The Muslim Fostering Project
Practice Learning Day
#MFP18

The Fostering Network

Wednesday 28 March 2018
Agenda

9.45am    Registration
10.15am   Introduction to the project
10.25am   **Societal engagement and the Muslim fostering family:**
           Esmat Jeraj
10.45am   **Findings from the literature:**
           Ahmed Uddin
11.00am   Theme one: **Barriers to recruitment**
11.45am   Break
Agenda

12.00am  Theme two: **Assessment and approval process**
12.45am  Lunch
1.30pm   Mercy Mission UK
1.50pm   Theme three: **Placement planning**
2.35pm   Theme four: **Training and support**
3.20pm   Summary, questions and next steps
3.45pm   Day close
Societal engagement and the Muslim fostering family

Esmat Jeraj
Citizens UK

28 March 2018
Literature Review and Statistical Findings

Ahmed Uddin – Senior Project Officer

The Muslim Fostering Project Practice Learning Day
The Fostering Network

28 March 2018
Contents

- Legislation
- Islam and the Muslim Community of Britain
- The role of foster care
- Foster care and the Muslim child
- Recruiting Muslim foster carers
Introduction

• Children enter care for a variety of reasons: commonly abuse and neglect.

• A child’s care plan, developed by a social worker, will be tailored to meet their needs

• Information about a child's identity needs to be captured in the care plan to enable the matching process and support provided to foster carers.
Legislation
Fostering legislation

- Children Act 1989
- National Minimum Standards
- The Fostering Service's (England) regulations
- The Care Planning Placement and Case Review (England) Regulations 2010

- These are the key legislative and practice guidance in determining the legal requirement of local authorities to provide foster care for any child who needs it.
Islam and the Muslim Community of Britain
A brief history of Islam

- Abrahamic Religion
- Founded by Prophet Muhammed
- Arrival of Muslims from ex-colonies to the UK post WWII
Muslim Community in Britain

• Three million Muslims - now with 3rd and 4th generation

• South Asians – Bangladesh, India and Pakistan: 50%

• Rest made up smaller groups of: Africans, Turks, Arabs, Somalis. Sizable Muslim convert population

• Family set up: Extended Vs Nucleus Family

• Understanding of culture and religion has evolved
British Muslims and Identity

- Identities are fluid concepts and may change from one context to another.

- British Muslims are engaged in the process of redefining their own sense of identity as ‘British Muslims’.
‘Identity options’

- There may be intergenerational changes taking place in the perceptions of nationality, ethnicity and religion. One may wish to express one identity in a social setting while outwardly expressing another identity when they interact with the wider society.

- This interchanging and flipping of identity in different contexts is described as ‘Identity Options’.

- Crucially, voice needs to be given to their wants and needs.
Islamic Mandate for the care of children

- 2005: collaboration of UNICEF and Al Azhar University to produce a manual titled Children in Islam, Their Care, Protection and Development.

- The manual lays out the rights children have in Islam, rights to health, education and protection.

- “if we see a child lacking in care or attention, responsibility for that omission lies on the shoulders of his or her parents, family and society” - Professor Tantawi
The role of foster care
Overview of fostering in the UK

- Approximately 64,000 children in foster care.
- Living with around 55,000 fostering families in the UK today.
- Current statistics show that a child comes into care in need of a foster family every 20 minutes.
- 7,000 new foster families are needed in the UK in 2017/18 alone.
- Estimates suggest 3,000 Muslim children coming into foster care every year in the UK, equating to 2,400 in England.
Importance of identity

- Preserving or facilitating the identity, cultural and religious practices are key to maintaining a stable placement.
- When there is cultural dissimilarity (especially language) it can present a significant barrier for the child in care.
- It potentially increases the risk of behavioural issues within the child, straining the relationship with the foster carers.
- All children need to be supported to develop their own cultural identity in a supportive, stable and loving environment.
Foster care and the Muslim child
Muslim children in care

- The child’s needs should be central in the matching process
- Even if placed with Muslim foster carers, it is crucial that the child/young person should be supported to fulfil or explore their Muslim faith
- Halal meat, worshipping at Mosque and the traditions for who in the household supports this, and non-consumption of alcohol all vitally important
Matching and identity

• A stronger connection with ones’ ethnic group can have a positive impact on self-esteem, academic achievement and crucially lower levels of depression and loneliness.

• Many examples of successful cross-cultural placements – where crucially foster carers are able to attend to the child’s needs.

• More needs to be done to capture information on the Muslim child’s identity at the
Cultural competency

- Appropriate cultural competency training is needed in order to achieve a positive outcome for the Muslim child.

- A culturally competent practitioner will be able to successfully assist people from different cultural backgrounds including, but not limited to, race, ethnicity, culture, class, gender, sexual orientation, religion, physical or mental ability, age, and national origin.
Recruiting Muslim foster carers
Muslim Foster Carer’s Vs Fostered Muslim Children

![Graph showing the comparison between Muslim foster carers and fostered Muslim children.](image-url)
Unaccompanied Children Vs Muslim Foster Carer’s

% Unaccompanied Muslim asylum seeking children

Muslim foster carers
Approval journey

- Muslims who made fostering enquiries
- Muslims who submitted an application
- Muslims who attended pre-assessment training
- Muslims who have been assessed to foster
- Muslims who have been approved as a foster carer
Summary

- Legislation, guidance and standards for fostering
- Changing British Muslim community
- 64,000 children in foster care – but limited knowledge of how many of these identify as Muslim
- 55,000 fostering families yet again, limited knowledge of how many of these identify as Muslim

- Further work is required to support fostering services to recruit and retain more Muslims foster carers.
Thank you

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Theme one:
Barriers to recruiting Muslim foster carers

- Common approaches to recruitment
- Cultural awareness within the process
- What is fostering, how does it look and feel
- Perceived complications, “the kids are all bad!”
Theme one:
Barriers to recruiting Muslim foster carers

Ziafat Ali
Olive Branch Fostering
Attracting Muslim foster carers
Cultural competency of staff
Challenging the mind-set
Halal food
Practicing faith
Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children
Perception of social service intervention
Theme one: Barriers to recruitment
Round table questions

• To what extent has your service tailored recruitment material to a Muslim audience?

