social pedagogy into UK foster care. Final report.* Available at: https://www.researchgate.net/publication/313729225_The_evaluation_of_Head_Heart_Hands _Introducing_social_pedagogy_into_UK_foster_care_Final_synthesis_report_executive_summary [Accessed: 23 March 2022].

McDermid, S., Holmes, L., Ghate, D., Trivedi, H., Blackmore, J., and Baker, C. 2019. *Evaluation of head, heart, hands: introducing social pedagogy into UK foster care. Final report.* Available at: https://hdl.handle.net/2134/24091 [Accessed 23 May 2022].

Maclay, F. 2006. Surviving the system as a foster carer. *Adoption and Fostering* 30 (1), pp. 29-38.

Murray, L., Tarren-Sweeny, M., and France, K. 2011. Foster carer perception of support and training in the context of high burden care. *Child and Family Social Work* 16, pp. 149-158.

Nutt, L. 2006. *The lives of foster carers: private sacrifices, public restrictions*. Abingdon Oxon: Routledge.

Petrie, P., Boddy, J., Cameron, C., Simon, A., and Wigfall, V. 2006. *Working with children in residential care: European perspectives*. Buckingham: Open University Press.

Petrie, P. 2013. Social pedagogy in the UK: gaining a firm foothold? *Education Policy Analysis Archives* 21 (37), pp. 1-13.

Power. S., Newton, N., and Taylor, C. 2020. Successful futures for all in Wales? The challenges of curriculum reform for addressing educational inequalities. *The Curriculum Journal 31 (2),* pp.317-333.

Rees, A., Maxwell, N., Grey, J., Corliss, C., Barton, A., Khan, A., O'Donnell, C., and Silverwood, V. 2019. *Final report for evaluation of fostering wellbeing programme.* Available at: https://orca.cardiff.ac.uk/128577/ [Accessed: 6 June 2022].

Ruch, G., Winter, K., Cree, V., Hallet, S., Morrison, F., and Hadfield, M. 2017. Making meaningful connections: using insights from social pedagogy in statutory child and family social work practice*, Child and Family Social Work* 22, pp.1015-1023.

Sebba, J., Luke, N., Rees, A., Plumridge, G., Rodgers, L., Hafesji, K., and Rowsome-Smith, C. 2016. *Evaluation of the London fostering achievement programme final report.* Available at: https://www.london.gov.uk/sites/default/files/london_fostering_achievement_evaluation_final_report.pdf [Accessed: 6 June 2022].

Sebba, J., and Luke, N. 2019. The educational progress and outcomes of children in care: editorial. *Oxford Review of Education* 45 (4), pp. 435-442.

Social Care Wales. 2022. *Induction framework for health and social care.* Available at: https://socialcare.wales/learning-and-development/induction-for-health-and-social-care-awif [Accessed: 1 June 2022].

Tarren-Sweeney, M. 2008. The mental health of children in out-of-home care. *Current Opinion in Psychiatry* 21, pp. 345-349.

The Fostering Network. 2021. *State of the nation's foster care 2021. Spotlight on Wales.* Available at: https://thefosteringnetwork.org.uk/sites/default/files/2022-03/State%20of%20the%20Nation%202021%20-%20Spotlight%20on%20Wales%20-%20ENG_2.pdf [Accessed: 17 March 2022].

The Fostering Network and AFA Cymru. 2019. *Post approval learning and development framework for foster carers.* Available at: https://www.afacymru.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/LD-Framework_E-1.pdf [Accessed: 17 March 2022].

Welsh Government 2018. *The Local Authority Fostering Services (Wales) Regulations 2018.* Available at: https://www-legislation-gov-uk.abc.cardiff.ac.uk/wsi/2018/1339/made/data.pdf [Accessed: 16 June 2022].

Welsh Government. 2014. *Social services and well-being (Wales) act 2014.* Available at: https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2019-05/code-of-practice-in-relation-to-measuring-social-services-performance.pdf [Accessed: 17th March 2022].

Welsh Government. 2018. *The local authority fostering services (Wales) regulations 2018.* Available at: https://www-legislation-gov-uk.abc.cardiff.ac.uk/wsi/2018/1339/contents [Accessed: 6 June 2022].

Welsh Government. 2020. *The curriculum for Wales.* Available at: https://hwb.gov.wales /curriculum -for-wales /introduction [Accessed: 20 March 2022].

Welsh Parliament. 2018. *Mind over matter. A report on the step change needed in emotional and mental health support for children and young people in Wales.* Available at: https://www.exchangewales.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/14/2020/06/cr-ld11522-e.pdf [Accessed: 1 March 2022].

