

Episode 22 | The experiences of an LGBTQ+ foster carer transcript | 26 June

00:00:00 Ellen Broome

Welcome to CoramBAAF Conversations, a podcast series dedicated to adoption, fostering and kinship care. We ask 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.

00:00:27 Emma Fincham

Hello and welcome to this CoramBAAF podcast. I'm here in conversation with Matt from Proud 2 b Parents, Matt is going to introduce himself in a moment. My name is Emma, Emma Fincham. I'm fostering consultant in the Policy Research and Development team at CoramBAAF.

00:00:43 Emma Fincham

And I am really, really delighted to be having this conversation.

00:00:47 Emma Fincham

The day with Matt especially as we're doing this during the month of pride.

00:00:51 Emma Fincham

We're going to have a conversation about the experiences of being an LGBTQ+ foster carer. What that's like, some of the things that are working well, some of the things that perhaps are not working so well for this community and we're going to think as well about how we can improve practice. So we're going to go through a series of questions and have a conversation.

00:01:12 Emma Fincham

And I'll hand over to you Matt now so you can introduce yourself properly.

00:01:16 Emma Fincham

OK.

00:01:17 Matt Taylor Roberts

Hi everybody and my name is Matt Taylor Roberts. I'm the founder and managing director of priority parents. Proud 2 b Parents is an organisation that supports LGBTQ plus parents and carers and their children across Greater Manchester, but some of our work is national in terms of policy change and advocacy for LGBT+ individuals.

00:01:36 Matt Taylor Roberts

LGBT+ parents and carers and wanting to ensure that their experiences are ever evolving and ever changing within the world that we live in today and it's really nice to see you.

00:01:48 Emma Fincham

Thank you, Matt. We have done some work together before. We're proud to be parents, which we if you look on our website, you'll be able to see some recordings of some previous webinars and sessions that we've done. So this is an ongoing partnership work that, yeah, just really pleased to be able to do this with you. So thank you, Matt, for introducing yourself.

00:02:08 Emma Fincham

I'll get started now on the kind of the question. So we can start the conversation.

00:02:12 Emma Fincham

Cool.

00:02:13 Emma Fincham

So if you are happy to please share with us a bit of your journey about being an LGBTQ.

00:02:19 Emma Fincham

Foster carer if you're happy to kind of share some of your personal experiences with us about how that's been for you and your partner.

00:02:28 Matt Taylor Roberts

Yeah, yeah, of course. So I've worked in the arena of LGBT plus parenting, caring for over 18 years. As I said, parenting proud to parents all that time ago. So I've had a bit of an eye opener around. Obviously, the experience of our Community and then back in 2015, I started working for an IFA as an independent.

00:02:49 Matt Taylor Roberts

Panel member that gave me a real.

00:02:52 Matt Taylor Roberts

Eye opener into the world of fostering and what it was like for many LGBT foster carers or foster carers in general, and and what their experiences were because they would come to us.

00:03:04 Matt Taylor Roberts

Obviously for approval.

00:03:06 Matt Taylor Roberts

And then obviously come back for their annual review. So we got to see the foster carers over that time and it definitely inspired me to start.

00:03:14 Matt Taylor Roberts

Being or start thinking about becoming a foster carer ourselves.

00:03:18 Matt Taylor Roberts

So back in 2000 and what was it now 19, I always get confused with the pandemic. Just throws me completely and so back in 2019, just before the pandemic hit and that we was approved as foster carers, and then we had our first placement during the first lockdown. So over the years we've learned a lot about.

00:03:37 Matt Taylor Roberts

The fostering system and how it works and all the challenges that come with it.

00:03:42 Matt Taylor Roberts

And being a gay male foster carers, we often face scrutiny about our ability to care for children, especially those who are a different gender to ourselves and at the moment we have a a girl and a boy in placement with us, and they've been with us for four years and it's just moved into permanency. So we've dealt with many microaggressions and.

00:04:02 Matt Taylor Roberts

Some outdated views which we try and obviously educate people, educate social workers IR's.

00:04:10 Matt Taylor Roberts

Head teachers of the virtual schools, etcetera, and try and support change. But honestly, sometimes it just feels like you just want to get on with your job without all the extra hassle of having to explain and support learnings and changes. And it feels like gender roles are often the biggest topic of discussion.