• What training have your enquiry takers received to answer specific questions from Muslim enquirers?

• How are existing Muslim foster carers involved in the recruitment process?
Break
Theme two: Assessment and approval process

- Initial visits, “The judge and the jury?”
- Support around the misconceptions
- Barriers to assessment and approval – literacy
- Placement specificity
Theme two:
Assessment and approval process

Joanne Nutton
Recruitment and Assessment Social Worker
Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council
STAR parties

• Rotherham Fostering Team introduced Start Thinking About Recruitment parties
• A STAR party is booked with approved foster carers in their homes. Fee of £100 paid for “hosting” minimum of five prospective foster carers
• The event is supported by the recruitment team
• The host will receive £500 if any prospective foster carers are approved
Advantages

• Community based approach
• Carers assist the service by identifying potential future carers
• Promotes future support networks
• Encourages community engagement
• Less intimidating process for PFC who have English as second language

Service considerations

• Recruitment and supervision teams need to both promote service
  • Needs to be promoted by other means such as:
    - eNewsletters
    - leaflets
    - fostering events
• Whole service approach to promoting STAR parties as an alternative way of recruiting foster carers.
Initial visits

• Second initial visit to be undertaken to look at how any challenges may be addressed
• Approved foster carer to attend initial visit
• Management oversight of any issues raised
• Plan developed how we will support them through assessment process and beyond
Our aspirations

• To be flexible and creative in recruitment of foster carers focusing on what they have to offer and how we recruit a culturally sensitive fostering community

• To support carers who want to wait for good culturally sensitive match

• To deliver suitable training to both staff and foster carers

• Learning from others who have successfully recruited Muslim foster carers who can meet the needs of children and young people
Theme two: Assessment and approval process
Round table questions

• How are Muslim applicants specifically supported during the assessment process?

• What consideration is given to faith-based commitments and holidays such as attending mosque and Ramadan if coincides with assessment and/or approval?

• What adjustments to the approval range does your fostering service consider for Muslim carers?
Lunch
Recruiting Muslim foster carers and the psycho social impact on Muslim children from war-torn countries

Shadim Hussain
Mercy Mission UK

28 March 2018
Theme three: Placement planning

- Recording of a child or young persons faith
- UASC and community barriers
- Crossing cultures and its complexities
- The voice of the child. Do we listen enough?
Theme three: Placement planning

Francesca Magnavacca and Liz Earle
Surrey County Council
Theme three: Placement planning
Round table questions

• To what extent is a child’s faith considered in the matching process?

• What support or resources are provided to foster carers who care for children of a different faith/religion to their own?

• How are foster carers supported to care for UASC children in your service?
Theme four: Training and support

- Cultural awareness
- Training
- Asylum and refugees
- Peer support, mentors, foster carer trainers
Theme four: Training and support

Jenny Howard
Central Bedfordshire Council
Central Bedfordshire Council

Learning and Development
A little bit about us...

- Central Bedfordshire is a Unitary Council which is largely rural with a population of 274,000 which is predominately White British

- At the time of the project there were:
  - 110 fostering households
  - 282 looked after children
  - of these, 37 were unaccompanied young people seeking asylum
  - during this time, 26 of our looked after children were Muslim
  - of which, 20 were unaccompanied young people seeking asylum who were practicing Muslims.
Training and support

• Training policy introduced in 2016

• Core training audit introduced in 2016

• Service approach
Training and support

• Cultural competency training to:
  o explore knowledge and understanding of cultural diversity;
  o gain a clear understanding of cultural competence and how to effectively engage with children/young people and families in ways that values and respect diversity;
  o identify and explore oppressive practices or safeguarding concerns that can be disguised as cultural issues;
  o begin to understand and develop their own competence and explore ways to enhance it; and
  o Support carers to better value and support children’s identity, being open and respectful and minimizing insensitivity
Training and support

• Resource packs

• Caring for unaccompanied young people seeking asylum training established to develop insight into the needs of asylum seeking children and provide foster carers with the information they need to be confident in caring for unaccompanied minors.
How has this training made a difference...

“All practical advise backed up by very interesting anecdotes and actual experiences. I was NOT bored for one minute! The young men talking at the end was heart warming and emotional.”

“Even though I’ve had D for 5 months there was still things I didn’t know and I’m very grateful for the opportunity to learn more. It gave good insight of what to expect, what the challenges are and to get rid of the myths a lot of carer’s have.”

“Absolutely brilliant and informative. Great to have young people speaking about their personal experiences and success story.”

“The course was amazing, truly inspiring.”

“It was lovely to hear the experiences of the two young people.”

“I have enjoyed it very much.”

“This training was excellent.”
And finally...
Theme four: Training and support
Round table questions

• What specific training is available to support foster carers caring for Muslim children?

• How are staff teams trained to be ‘culturally competent’?

• Is the frequency of SSW visits tailored to/adjusted for cross-cultural fostering placements?
Questions
Next steps

- Report finalised
- Launch in Foster Care Fortnight
- Follow up recommendations
Thank you

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