Welsh Parliament. 2020. *Mind over matter: two years on.* Available at: https://senedd.wales/laid%20documents/cr-ld13568/cr-ld13568-e.pdf [Accessed: 1 March 2022]

Wilks, S., and Wise, S. 2011. *The care factor: rewards and challenges of raising foster children.* Available at: https://www.anglicarevic.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2016/12/AV-Foster-Carer-Report-FinAll2.pdf [Accessed: 16 June 2022].

Wilson, K., Sinclair, I., and Gibbs, I. 2000. The trouble with foster care: The impact of stressful events on foster carers. *British Journal of Social Work* 30, pp. 193-209.

Appendix 1

The Fostering Network / Y Rhwydwaith Maethu

The Fostering Wellbeing Programme

Masterclass 1 - Facilitator framework

Masterclass 1	Knowing and meeting needs	**Principles** **1** All the child's needs have to be met - it is essential to understand and respond to the **whole child**/young person to improve their wellbeing. **2** Each person's **view of life** and the wider world will differ, arising from their background, experiences and own mindset.
Aims	*The aims of the Fostering Wellbeing Programme are for all participants and sponsors to:* **1** identify and share the core values and principles which will help children and young people who are looked after to thrive; **2** develop skills and competencies in common which will help equip children and young people who are looked after to fulfil their potential; **3** become confident in a shared and consistent approach to meeting the needs of children and young people who are looked after which, in turn, will fire ambition and help them to find success; **4** be active advocates for the children and young people for whom they have individual or corporate responsibility.	

Fostering Wellbeing masterclass 1, Version: 1.0

Objectives	*The specific objectives of this masterclass are for participants to:*
	1 arrive at an understanding of wellbeing and the five areas of need, using a common language;
	2 become familiar with the principles underpinning the Fostering Wellbeing Programme;
	3 listen to and learn from the stories of children and young people who are or have been looked after;
	4 explore and evaluate the various methodologies for finding out what children and young people think and feel;
	5 gain insight into the perspectives of foster carers and co-professionals working with and caring for children and young people who are looked after;
	6 explore the values and attitudes which research has shown have the greatest effect in supporting children and young people with adverse childhood experiences (ACEs); this will include the principle that caring for a looked after child is a shared endeavour which requires commitment and working in partnership.
	The wider objectives of the masterclasses are for participants to:
	7 gain a shared understanding of the needs of children and young people who are looked after;
	8 develop their understanding of the principles underpinning the Fostering Wellbeing Programme and how they need to be applied in practice;
	9 embrace and mediate the theories, practical activities and resource materials that will enhance the experience and wellbeing of children and young people who are looked after;

	10 build the knowledge, understanding, skills, confidence and positive attitudes of individuals and agencies to improve the wellbeing of children and young people who are looked after; 11 develop a greater understanding by all of the roles of foster carers and co-workers and open channels of communication which will benefit the children and young people in their care.

Rationale	Everyone has the same basic needs. To exist, we require our physical need for food, warmth, shelter, and freedom from disease to be met. It is part of being human to require our social, emotional, and cultural needs to be met. Wellbeing, for the purposes of this programme, is the state reached when a person's five basic needs are met. The principles of social pedagogy underpin many of the most effective means of meeting our basic needs. These principles put people before processes, relationships before rules. While the language and theories behind social pedagogy will not be explicit in the programme, the key principles relevant to the wellbeing of children and young people who are looked after will shape the content of the masterclasses. A person's basic needs can only be met in a holistic way. We have to recognise that while we all have the same basic needs, our experiences of the world will all be different. Therefore, our values, attitudes and abilities will differ in range, strength and complexity.
Outcomes	Participants will: • listen to and learn from others • reflect upon their own values, attitudes and practices so that change for the better in service provision and relationships might result • understand the five areas of need • understand and embrace the 10 principles underpinning the Fostering Wellbeing Programme • acquire a better understanding of the perspectives that co-professionals bring to improving the wellbeing of children and young people • understand how person-centred planning can meet the needs of the whole child or young person

Masterclass outline	• Introduction to the Fostering Wellbeing Programme and the 10 principles
	• Wellbeing and meeting the needs of children and young people
	• Real-life stories – sharing of good practice from foster carers, social workers, health professionals
	• Engaging with children and young people - the PACE model
	• Person-centred planning and good practice from education
	• Reflecting, learning and applying lessons

Masterclass schedule			
	Introduction	Slides 2 – 7	20mins
	What is Wellbeing?	Slides 8 -10	15mins
	Voice of young people	Slide 11	10mins
	Fostering Wellbeing principles	Slides 12 – 18	15mins
	Break		
	Knowing a child's needs – Foster Carer / Social Worker	Slide 19	15mins