00:04:31 Matt Taylor Roberts

As an LGBT foster carer, me and my partner often find ourselves right in the middle of it, you know, dealing with the complexities of fostering trauma behaviours, attachment issues, but also facing questions about how we can care for a child of a different gender.

00:04:47 Matt Taylor Roberts

And our experiences show that we really need to rethink that. That idea of traditional gender roles caregiving should really be about understanding, providing care, creating like a space

that's safe, and it's nurturing. And it should. Gender shouldn't really, really matter. It's it shouldn't become part of the discussion. One of the biggest challenges that we face is all the assumptions about.

00:05:10 Matt Taylor Roberts

How we can care for a girl that's in place it with this? People often ask us. Well, you know who does her hair? How does she have girly time? Who paints her nails? Who picks her clothes? Who plays with her dolls with her?

00:05:24 Matt Taylor Roberts

And these questions are just like really rooted in old fashioned gender stereotypes. And so that's one of the things that we come across quite a lot and that we try and advocate for change. So you know, as fast as our journeys are often filled with navigating trauma behaviours and attachment difficulties as well as these gender stereotypes and.

00:05:44 Matt Taylor Roberts

You know the most important thing really is about their emotional well-being and and trying to create a safe environment for them to thrive.

00:05:53 Emma Fincham

And listening to you describing those, what you have to deal with you and your partner kind of regularly the amount of energy that you have to expend in dismantling really traditional really old fashioned gender roles. It I can imagine that at points feels really exhausting. And like you say, you want to be able to get on with.

00:06:13 Emma Fincham

Doing the caring. That's why you've decided to be foster carers. Not so you can spend all your time reeducating people, which feels.

00:06:21 Emma Fincham

It feels a bit farcical, doesn't it, that we're still having to have these conversations about gender roles and and some of those examples you've just described. Thank you for sharing.

00:06:31 Emma Fincham

So the next question is for us to think about a little bit about the kind of the history of the LGBTQ plus rights movement, which is obviously kind of ever changing, but that there still does need to be a rights movement that you know, we we still have a lot a long way to go. You've obviously just kind of touched on that. So I just wondered if you wanted to just kind of.

00:06:52 Emma Fincham

Explore some of that about maybe where you've you have touched on it, but where you've been involved in that movement perhaps how that's impacted on on your fostering or kind of other foster carers that you've worked with and supported?

00:07:06 Matt Taylor Roberts

Yeah, yeah, yeah, of course. So that, like, you know, as you said, there's been many developments for the LGBT foster carers. But, you know, there's still many more that needs to come. Many foster agencies clearly want to engage LGBTQ plus individuals as foster carers. You know, our community has a wealth of experience and understanding that can really support care for.

00:07:27 Matt Taylor Roberts

Children and we can really empathise with their some of their experiences as well.

00:07:31 Matt Taylor Roberts

You'll now often see like foster agencies promoting their services at pride events and being involved in Pride Month as well. And and you know, they're trying to increase visibility. And often agencies have between like 5 and 10% of their foster families are from the LGBTQ plus community, which is really great to see. And organisations like priority parents, you know, we're heavily involved and.

00:07:51 Matt Taylor Roberts

Pushing for changes and raising awareness about the unique challenges faced by LGBT foster carers.

00:07:58 Matt Taylor Roberts

And more research, thankfully, is being done all the time to look at the experiences of LGBT foster carers, and obviously the outcomes for our children that are being cared for, and this data can really help and inform policy changes and highlight the areas where more support is needed.

00:08:15 Matt Taylor Roberts

But we've got a long way to go and there's still challenges. You know that we need to address, you know, despite the legal uh protections for LGBT foster care.

00:08:24 Matt Taylor Roberts

We can still see that sometimes there's a bias or discrimination, either overtly or subtly in terms of like the assessment processes or our experiences as, as I talked about, the microaggressions and gender roles that are often in the forefront of our experiences. And, and these still need to be tackled.

00:08:44 Matt Taylor Roberts

Dealt with and and and changed and developed and in some areas, cultural and societal attitudes towards LGBT plus individuals are still negative and this can really impact fostering experiences.

00:08:58 Matt Taylor Roberts

The system takes a long time to change and develop and grow, and sometimes worker attitudes can be outdated, so you know, even though the training in some areas is getting better and there needs to be a willingness for change as well to make foster agencies LGBTQ plus affirming and, you know, organisations like proud parents we.

00:09:18 Matt Taylor Roberts

Deliver a lot of training to foster agencies and adoption agencies to try and create this change and develop it faster. But there needs to be that willingness and you know.

