

## **Adoption & Fostering journal #13 | Vol.49 Issue 1 introduction with Dr Dennis Golm and Vicky Walker transcript**

Welcome to CoramBAAF Conversations, a podcast series dedicated to adoption, fostering kinship care. We asked children, social care professionals, and experts by experience to join us to share with us and you, our listeners, their experiences, reflections and knowledge. I hope you enjoy.

Welcome to the *Adoption and Fostering* journal podcast. This is an introduction to the March 2025 issue, which is volume 49 issue one out now. And my name is Vicky Walker. I'm the Production Editor of the journal and I'm here with Dennis Golm, who's the Editor-in-Chief. Hello, everyone. So as usual, what we'll do is we'll have a chat about the editorial and I'll ask Dennis to talk about his editorial just briefly for us. And then we'll run through the contents of the issue just to kind of get this outline of what's included in this edition.

So there's a real focus on diversity in this edition of a few of the papers come to deal with these kind of topics and issues and diversities. The key theme is your editorial this time.

Yes. So in this editorial, I was able to feature not one but two articles from the current issue. We're just being nice because they're both in one way or the other dealt with issues of diversity. So the first one was a scoping here by Rachel Stamp and colleagues. And they kind of asked the questions about how diverse is research within care and they basically looked at looked at the demographics that were reported in research studies on foster care and what they found was basically there was a lot of variation between studies. Uh, and some characteristics were more commonly reported than others, but I think the message was that it there should be more standardised reporting and more demographics should be reported on one issue.

For instance they identified is there that usually there was no distinction between sex and gender. For instance, in in the included populations, I think it's like age and ethnicity. They were only reported by a third of the studies. For instance, they had identified which is which is it's not a loss and sex and gender, sex, sex or gender were potent. The lowest. But also they were not reported in almost 40% of the studies.

And in these studies, they're not necessarily even acknowledging that they're not collecting this information, are they? They're not necessarily even acknowledging that they that it's a limitation. So there's generally a lack of awareness if they need to collect and include this kind of information in in research that's published.

Probably. And they are making a suggestion for a template to use at the end. Yeah. So that could be a solution to the problems. And then other things that that are also not as often reported on include disability and that. Is this challenge English to Peter, Peter and so obviously here we're talking about foster care, representativeness within research study. This but it means if these things are not supported or some groups are underreported, then

there are voices within research that are not heard and that is obviously a problem. So ideally foster care research should be representative of the demographics of the foster care population as a whole. Yes.

Absolutely, because then it can. There can be meaningful kind of messages that go out to policy and practise. If the research is reflecting kind of accurately what's going on in the actual population, it makes more sense and has more meaning, doesn't it, for policy and practice.

Then so and then the article by Peter Angwin and colleagues also focuses on the topic of, in that case, disability within foster care but with the care research, but kind of foster care population within England and.

Yeah. Obviously, sorry there are. Huge recruitment and retention issues that we're well aware of in in among substrate cars. And I mean obviously we're aware of it and the work that we do, but it's in, in the news, there's a there's a real awareness of this. I think that we've got this problem in the country at the moment and. One of the. Suggestions that comes out of Peter Unwin and his colleagues article is that this could be a really valuable way of kind of looking at increasing inclusivity and diversity could help. But what one way to address that problem of recruitment and retention, because we're not kind of, there's a whole sector of the population that we're perhaps excluding. Not reaching properly when it comes to the the agencies recruiting.

There is a retreatment problem with foster carers and it's also an ageing foster care population, so something needs to happen in order to increase the number of foster carers again, and I think the solution that Peter and many colleagues are suggesting is to make a conscious effort to.

Yeah.

Recruit disabled foster carers well, they already had done another study where they looked at how well. The opportunity to become a foster carer for disabled people is mentioned on websites and they found that it's not mentioned at all most of the time, yeah. So that that is one problem.

And there's more. There's been more of a focus on disability among. The children who need to be careful rather than carers, kind of as a sector looking at increasing diversity and inclusion, the emphasis has been in One Direction, but maybe not the other.

Yes, exactly. And I think what they try to do is they recruited basically across different foster care agencies and did well conducted A questionnaire first or survey where they asked about awareness about the Equality Act. And knowledge about. It's. And discovered that there was basically lack of knowledge and. But also I think their recruitment was hard for them and engaging kind of for the agency into this research was hard in the 1st place, which I think is interesting on its own.