	Engaging Children – the PACE model (DDP or EP presentation)	Slide 20	20mins
	Meeting health needs (Health professional)	Slide 21	10mins
	Knowing the whole child	Slides 22 – 25	10mins
	Person Centred Practice in education (DT or LACE)	Slide 26	10mins
	Reflection and End	Slides 27 – end	10mins
Resources	**Handouts** 1 The 10 principles of the Fostering Wellbeing Programme 2 Wellbeing concept 3 The five areas of basic need chart 4 Ten things looked after children and foster carers want you to know. 5 One page profile template 6 Personal reflections journal 7 Head, Heart, Hands – social pedagogy stories		

Appendix 2

Fostering Wellbeing Programme: Mapping learning from Masterclasses to Welsh Learning Frameworks
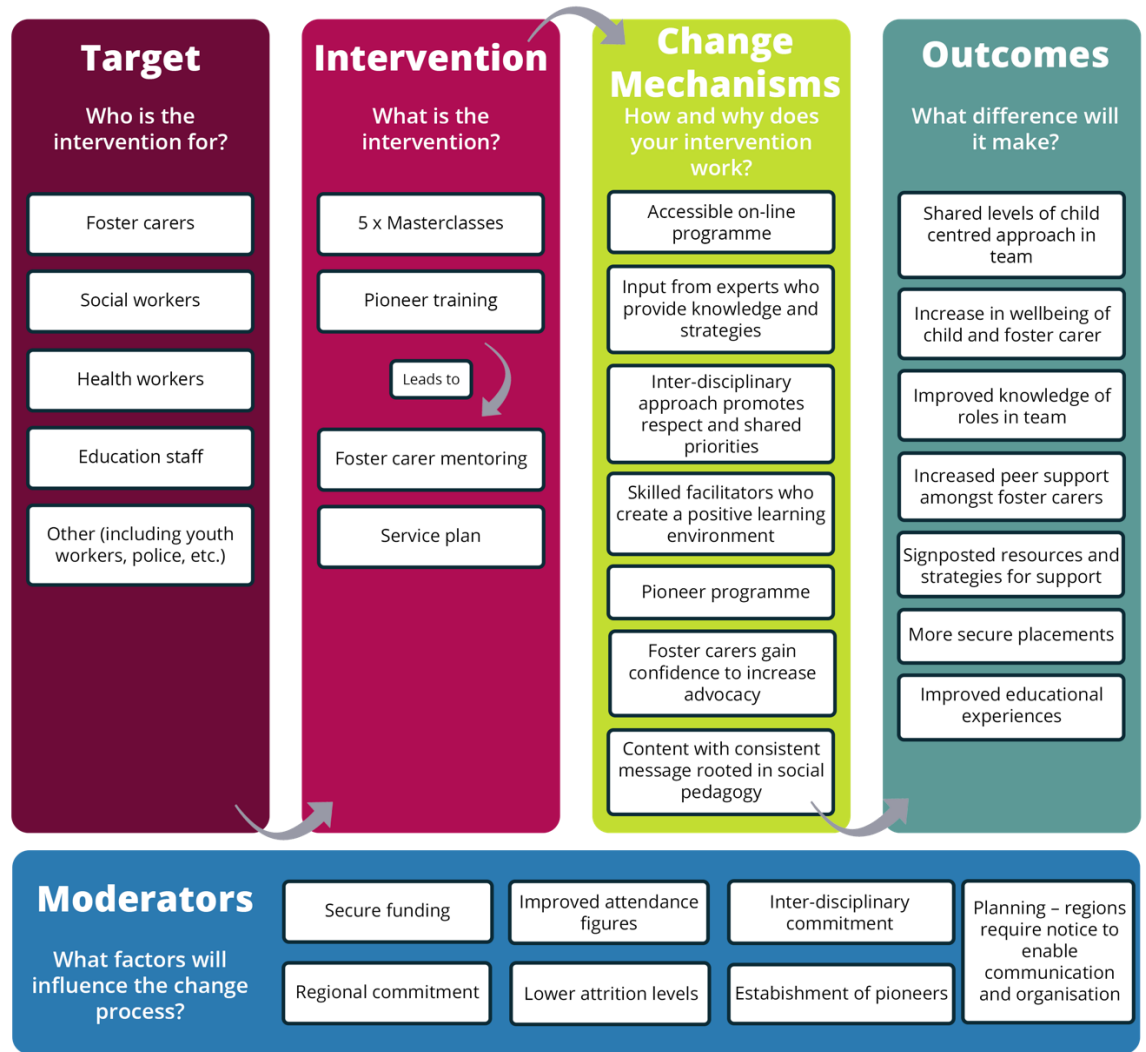
Fostering Wellbeing Masterclasses	All Wales Induction Framework for Health and Social Care Workers	Post Approval Learning and Development Framework for Foster Carers in Wales
1. Knowing and Meeting Needs	**2. Principles and values of health and social care** • Child centred approaches • Communication • Change and transitions in children's social care **4. Health and wellbeing** • Wellbeing • Factors that impact upon health and wellbeing • Positive environments for the health, well-being and development of children and young people • Play • Speech, language and communication **5. Professional practice as a health and social care worker** • Continuing professional development	Core topics • Developing a secure base and promoting attachment • Understanding challenging behaviour and promoting positive strategies • Child development • Transitions for children and young people • Supporting education and development • Promoting good health and wellbeing Additional topics • Equality and diversity • Promoting independence • Understanding children and young people's mental health

