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Foster Carer retention: the power of relationships

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Themes to help us think together

- The relationship between recruitment and retention of Foster Carers: **why this is key**
- Learning from an international partner: **the importance of understanding universal themes**
- The impact of allegations: **safeguarding and meeting the needs of carers**
- Carer retention and relationship based practice: **positives and challenges**

"Fostering is a mixture of the everyday and the extraordinary"

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Recruitment and retention

Who they choose to foster with and why: first and lasting impressions

Why people choose to apply and remain: what can I offer and what does it offer me

Our thoughts and feelings regarding motivation: Saints and sinners?

Agency focus and priority placed on recruitment and retention: a level playing field?

Applying the secure base model to all: Availability; Sensitivity; Acceptance;

Co-operation; Family membership

''First impressions count…the way in which we were treated at the start of the process made us think what it would be like when we needed support..''

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Learning from a Ugandan perspective

High levels of poverty; political instability and high rate of HIV/AIDS have contributed to a high number of Children living outside of parental care, as well as other risks to Children.

Community based development that is focused upon enabling and empowering communities to work together to identify and meet the needs of Children as an alternative to Institutionalized care options

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Ugandan perspective on retention

- Ongoing **support** and training that is meaningful and relatable
- **Incentives** including access to financial stipends and subsidies
- Creating and sustaining a sense of **community**
- Meaningful **participation** in decision making processes
- Regular check-ins and **communication** when things are going well, in addition to times of stress
- Recognition and **appreciation**

Universal themes….so must therefore be important!

So, if we can identify these themes why do things go wrong?

''We are expected to care 24/7 and when we need care, we are judged…..''

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the impact of allegations

Learning from the Allegation Support Team at FosterTalk

- Impact of a consistent; impartial, non-judgmental; confidential service *
- Research is consistent in regard to the relationship between the experience associated with allegations and choosing to resign or remain as a Foster Carer
- Need for development of mediation following conclusion of the allegation
- * Importance of clarity in regard to advocacy and safeguarding responsibilities
- Capturing evaluation from carers is key
- c. 47% of foster carers referred to the service continue to foster
- c 19% of foster carers referred to the service resigned during the process

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The Impact of Unproven Allegations on Foster Carers (2016)

Gillian Plumridge and Judy Sebba University of Oxford (supported by FosterTalk and the Sir Halley Stewart Trust)

- Recommendations were made for the DfE, Ofsted & ADCS, Fostering Providers and Social Workers.

- Review your service against the recommendations to evaluate whether improvements can be made to support retention

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the impact of allegations: voice of the carer

‘’thank you for your support, kindness and thoughtfulness’’

‘’my advisor was excellent...professional and helpful…it was easy to contact him, and he always responded…’’

‘’I was suffering with anxiety and stress that was brought on by the incident…when they came on board I felt myself once again knowing I had genuine support and knowledge behind me…’’

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Voice of the Carer: application to secure base model

Easy to contact him

When they came on board, I felt myself again

kindness

Knowledge behind me

I had genuine support

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Relationship based practice takeaway's

- *We are all working with attachment; separation and loss all the time*
- *Current thinking from geneticists is that 30 % of impact in regard to children reaching their full potential is from nature rather than nurture: how we respond to others can have a real, lifelong impact*
- *Our interactions with others will be impacted by our own and the recipients experience of self esteem/identity; cognitive development; emotional development; attachment; and experience of oppression/discrimination.*
- *The development of trust is central to all our interactions with others on a lifelong basis and defines our internal working model of the world*
- *Adults move between co-regulating and self-regulating behaviours all the time*
- *Triggers reinvigorate our journey through Stress-Impulse-Rage and Shame. Trust and empathy are the counterweight to these. We need to minimize likelihood of shame….*

Differentiation of Shame and Guilt: implications for our work with Carers and parents?

Differences	**Shame**	**Guilt**
Focus of evaluation	Global self	Specific behavior
Degree of distress	More painful	Less painful
Feelings	Feel small, worthless, powerless	Tension, remorse, regret
Impact on self	Global devaluation	Minimal
Primary Concern	Other’s evaluation of self	Effects on others
Motivation	Wants to hide strike back	Wants to confess, repair
Degree of anger	Intense anger	Moderate anger
Actions	Blames others to avoid devaluation of self	Triggers problem solving, relationship repair

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Thank you ☺

https://fostertalk.org

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