Yes. Yeah, because they had. A dropout, didn't they? Of one of the. First of all, getting people involved and then as the war. I think agencies that were involved, one of them dropped out because new management came in. So yeah, there's questions there aren't there about whether there's a discrimination there. Yeah.

And how much they do. This type of research.

Yeah, exactly. Yeah, yeah.

And then they kind of conducted a training within the agencies and did a follow up survey and they analysed it qualitatively. They had unfortunately to deal with a bit of it. Dropout of participants at that stage, but the kind of findings that they had suggest improvement in in knowledge and also things like empathy. So that is that is promising and.

Yeah, yeah.

But I think the. Bigger message here is, but this could be a solution to a problem and it's it's. It's something that there's no active engagement or agencies basically to to recruit disabled Foster. Paris.

Yeah, absolutely. And I know that at the end. Of the article. I think it's a really useful sort of set of recommendations for policy and practise and kind of, as I say, recommendations for implementing, for, for trying to kind of improve things, for trying to actually get agencies. To address this and to kind of think more actively about how they can recruit disabled people and which comes from being more inclusive and marketing materials and things like that. Doesn't it? So it's just like the entire approach really as well as kind of how they support people. It's kind of right from the beginning and the, as we say, recruitment ages as well.

And I think it also comes with maybe stereotypes or reservations, but some social workers have agencies have and I I think one of the articles maybe uh, previous generalities that might be helpful. There is the article Tim Kaine on the grace model which is.

Yeah.

Model they with settles very useful questions that agencies. Personal agencies can ask themselves if it was developed for recruiting. Cannot prospective doctors from ethnic minorities, and it's just to help overcome own personal bias. But I think similarly, these questions could be helpful in in maybe overcoming.

Hello.

Some stereotypes helped against disabled people, or just asking where does this assumption come from? And do you actually have evidence for that?

Not sleeping. Yes, yeah, yeah, completely.

And also we might we might recruit another podcast we might have. Peter Unwin and one of the other authors, Becky Meeken, with us for podcast episodes. So they will tell you all about disability in foster care.

Yeah. Yeah, I think that's a really important one to listen to. So, yes, what's the status for that one? Well, listen out. So I suppose we better hop along into the rest of the issue. So Sandra Melanda and colleagues, we've got quite a few Scandinavian articles on this issue. So this one is Sweden and it's an A group intervention that was developed in Australia, then adapted fees in Sweden. And then I think adapted a little bit by the authors of this study, again, who kind of looking at. Birth mothers with intellectual and developmental disabilities is sort of what we think mainly autism and ADHD. I think in this case it was 3 mothers. And and all of these mothers, these women, their children, had just gone into care, could be them with them, willingly or otherwise. And the intervention was about supporting these women to kind of come to terms with their loss. And also we align their kind of role as a mother and get the case study.

Group support so they interviewed him at three time points, including I think just every year, wasn't it after the intervention and the group was kind of run and we saw that there were some real longer lasting benefits for these mothers. It's kind of along the theme of diversity, again, isn't it this one kind of how we can be as inclusive and supportive.

I guess it shines a light on a on a population whose voices are not often heard in research. Maybe it is both parents and and kind of subgroups of both parents.

Yeah, absolutely.

Intellectual and developmental disability. So that's a very nice thing I think about. Who knows, it's funny.

Absolutely yes. Two sort of underrepresented groups and kind of the the overlapping kind of groups, so.

Shoot this one. Have you seen this issue?

Yeah, there it is. There it is. It's interesting how these things do tend to kind of collect together. You know, I would say we heavily planned it, but obviously we we have open submissions. So things kind of come in in different ways. To the next article is Lisa Cohen and colleagues. Looking at foster carers holding the experiences of the children in their care and ohh, I think this is a really moving piece. Again we've got lots of quote quotes in it with interviews with the foster carers and the how they've experienced the managing really the trauma managing their own lives alongside the lives of the children that they're looking after. And this sort of team of that, we've had another article about kind of professional and kind of parenting sort of like that. The duality is really of the role of being a foster carer and and the two sides that both need to be equally respected, so it's really looking at about how the whole system needs to kind of be a system of support and holding. And as I say, I found

it very, very moving to, to read actually these experiences of because it's an. APA, remind me this is an interpreter. Terminological. So you tend to get slightly sort of smaller studies on that. Then some say that it's.

Analysis. Well, it is. It is a method that can be very well. Applied to kind of smaller samples together rich picture.

Yeah. Picture yes. Yeah. And with no details in depth interviews, you can get with people.

