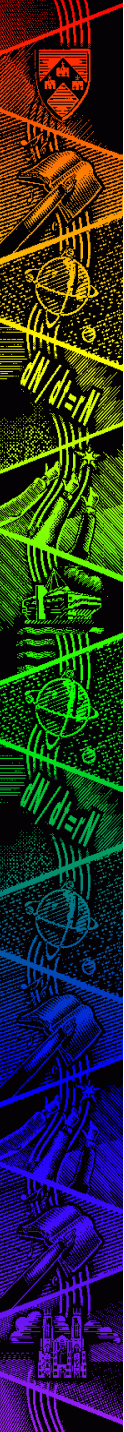


# Fostering Now: Messages from Research

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# Fostering Now: Five Themes

- What should foster care do?
- What theory should underpin it?
- What makes for successful placements?
- How should carers be recruited and supported?
- How should it be organised?

# So What's this Talk About?

- What should foster care do?
- What kinds of foster care does that imply?
- What makes for successful placements?

# So What's the Basic Assumption?

- Foster care has to be seen in the context of the children's lives and the way they view them
- Foster care has to be high quality, what follows it has to be high quality and the two have to be connected

# Going Home: A Dilemma

- *‘She loved her daughter, I am quite sure of it, in her own way, but she was useless at mothering.’ (Foster Carer)*
- *‘I had been fighting for her to come back.. But the day she come back I think they locked me in prison and threw away the key.. I told her..I feel as though I am on a life support machine, just lifeless, ‘cos you’ve took everything away from me’. That’s how I feel.’*

# Going Home: A Dilemma (2)

Int: If they'd said to you 'we've got a family that's interested in adopting you, something like that'.

YP: Oh no no.

Int: Why would that have been a 'no no'?

YP: Cos it just would. I wouldn't be able to see my mum and it would do me head in really. I'd flip if they offered me adoption, I'd flip so.

# Going Home: Some Findings

- Most (not all) children 'want' both home and foster care
- Those tried at home were: more likely to be re-abused, least likely to be in situations that were seen as fully safe, materially adequate and satisfactory, doing, on average, less well at school, most likely to show a variety of difficult behaviour

# Leaving Care: A Challenge

- *‘I’m moving around at 18 years of age and I’ve been moving since I was a little girl and I’ve got nobody apart from my dad but he’s poorly and so that’s that. Guess that’s how it’s always going to be.’*
- *‘I am getting on better with my family and have my own flat. I have maintained a steady job and have two beautiful children.’*



# Care Leavers: Some Findings

- Most said they had been lonely, short of money, unemployed and depressed
- Only a minority described leaving for 'positive reasons' as opposed to a 'quarrel' or 'being pushed out'
- Around 40 per cent had wanted to stay on beyond 18 but very few did
- Contact with carers was common but rarely intensive enough to make a difference
- 'Success' associated with positive ties

# So What Kinds of Foster Care?

- Shared or Through Care?
- Treatment Foster Care?
- Relative Foster Care?
- Permanent Foster Care?
- Residence Orders, Special Guardianship, Adoption?

# What Makes Good Placements?

- I get tormented by this other lad
- Lots of food and money and love
- They treat me the same as their own family
- I can't see my mum
- Social workers are trying to push me back home
- Different schools with change of addresses

# So Children Wanted

- Acceptance and a normal family life
- Respect for their individuality
- Respect for their wishes over contact
- Predictability and some measure of control in relation to school and care career

# Factors in Placement Success

- The children
- The way placements are made
- The carers
- The 'chemistry' with foster family
- The child's own family
- The school

# So Development Will Depend On

- Being able to meet children at least half way
- Practice developments over placement, matching, intervention in 'spirals', work with family
- Selection, training and support of carers
- Developments in school support

# A Postscript

- *‘Do you know what? I was thinking what a big family! I’ve got my dad’s side. I don’t get on with them. My mum’s side, I don’t talk to them at all. I’ve got his dad’s side – mum and dad – they love me. And then I’ve got my foster carer’s whole side – her sister’s and her husband’s side. So I’ve got like families everywhere .. And I’ve got my own family now.’*