00:09:30 Matt Taylor Roberts

And more and more is being done all the time and you know more specifically. There needs to be support put in place for elderly foster carers who may experience unique challenges and unique experiences from the fostering system. And as you know, and we're we're in discussions at developing some practise guidance and reference to that.

00:09:51 Matt Taylor Roberts

To try and ensure that there's those equitable changes for eligibility foster carers.

00:10:01 Emma Fincham

Absolutely. And just listening to you talking there, so I know that you and I have had this conversation that we are very pleased that the fostering data set now, which is the information collated by Ofsted as of April next year, April 2025, they will now be fostering agencies, fostering services will be.

00:10:21 Emma Fincham

Collecting data on their foster carers who are LGBT, plus which is a significant change and great because you've been crying out for that information for a long time, haven't you? Yeah.

00:10:33 Emma Fincham

And so that's a that's really positive. But as you say, these things take time to kind of roll out. And for all these services and agencies and organisations to be kind of on board and equipped and supported and and knowing what they're doing around that, you've touched, you talk a bit about the assessment of foster carers and.

00:10:52 Emma Fincham

You and I have been involved in the working.

00:10:56 Emma Fincham

Group, which has been a a long but brilliant piece of work. There's been seventeen of us, haven't there working over like well over a year where we were looking at the assessment, the the format, which is 1 assessment of a very widely used assessment of how to prospective foster carers and we've been working on that revision which is currently being.

00:11:00

Hmm.

00:11:16 Emma Fincham

Piloted, where we've absolutely endeavoured your voice and others on that working group have been strong. I'm pleased to say where we've thought really carefully about the assessment and whether the asset.

00:11:30 Emma Fincham

Process is as inclusive as it should be for our LGBTQ plus prospective foster carers. It's quite quite long to say, but so important and we we've spent. We've spent real time, haven't we thinking about language terminology, thinking about how that assessing social worker might be able to get alongside, how that assessing social worker.

00:11:37

Hmm.

00:11:50 Emma Fincham

Might think these carers have got additional challenges, additional barriers to be able to get to panel and then app panel that might be tricky in itself. So we we've kind of thought about that quite a lot, haven't we? But as you said still work in progress.

00:12:03 Matt Taylor Roberts

Yeah.

00:12:05 Matt Taylor Roberts

It definitely is, but you know the the the development platform are for, you know is really where we need to be going and the information that sits alongside of it to support the assessing social work is crucial to allow them to, you know, authentically see the people that are in front of them and allow those experiences, those challenges.

00:12:26 Matt Taylor Roberts

To come forward so that that.

00:12:28 Matt Taylor Roberts

People are going into it with their eyes open that the foster carers that have sat in front of them are fully aware of their expectations and what they need to be doing and that the agency are fully aware of what they're bringing to the table and how they can help and support them along that journey, because we've all got baggage and that's perfectly fine.

00:12:48 Matt Taylor Roberts

We've all got stuff, but actually what we need is that stuff to to be there, we all to know it and to either work through it, work with it, use it to support, and the careful children. And so yeah, I think it's that that format is is a really great development that you know is going to support many.

00:12:50

Yeah.

00:13:08 Matt Taylor Roberts

LGBTQ plus and foster carers moving.

00:13:11 Emma Fincham

I hope so. I think so. I hope so. I think, yeah, I agree with you. As you know, I think the support element is key and what that support looks like that's that's a conversation, right, there's it's not about making assumptions and saying Oh well, you know, I'm going to be assessing these carers and I think they will need this because I assessed.

00:13:31 Emma Fincham

A gay couple or a lesbian couple or a, you know, previously. So I I know what these Council need. It's always the conversation about the individuals in front of you, isn't it? What? What

will this look like for you and kind of building that trust, which is essential during the assessment. But just just having.

00:13:40 Matt Taylor Roberts

Definitely, yeah.

00:13:48 Emma Fincham

Additional thought and sensitivity and it's the caretaking, isn't it, of information and understanding that discrimination happens and it and microaggressions happen and they happen all the time and we don't want those microaggressions and that discrimination to in any way put anybody off being foster carers. So we've thought really hard.

00:14:08 Emma Fincham

About that, we we have paid attention to.

00:14:10 Matt Taylor Roberts

Check.

00:14:11

But.