Yeah, yeah. And then that's kind of data analysis. Yeah, yeah. And this is. Foster carer so we have kind of first parents, we have foster carers who present. Said, and then we also had a study on social work professionals.

Yeah. So I'm kind of moving through all the different, it's a really holistic look at the care system in a sense, isn't it this, this issue of all different sort of aspects of it. So yes, Evelina fiddle list against Sweden, this next article on. Independent fostering agencies and as, as Dennis says, how these social work professionals, including managers, administrators and social. Workers experiencing engaging with independent foster fostering agencies and or I first. So although it's set in Sweden, it's very important and relevant to the UK because there's heaps of very large proportion of. Well, lots of recruitment happens through the islands in the UK. She's looking really at how they feel about it, how they feel, how how these professionals feel about using guises and when and what sort of situations they would be used. So for example, in cases of really complex needs, it can be useful to kind of get that word approval of recruitment. I think there's related issues that come out in terms of pay as well, you know or I'm not kind of massively familiar with this media system, but how the officers are able to recruit. Certain people that maybe the municipal or local authority agencies kind of can't. Whether there is a sort of as she questions and entitles some kind of organisational failure there, that means that there's a need to outsource and look externally so.

The way of of, of, of outsourcing. Right. So because enough kind of available foster carers within the Swedish equivalent.

Yeah.

The local authority. Yeah, right. And then they are outsourcing and then they're looking at. Kind of reasons for that, but also reservations people hold and I think we have similar problems in the UK where a local authority does not have enough foster carers and then they're using private foster care agencies as well. That went well. Sorry, not, not necessarily.

I think that is a problem, but we have the similar things are happening here so.

Exactly, yes.

Like. Thing to learn about this from a Swedish perspective and comparing it kind of with the situation in the UK.

Absolutely. Yeah. Yeah. No, that's it. So very, very relevant. Uh, even though there's a different context and relevant questions that come. Out of it and.

And then this.

They make plays again into the Peter unwinds article where I mentioned where the decline in foster care and foster care treatment.

Yeah, absolutely. Comes back to she's a recruitment totally doesn't it? And the kind of the system that we have in the UK at the moment and shining the light on that in England. And so then the last articles and e-mail, Camilla, I think these two are both based on dissertation projects. I'm think I'm right in saying that. So we've got some earlier career authors, which is always nice to see. So this last one looks at the agency paths of young adults. So 18 young adults. I think aged 18 to 32 years old, kind of reflecting on growing up and how they've managed to exercise agency in different ways. So possibly kind of. A way of understanding how to support those with care experience or those in care to to exercise agency and have some influence in their lives.

And we're staying in northern Europe with this one. So this one is not Sweden.

But this is Finland. Finland. Yes, yes.

Feel like it's in your vision, in a way. You're singing, you're singing.

So true, and it's all about inclusion and diversity and celebrating the difference.

Yeah, and this one posted, sorry, this one focuses on on young adults with the foster care background. So again a different population. So while we have a bit of a focus maybe on foster care.

Yes.

On this issue, we we have kind of young adults we're supposed to care experience. Represented and then we have an article about both mothers who lost a child to care and who also. Type intellectual development disabilities and then we have social workers features and they talk about foster care and independent foster care agencies. And then we have the question around kind of diversity within foster care research and kind of recruitment. Or lack of recruitment or.

Oh.

The you know disabled foster carers, so come up to the articles, sit very nicely together in a way.

They do. They really do. So then. A quick kind. Of mention to the legal notes in the issue, we've got legal notes on Northern Ireland and Scotland and some really fascinating recent. Cases including kind of surrogacy, missing the deadline to register. The birth and. And the courts having to kind of come in there and I, I suppose to kind of wrap up another

interesting one in Scotland is that woman who was compensated an awful lot of money for. Not being properly supported or giving sole information about a child with complex needs who she adopted. So it kind of leaps US background. I think that that piece into. Issues around the information that's given and expectations setting and the support that we offer when there are very complex needs. And so yes, unfortunately I was about a breakdown of adoption, but kind of question whether that could have been prevented.

Well, you know, legal also quite, I mean I'm a I'm a psychologist, so knowing nothing about legal notes and I find it so fascinating to. Meet them and. I always like I I learned something along the way, so they are short and sweet and well work.

Completely.

Yeah. Thanks.

Absolutely. Well, thanks so much for joining us and we will. Well, we'll be here again next issue.

Thank you for listening to this episode of CoramBAAF Conversations. You'd like to know more or listen to earlier episodes. Visit [corambaaf.org.uk](http://corambaaf.org.uk).