

About the Rees Centre

The Rees Centre is a research team looking at fostering and education in the Department of Education at the University of Oxford. It was set up with funding from the Core Assets Group (an international children's services provider) in 2012 to improve the outcomes and life chances of children and young people in foster care. We do this by:

- **reviewing existing international research** so as to help young people, foster carers, practitioners and policy makers make better use of current evidence;
- conducting new research projects to address the gaps identified by the reviews and issues raised by adults and young people involved in foster care.

Key principles of our work

The Rees Centre focuses on **fostering** not adoption. It **engages users of research** such as foster carers, young people with care experience, teachers, social workers and service providers throughout the research process. Both **foster carers and care-experienced young people** who have been trained in research are employed on projects to work with us. We have established **consultation groups** of fostering providers, carers and care-experienced young people. The research we undertake uses a **wide variety of rigorous methods**. We are committed to **making our findings accessible** and inviting debate about them. To this end we make extensive use of **blogs, Twitter, two-monthly newsletters** and webinars as well as holding regular meetings with key organisations.

Recent research reviews available on the website¹ include:

- **motivations** to foster;
- foster carer **peer support**;
- instruments used in the **selection of foster carers**;
- the impact of fostering on **carers' own children**;
- effective **parent-and-child** fostering arrangements.

Current Rees Centre research includes projects that are investigating:

People's motivation to foster: a prospective study of those inquiring about fostering in 10 fostering providers (8 Local Authorities [LAs] and 2 Independent Fostering Providers [IFPs]);

Foster carer peer support: evaluating the benefits of foster carer support groups in 3 LAs including specialist groups, for example of male carers;

Bringing siblings together who are placed in care apart: an evaluation funded by the Siblings Together charity;

Teenagers in foster care: a Research Council funded seminar series that will generate a handbook for foster carers on fostering teenagers;

¹ <http://reescentre.education.ox.ac.uk/research/publications/>

How to improve educational outcomes for children in care by linking the Children Looked-After national dataset with the National Pupil Dataset (NPD) in England. Funded by the Nuffield Foundation, this research will identify the influences on educational outcomes of placement stability, school stability, length of time in care and care histories;

Risk and protective factors in educational outcomes: reviewing the evidence on how factors such as placement changes and school changes influence the educational outcomes of children in care;

The impact of allegations on foster carers and the support they receive;

Children leaving residential care: identifying the factors in the effectiveness of the provision.

Future research

The Rees Centre is planning to undertake research in the following areas:

RESEARCH REVIEWS

- What works in preventing and treating poor mental health in looked after children? (NSPCC funded)
- The role of the supervising social worker;
- Recruitment and support of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender foster carers;
- The impact of placing siblings separately from one another;
- School strategies that support the improvement of educational outcomes of children in care.

NEW STUDIES BEING DEVELOPED

- 'Tools' used in the selection of foster carers and evidence of their 'validation' and efficacy in the process of selecting the most effective carers;
- Mental health needs of children and young people in care;
- The long-term impact of separating siblings through placement in foster care;
- Employability and impact of unemployment on care-experienced young people.

How to become involved

- Come along to lectures & seminars;
- Look at resources including recordings of all our seminars on the Web – <http://reescentre.education.ox.ac.uk/resources/>
- Join our mailing list and receive newsletters 5 times/year: rees.centre@education.ox.ac.uk;
- Comment on our blog – or write for us;
- Follow us on Twitter - @ReesCentre

See our website <http://reescentre.education.ox.ac.uk/> for further details.



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