00:14:12 Emma Fincham

OK, so shall we move on then? Should we have a think about how do you and your family celebrate pride? What? What? What do you do? What does that look like? If you're happy to share?

00:14:22 Emma Fincham

A bit of that with us.

00:14:23 Matt Taylor Roberts

Yeah, yeah, of course. When it comes to celebrating love and diversity and the power of our community, we make sure that our children in our care understand the significance of pride and what it means to.

00:14:34 Matt Taylor Roberts

Us. You know our son and the children that we care for, and they often join in the various activities at pride celebrations throughout the season, soaking up all the fun and excitement

and activities and dances. And they love a bit of voguing and and, you know, celebrate all the colours that are around them. And and we particularly we use books.

00:14:54 Matt Taylor Roberts

Like and it was the night before pride to really give a deeper understanding of the historical context of why pride is so important, and we also have age appropriate conversation.

00:15:05 Matt Taylor Roberts

About, you know the significant events that have happened across history, likes of Section 28 and the actual impact that has had on us, they understand these legislations in terms of bullying and knowing right from wrong, which is like a really powerful lesson for any children to know and and participating in pride events.

00:15:26 Matt Taylor Roberts

And not just about having a good time. Of course. It's about being part of something bigger. It's about strolling through a lively city surrounded by people who embrace you for simply being yourself and these experiences and really.

00:15:40 Matt Taylor Roberts

Eats and children. The value of authentically being yourself and accepting yourself as well. And those are the types of messages that we really want to instil in them. Because when you embrace yourself for the person that you are, you know you're going to contribute to a world of inclusivity and be compassionate to others.

00:16:01 Matt Taylor Roberts

And reminding them that love no love knows no boundary, and that families come in all different shapes and sizes. And you know, that's the power of pride. It really shows that message. And for the way it should be that, you know, everyone should be accepted for who they are.

00:16:19 Emma Fincham

Absolutely. Beautifully put. I'm not going to try and try and paraphrase what you've just said, cause you've just said it perfectly. Thank you. So we we're now thinking a bit about how to.

00:16:33 Emma Fincham

What you would expect as a foster carer, what what we would want you to expect as a prospective foster carer and then post approval.

00:16:42 Emma Fincham

What you can expect from your fostering agency, your fostering service, you know, the kind of the people that you're the people, that you will be working with when you're thinking about caring for a child or or moving towards being approved to then care for a child. So I guess just any ideas or suggestions, thoughts you've got around that?

00:17:00 Matt Taylor Roberts

It's a bit of advice, really for anybody that's thinking about it is.

00:17:04 Matt Taylor Roberts

Is for me, it's about ensuring that you are realistic in your expectations of becoming a foster carer. I think we all potentially go into it a little bit with our eyes, a little bit short in terms of how it's going to roll on a day-to-day basis, but.

00:17:24 Matt Taylor Roberts

What we need to understand is that it may take time for the child that's come to you to adjust to their new environment that they may not initially or ever express their gratitude or happiness to being pleased.

00:17:36 Matt Taylor Roberts

To you, and be prepared to offer like, patience and understanding unconditional support as that child navigates their journey and you know it's it's a very it's a difficult journey but it you know the rewards of seeing them start to flourish. See them start to work through the trauma that they've experienced.

00:18:00 Matt Taylor Roberts

See them opening up and that attachment may be growing. You know, is the reason why many of us do this job because we can see those developments and changes in the children that we're caring for and also giving them those experiences.

00:18:16 Matt Taylor Roberts

When the children that are in care with us first came to us.

00:18:21 Matt Taylor Roberts

About four years ago, they had, well, one of them had two wishes, so he was five when he first came to us, and his 2 wishes was he wanted to read.

00:18:33 Matt Taylor Roberts

And not just read, because he had to. But read for fun, and he also wants to go on a plane and thankfully, over the last four years we've been able to give them those opportunities to see the world and to read. And he now can read you.

00:18:48 Matt Taylor Roberts

You.

00:18:48 Matt Taylor Roberts

Know.

00:18:49 Matt Taylor Roberts

And read for fun and read different things. And he loves that, that opportunity that's been opened up to him and it's really lovely that we've been able to tick those boxes and give him those experiences. And one of the other things I think is really important for foster care is, is the opportunity to come together, the opportunity to.

00:19:08 Matt Taylor Roberts

Share experiences to talk to others and.

00:19:13 Matt Taylor Roberts

Have that no hold back conversation and when you have the opportunity to speak to other LGBT foster carers, because our nuances are challenges are different, maybe our cultural experiences are slightly different. It's nice to be able to sit and have those conversations with other LGBT foster carers, so I already always say to people to try and seek out others.

00:19:34 Matt Taylor Roberts

Because it's it's really important that you're with your community at times to share and bad ideas and also be validated for your experience too.

00:19:45 Emma Fincham

Yeah. I think really important listening to that bit of advice. Thank you. So just we know from the work we do at corn bath and you know obviously.

00:19:54 Emma Fincham

Conversations, you and I.

00:19:55 Emma Fincham

Have.

00:19:56 Emma Fincham

Had that foster carers are absolutely brilliant at supporting one another, but you do need to know where those other foster carers are, so there is.

00:20:05 Emma Fincham

It's almost about having that conversation with your supervising social worker, isn't it? Or somebody else in a fostering service saying, you know, I wonder if I could be connected with. I'd really like to connect with other foster carers that identify as LGBT plus because.

00:20:19

Also.

00:20:21 Emma Fincham

Like you've just described, those conversations provide such a huge amount of support and a space that feels safe where you can kind of.

00:20:31 Emma Fincham

Let your shoulders down, not feel like you're going to have to be in a position of kind of correcting the gender, gender, kind of traditional stereotypes and so on. I mean, you may have to but, but. But it will be different. It will be different. It will be more accepting, more understanding and more kind of sharing of those experiences in a yeah. Like I say in a in a kind of safe way.

00:20:38

Yeah.

00:20:52 Emma Fincham

So I suppose I would just urge urge people listening to this in the same way you've just said to just seek out those opportunities if they're not, if if you're fostering in an area and you're not sure where those other carers are, ask the questions. Is there a support group? Could we set up a? Could we set up a session or a meeting to bring carers together to see if there's a see, if there's a desire and need for a support group is would that be helpful? Would that be?

00:21:14 Emma Fincham

Useful. Always ask those questions.

00:21:17 Emma Fincham

You know always.

00:21:17 Matt Taylor Roberts

Yeah, I think it's a really good point.

00:21:19 Emma Fincham

Because it might be, it might just be meeting. It might be meeting in someones home. It might be meeting, going for a, you know, going for a walk. It might be going to a cafe, obviously. Got to be careful about confidentiality but but it is about bringing people together, right and not feeling isolated because that's something we want to kind of we want to reduce that for any foster carer but especially.

00:21:20

To have.

00:21:33 Matt Taylor Roberts

Yeah.

00:21:40 Emma Fincham

The this comma.

00:21:40 Emma Fincham

The T.

00:21:41 Matt Taylor Roberts

Definitely cause like our eye for that I work for, they have their own LGBTQ plus support group, so we meet every what six weeks online and we can all sit and you know.

00:21:54 Matt Taylor Roberts

Have the opportunity.

00:21:54 Matt Taylor Roberts

To share and chat and either it's just you know.

00:22:00 Matt Taylor Roberts

Talking about our experiences or we're doing things with developing stuff within the agency to progress it and move it forward. So you know we've been involved in compelling writing together a pride letter to send out to all fostering households just to say why it's so important that we.

00:22:17 Matt Taylor Roberts

With that, and they've sent out a fridge magnet saying all is welcome here so that any children that come into our households can see straight off the bat that there's an LGBT flag on the fridge which says all is welcome here. So that if they feel they are identifying that they can open up to their foster carers and have those conversations. And we've done other things like.

00:22:38 Matt Taylor Roberts

Right. And writing like top 10 tips and all those different things.

00:22:43 Matt Taylor Roberts

So it's a really good opportunity to come together and share or just have a good old moan of.

00:22:49 Emma Fincham

All of the above. I love the fridge magnet and the letter and how, yeah, how and that. And those examples of Co production, right, which gets talked a lot about, you know, must Co produce. But so important. So important that.

00:22:54 Matt Taylor Roberts

It's cute enough.

00:23:03 Emma Fincham

The voice of.

00:23:04 Emma Fincham

Of your group of carers that you've just referred to are leading that and directing that so that you know that.

00:23:09 Emma Fincham

You know how it will land and how it will be received. And yeah, brilliant. Love it.

00:23:13 Matt Taylor Roberts

Yeah, definitely. But there's also, obviously organisations like new family social or like priority.