2. Living and Growing	**2. Principles and values of health and social care** • Child centred approaches • Communication • Change and transitions in children's social care **4. Health and wellbeing** • Wellbeing • Factors that impact upon health and wellbeing • Positive environments for the health, well-being and development of children and young people • Play • Speech, language and communication **5. Professional practice as a health and social care worker** • Continuing professional development	Core topics • Developing a secure base and promoting attachment • Understanding challenging behaviour and promoting positive strategies • Child development • Transitions for children and young people • Supporting education and development • Promoting good health and wellbeing Additional topics • Equality and diversity • Promoting independence • Understanding children and young people's mental health • Advanced attachment and trauma
3. Me, you, us and them	**2. Principles and values of health and social** care • Child centred approaches • Communication • Change and transitions in children's social care **4. Health and wellbeing** • Wellbeing • Factors that impact upon health and wellbeing • Positive environments for the health, well-being and development of children and young people • Play • Speech, language and communication	Core topics • Developing a secure base and promoting attachment • Understanding challenging behaviour and promoting positive strategies • Transitions for children and young people • Recording, presenting and information sharing • Supporting education and development • Promoting good health and wellbeing Additional topics • Equality and diversity • Promoting independence

	5. Professional practice as a health and social care worker • Continuing professional development	• Understanding children and young people's mental health
4. Hands on	**2. Principles and values of health and social care** • Child centred approaches • Communication • Change and transitions in children's social care **4. Health and wellbeing** • Wellbeing • Factors that impact upon health and wellbeing • Positive environments for the health, well-being and development of children and young people • Play • Speech, language and communication **5. Professional practice as a health and social care worker** • Continuing professional development	Core topics • Developing a secure base and promoting attachment • Understanding challenging behaviour and promoting positive strategies • Child development • Transitions for children and young people • Supporting education and development • Promoting good health and wellbeing Additional topics • Equality and diversity • Promoting independence • Understanding children and young people's mental health • Therapeutic re-parenting • Advanced attachment and trauma
5. Working as one	**2. Principles and values of health and social care** • Child centred approaches • Equality, diversity and inclusion Communication • Change and transitions in children's social care	Core topics • Recording, presenting and information sharing • Working with birth families and contact • Transitions for children and young people

	5. Professional practice as a health and social care worker	• Supporting education and development • Promoting good health and wellbeing
	• Roles and responsibilities of the health and social care worker • Partnership working • Team working • Handling information • Personal conduct of health and social care workers • Continuing professional development	**Additional topics** • Equality and diversity • Promoting independence

Appendix 3

Target	Intervention	Change Mechanisms	Outcomes
Who is the intervention for?	**What is the intervention?**	**How and why does your intervention work?**	**What difference will it make?**
Foster carers	5 x Masterclasses	Accessible on-line programme	Shared levels of child centred approach in team
Social workers	Pioneer training	Input from experts who provide knowledge and strategies	Increase in wellbeing of child and foster carer
Health workers	Leads to	Inter-disciplinary approach promotes respect and shared priorities	Improved knowledge of roles in team
Education staff	Foster carer mentoring	Skilled facilitators who create a positive learning environment	Increased peer support amongst foster carers
Other (including youth workers, police, etc.)	Service plan	Pioneer programme	Signposted resources and strategies for support
		Foster carers gain confidence to increase advocacy	More secure placements
		Content with consistent message rooted in social pedagogy	Improved educational experiences

Moderators

What factors will influence the change process?

Secure funding	Improved attendance figures	Inter-disciplinary commitment	Planning – regions require notice to enable communication and organisation
Regional commitment	Lower attrition levels	Estabishment of pioneers	

CASCADE

Authors and Contributors

Alyson Rees, Bridget Handley

Children's Social Care Research and Development Centre (CASCADE),
Cardiff University, School of Social Sciences (SOCSI), Cardiff University

For further information please contact: