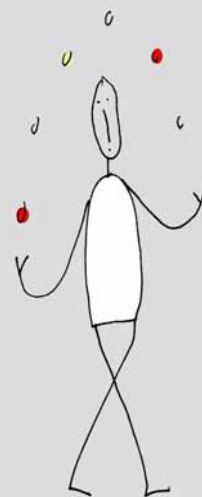


Translating the research into practice materials



materials to support *Fostering Now: Messages from Research*

research in practice

with

department for
education and skills
creating opportunity, releasing potential, achieving excellence



research in
practice

commissioned by others, developed by **research in practice**

1. **Fostering Voices** – four short films
2. **Fostering Now** – 6 leaflets
3. **Fostering Service Development Exercises**
4. **Placement Stability** – research & practice briefing
5. **Recruitment & Retention of Foster Carers** – briefing
6. **Invest to Save** – leaflet



**the voices of those most
affected by fostering**

fostering voices



children, their families and their foster carers

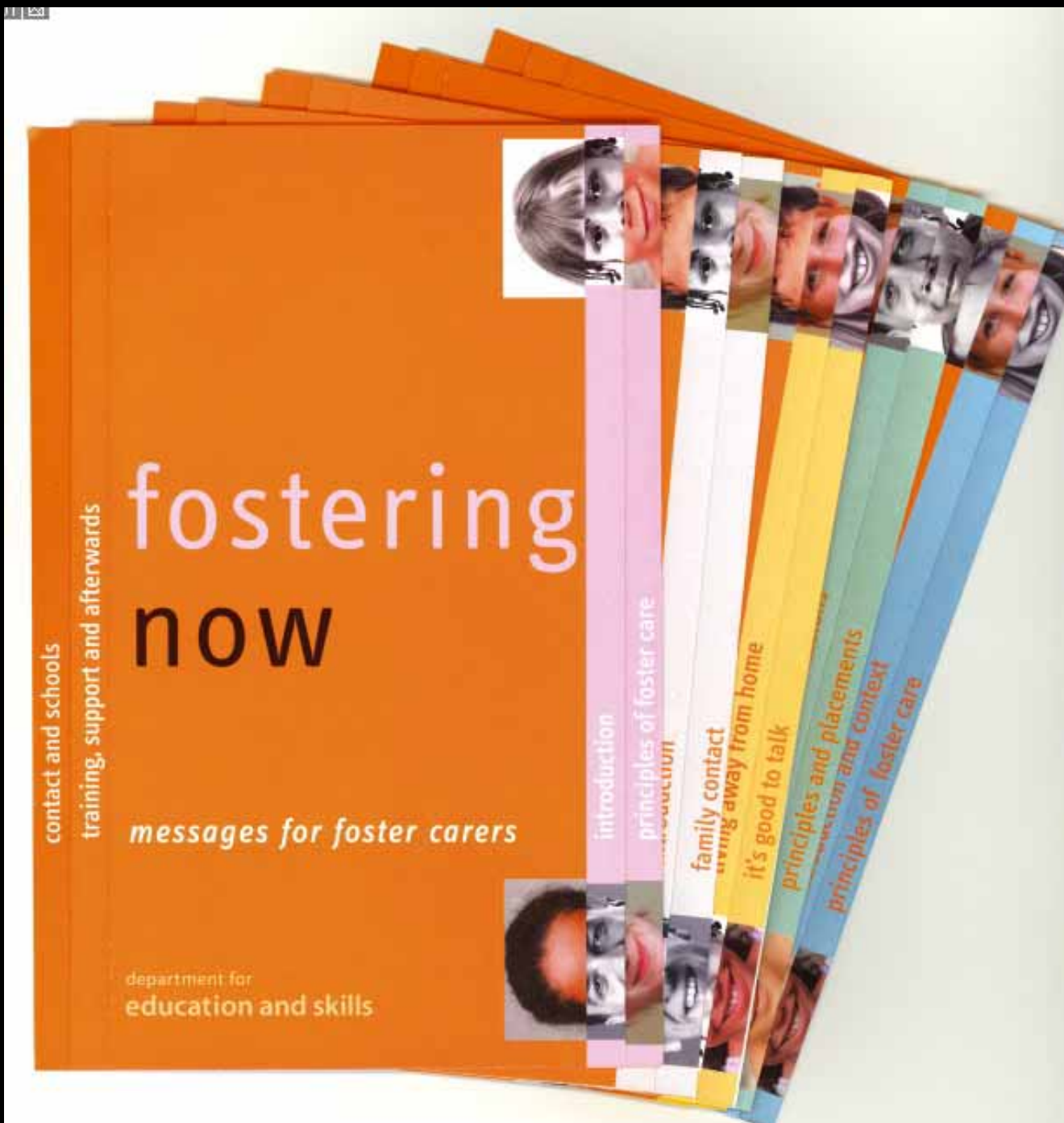
Department for
education and skills

Choice Protects

the films on CD



and the leaflets separately,
and with the films



each leaflet focuses on its *particular* audience

asking for help

It's not always easy to ask for help. It can make us feel that we're failing or that somehow we're not good enough. But all families run into problems. And the evidence is that families where children go to live with foster carers are often having to cope with more problems and more stress than most.

Asking for help and support is not something to be ashamed of; in fact, it shows you care and that you want to get problems sorted out. So it's important to ask for help if you think you need it.

Many families say they find that foster carers are given all sorts of support, help and training that were not given to them before their child went into care. If you find yourself in this situation, tell someone how you feel. Talk to your advocate or social worker about how you can get the support you need.



your views on Fostering Voices...

department for
education and skills
creating opportunity, releasing potential, achieving excellence



research **in practice** evaluation of *Fostering Voices*

About the questionnaire

In 2004 the DfES commissioned a review of their programme of research on fostering - *Fostering Now: Messages from Research*. The *Fostering Voices* pack of six leaflets and a video CD containing four films was developed by **research in practice** to make the findings of the report easily available to people involved in fostering services, whether they are children and young people who are fostered, foster carers, professionals or others.

We are asking you to help in the evaluation of *Fostering Voices* by completing this questionnaire. This should only take a few minutes of your time. **Please put your completed questionnaire in the box on the research in practice stall** before you leave the conference. If you forget to do this, it can be posted to: **Linnie Price, research in practice, Blackders, Park Road, Dartington Hall, Totnes TQ9 6EQ.**

Please answer all the questions you can. The questionnaire is anonymous.

DATE SEMINAR VENUE.....

1. How would you describe yourself? (Tick more than one box if appropriate).

- A foster carer
- A foster carer who fosters a young relative
- A young person who is in foster care
- A member of a family of a young person in foster care
- A Local Authority elected member
- A Trustee of an Independent Fostering Provider
- A social care practitioner (SSD)
- A social care practitioner (non-statutory sector)
- Staff development/trainer in SSD
- Other (please describe your role)

12 exercises:
www.rip.org.uk/fosteringnow

fostering now

fostering service development exercises



the major challenges...

Contents

- 1 The role of foster care
- 2 What kinds of foster care should there be?
- 3 Making placements and forming relationships with carers
- 4 Sustaining relationships and managing behaviour
- 5 Emotional work with young people
- 6 Auditing relative foster care
- 7 Working with family members
- 8 Contact with family members
- 9 The education of looked after children in foster care
- 10 Recruitment and retention of foster carers
- 11 Disabled children and young people's experience in foster care
- 12 Going home from foster care

a briefing for practitioners

QUALITY PROTECTS RESEARCH BRIEFINGS

2

Placement stability

Providing stability and continuity for looked after children is essential for their personal development and achievement.

Objective 1: to ensure that children are securely attached to carers capable of providing safe and effective care for the duration of childhood
sub-objective 1.1: to reduce the number of changes of main carer for children looked after

THE IMPORTANCE OF STABILITY

Most of us value some stability and predictability in our lives. Experiences such as divorce and moving house are major stressors, which can jeopardise our physical and psychological health; while we seldom admit to our loved ones the times we are relieved to return from holiday to familiar surroundings and routines. We require an element of continuity to cope as individuals and for social life to be possible. But many looked after children – around 60,000 in England and Wales in 1999 – will have had little stability in their lives. Their ages vary and many are teenagers. Two-thirds live in foster placements. Some will have been rejected or mistreated by their parents; some will have moved out of their home to live with relatives or in unfamiliar foster or residential homes; and some will have had periods out of education and changed schools. Coping with multiple change is especially stressful. Regrettably, the care system these children enter does not always compensate by providing the necessary degree of stability and continuity.

This research briefing concentrates on the Quality Protects programme objective 'To ensure that children are securely attached to carers capable of providing safe and effective care for the duration of childhood', with the more specific sub-objective 'To reduce the number of changes of main carer for children looked after'. These are interpreted, for brevity, as placement stability. This QP Research Briefing sets out the nature of the problem of placement instability and summarises research evidence that identifies the contributory factors. It also suggests what managers and practitioners can do to tackle the problem. However, as with most social care research, findings from studies can give only general indicators to managers and practitioners and should be used to support rather than to replace professional expertise and careful, individual assessments.

a briefing for councillors

Questions for councillors to ask



Recruitment and retention of foster carers

champions for children **1** Research Briefings for Councillors

about the 'champions for children' series

This is the first in a series of research briefings for councillors. They may be especially useful to Cabinet and Scrutiny Panel members with lead responsibility for children and family services. The aim is to provide information about key research findings, good practice, and policy developments that will help you to improve outcomes for children and families in need by ensuring that adequate and effective services are provided for them. There are also prompts for questions you might want to ask your officers.

You can get additional hard copies from **research in practice** through the publications pages of our website (www.rip.org.uk). Here you will also find the full text, plus all the references; details of how the series is managed and details of how we gathered and judged the research evidence considered for the Briefing.

Coventry Alderman King
Chairman
IGA Social Affairs
and Health Committee

I am pleased to endorse this new series of research briefings, which has been specifically crafted for councillors. As elected members, we are deluged with material; it is often very useful, but we simply do not have time to read it all.

Policy and research development around children's services is changing almost daily; it is vitally important that we are up to speed, particularly in the light of the Green Paper on children at risk which is expected soon. Tools like these briefings will help us to make the right decisions.



research in practice

an initiative of the Association of Directors of Social Services
in Dartington and Sheffield



Distributed in partnership with the Local Government Association

with questions to ask...

Please help to find the answers

- 1 Do we have a process for assembling information about the needs of our looked after children? Does it enable us to work out how many and what kinds of foster carers we require?
- 2 Do we have a strategy for commissioning a range of services adequate to meet the needs we have identified?
- 3 How many foster carers do we have? What is their profile in terms of gender age, ethnicity and so on?
- 4 How do we handle enquiries from potential foster carers? Do we have a trained team to deal with them? What information do we send out?
- 5 How much time elapses between initial enquiry and assessment? And between assessment and approval?
- 6 How are carers assessed? Is competency-based assessment used?
- 7 Have previous recruitment campaigns been effective? If so, what has worked?
- 8 How much is being spent on recruitment?
- 9 Are we addressing the needs of disabled children, black children and children from other minority ethnic groups?

strategic planning



investing to save...

...why it's important to **invest**
in **placement services** for
looked after children

department for
education and skills

information and examples

for local authority elected members

with real-life examples

investing to **save** in Durham

In April 2002, Durham launched a comprehensive three-year **invest to save** strategy. Its impetus was the rising cost of external placements and the need to wrest a potentially runaway overspend back under firm control. Without such a strategy, the council faced an overspend of £1.5 million on its looked after system budget in 2002-2003. The prospect for later years would have been even more stark.

The strategy focuses on activity across the whole of the children's services branch, integrating six related work strands, with clear objectives set for each and all supported by a clear financial model. Objectives cover investment in in-house provision, including more foster placements and more effective residential care; investment in other preventive services, including increased spending on children in need; and an improved entry system into care to ensure appropriate placements.

where can you get these?

1. **Fostering Voices films** – from DfES stall here today (and order form for more inside)
2. **Fostering Now leaflets** – in the Fostering Voices pack or separately
3. **Fostering Service Development Exercises** –
www.rip.org.uk/fosteringnow
4. **Placement Stability** – DfES stall
5. **Recruitment & Retention leaflet** –
www.rip.org.uk/publications
6. **Invest to Save leaflet** – DfES stall

