



**The
Fostering
Network**

State of the Nation's Foster Care 2019

Leeds member conference

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Why we do it: Understanding the experience of fostering

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



What we did: The survey

- Largest UK survey of fostering: 4,037 respondents
- 74% from England (c/w 84% of UK population)
- 94 questions. Typical time to complete: 22 mins
- Monitoring trends and progress (biennial survey)
- Snapshot of the experience of fostering in the UK



Key findings: views and attitudes

- What one thing would you change to make foster care better?
- Open answer question. Top three themes that emerged were:
 - improve pay
 - be treated more as a professional
 - receive better support.



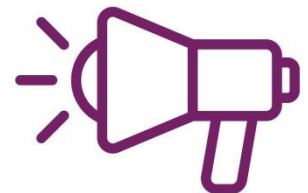
Key findings: views and attitudes

What one thing would you change to make foster care better?



Key findings: views and attitudes

- Would you recommend fostering to others who may be considering it?
 - 55% said yes (same as 2016)



Key findings: realities of foster care

- 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%); or
 - 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: Foster carer authority

- Has the children's social worker been clear about which decisions related to your fostered children you have the authority to make?
 - Yes: 69%
 - No: 26%
- In practice, do you feel able to make these decisions related to your fostered children?
 - Always/usually: 65% (short term)
 - Always/usually: 79% (long term)



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 (2016 was 82%) 😊
- 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
- Only 9% of foster carers receive a fee at or above the equivalent of the National Living Wage for a 40-hour week



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: transferring fostering service

- 11% of foster carers wanted to move fostering service recently but did not do so. The top two reasons given for not moving were:
 - too much time and effort to go through the assessment and approval process again
 - their long-term placement would have to leave.
- 92% of the 318 carers who did move had to redo the whole approval process when they transferred, which took on average six months to complete.



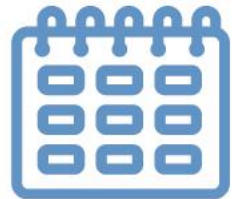


Key findings: Allegations support

- Only 58% of foster carers have received allegations training. Slight improvement on the 56% in 2016 but is still disappointing.
- 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. This is unchanged from 2016.

Key findings: Staying Put

- 44% of cases where Staying Put arrangements did not go ahead, it was because they were prevented by local policies and payments
- 83% of Staying Put carers had taken a drop in overall income
- Almost a third of Staying Put carers said there was no extra support or training offered.



State of the Nation in action

- National media activity
 - You and Yours R4
 - Emma Barnett R5
 - Observer
 - Local radio



State of the Nation in action

- Staying Put campaign win
 - Additional £10 million funding
 - Evidence to drive policy change
 - Identified issues for further research
- Central register policy position





Thank you

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