



**The
Fostering
Network**



State of the Nation's Foster Care 2019

Birmingham

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Why...

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

What...

- Largest UK survey of fostering: 4,037 respondents
- 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?



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- 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 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 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. This is unchanged from 2016

State of the Nation in the media

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



Table discussion

- Thinking about your fostering service, which areas we've touched on do you think you:
 - are doing well in?
 - could improve in?
- What three things could you do this year to make improvements in one area?
- What should we focus on in 2021's State of the Nation? (Carers and services)

Next steps

- Influencing to implement recommendations
- Working with Ofsted
 - training inspectors
 - research around matching
- Working with DfE
 - digital discovery phase (how can information be shared and used to improve journey of children through care)
 - charter and checklist

Next steps

- Register of foster carers, addressing three issues:
 - The need to increase the status of foster carers in the team around the child
 - The difficulty of foster carers moving from one service to another or fostering for more than one service
 - The need for more robust safeguarding measures in the fostering sector
- Must go hand in hand with accredited pre- and post-approval training.

**The
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Thank you

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