



**The  
Fostering  
Network**

# **The fostering landscape in the UK**

Foster Care Transforming Lives Conference

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# The Fostering Network

- UK's leading fostering charity and membership org
- 370 fostering services, 55,000 foster carer members
- Bring together everyone involved in foster care
- Work to make foster care the best it can be

## What we do

- Awareness raising
- Policy and campaigns
- Advice, support, information and guidance
- Practice development and innovation
- Training, events and publications

## Fostering in numbers

- 55,000 foster families in the UK
- 65,000 fostered children on any one day
- 8,600 more foster families over the next year
- Sufficiency planning

## State of the Nation report

- Largest UK survey of fostering: 4,037 respondents
- Long survey covering wide range of fostering issues
- Monitoring trends and progress (biennial survey)
- Snapshot of the experience of fostering in the UK

## Why...

- Unique insight into views and experience of fostering
- Lens of the foster carer
- Influencing in 2019 and beyond
- Supporting fostering services
- Raising awareness outside of fostering community

## Profile of foster carers

- 45-54 years old
- Female
- Fostering with a partner
- One or two children in placement
- No birth children at home
- Housing capacity an issue



## Key findings: views and attitudes

- What one thing would you change to make foster care better?
  - improve pay
  - be treated more as a professional
  - receive better support.
- Would you recommend fostering to others who may be considering it?
  - 55% said yes (same as 2016)

## Key findings: realities of fostering

- 48% of foster carers are supporting a child with mental health needs who has not been able to access support
- In the past two years 50% of respondents said they had looked after a fostered child who has either:
  - caused violence in their home 26% (5%)
  - self-harmed 28% (7%)
  - gone missing from the home 25% (2%)
  - been involved with the police 25% (4%)

## Key findings: Foster carer status

- In general, do you feel treated as an equal and valued member of the team by the following?
  - Supervising social worker: 79% yes (same as 2016)
  - Children's social worker: 58% yes (4% lower than 2016)
  - Health professionals: 81% yes

## Key findings: Delegated authority

- A quarter of foster carers (26%) say it's not clear what day-to-day decisions they have authority to make.
- Percentage of foster carers who feel able to make the decisions delegated to them:
  - Short-term foster carers: always/usually 65%
  - Long-term foster carers: always/usually 79%
- When authority is not delegated, does child's social worker respond in a timely manner?
  - Always/usually 49%
  - Sometimes/rarely/never 51%

## Key findings: Foster carer support

- Only 37% of foster carers feel they receive excellent or good short break / respite support
- Only 44% of foster carers feel that out of hours support is excellent or good
- The percentage of foster carers who rate support as excellent or good from:
  - Their SSW: 70%
  - Their fostering service in general: 53%
  - Their child's placing authority: 39%

## **Key findings: Foster carer training**

- 59% of foster carers have an agreed training plan for the next 12 months (2016 was 46%)
- 86% of foster carers say that their training helps with their fostering
- Top five training gaps identified:
  - Therapeutic parenting
  - Behaviour management
  - Mental health support
  - Specialised first aid
  - Attachment

## Key findings: Foster carer finances

- 59% of foster carers say that their fostering allowance and expenses they can claim **do not** meet the full costs of looking after their fostered child
- 60% of foster carers said that they receive a fee

## Key findings: Placement stability

- In the past three years, one third of foster carers have had an unplanned placement ending that they felt was not in the child's best interests
- Of those, only 21% said it was preceded by a review
- Over two-thirds were not given the opportunity to feed referral information into the next placement



## Key findings: Allegations support

- Only 58% of foster carers have received allegations training
- More than a third (35%) of fostering households have experienced one or more allegation, up 2% from 2016
- Following their allegation, two-thirds (67%) did not receive independent support (unchanged from 2016)

## Next steps

- Influencing to implement recommendations across the UK
- Produce country specific reports
- State of the Nation 2021



**Thank you**

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