00:23:17 Matt Taylor Roberts

Parents who, you know, we provide support and resources and accuracy for all LGBTQ plus parents and carers, regardless of the roots, parenthood. So you know, there's those different opportunities where you can link in to organisations and and gain support through social media and different webinars that we put on or workshops etcetera. So there's.

00:23:38 Matt Taylor Roberts

There's all those things that are around. If it's not local to you as well.

00:23:43 Emma Fincham

Yeah, good point. And actually as well, I suppose there's something about not everybody wants to be part of a support group, right? So some people will have in the way you just described Will will absorb their will, absorb information or want to seek out kind of, you know, just some perhaps resources or some training by doing it online and of course.

00:23:49 Matt Taylor Roberts

Course yeah.

00:24:04 Emma Fincham

Whichever way people want to access that information, it does exist. Sometimes it it might, it might be.

00:24:10 Emma Fincham

Not terribly easy to find, but it is there, so I suppose we would just urge people, wouldn't we, to get in touch with parents and parents with new family, social with core and bath with loads of other organisations and just see what they have available. And if they don't have what you're.

00:24:23 Emma Fincham

Looking for they're.

00:24:24 Emma Fincham

Probably going to be able to sign post so you know, at least at least start, yeah.

00:24:26 Matt Taylor Roberts

Yeah, definitely.

00:24:31 Emma Fincham

OK. So we've just got.

00:24:32 Emma Fincham

I think a couple more questions now.

00:24:35 Matt Taylor Roberts

Agencies are inclusive. They are making a real effort to reflect the real world around them, and that means having like a mixture of people from different backgrounds and identities involved in the whole process. Plus, when an agency is on board with diversity, they can meet the needs of all sorts of children and families. That might mean providing.

00:24:55 Matt Taylor Roberts

Extra support for different cultures or languages and make sure that everyone feels safe and accepted no matter who they.

00:25:02 Matt Taylor Roberts

And so it's just, it's not just about doing the right thing. It's, you know, legally or ethically, although that's like really important, of course, but inclusivity it, it helps agencies to stay on top of, you know, on top of their game and ensure that they reflect everybody that's involved in a child's life. It means that they're always learning and that they're always growing.

00:25:22 Matt Taylor Roberts

And it's about keeping and making sure that they are offering the best care possible for not only the children but also their foster carers, and I think it's just, you know, it's it's really important that they.

00:25:35 Matt Taylor Roberts

Recognise that because often it's like an added extra so EDI stuff, equality, diversity and inclusion. And sometimes it's like an added extra strategy or an added extra thing that they need to be doing. But actually when it's woven into all elements of their work, it's really powerful because then it's a true reflection of the community that you're working with.

00:25:56 Matt Taylor Roberts

The community that you're serving and then everybody's involved, everyone's included.

00:26:01 Matt Taylor Roberts

Did.

00:26:02 Matt Taylor Roberts

And everyone's recognised because, you know, we've moved slightly over the last few years from equality to equity, and that is a real powerful shift because when we look at it from an equity perspective, you are making those subtle changes to practise changes to things to meet the persons needs that are in front of you.

00:26:24 Matt Taylor Roberts

And for a long time, we didn't do that because we wanted everyone to be treated the same. We've moved on from that and we are we need to recognise that we've all got different stuff. We've all got different baggage. We've all got different things that we need addressing to just make the changes to practise, to ensure that that happens and that's what how I.

00:26:40 Matt Taylor Roberts

Feel about it.

00:26:42 Emma Fincham

That's great. Thank you. Really brilliantly described. And so there is something about seeing yourself seeing oneself, whether that's in the kind of promotional, the imaging, the workforce.

00:26:56 Emma Fincham

Other foster carers, there's that bit but but like you said, it goes beyond that. It goes beyond what? What do you particularly need? What? What does that look like? So yeah, not just making this a kind of trying to make it a level playing field cause that that isn't how we are. We're all so different, aren't we? We're all so different with so many different elements to our identity and and.

00:27:11 Matt Taylor Roberts

Yeah.

00:27:16 Emma Fincham

Days in our life, when we might need something more than we need something.

00:27:19 Emma Fincham

You know, whatever that looks like. So there is a I think we're getting there, but like like we've established, we've still got more we can do, but that's great because we're having these conversations, right and and we're working together in partnerships all all across the sector, wherever we can.

00:27:35 Matt Taylor Roberts

Yeah, definitely.

00:27:36 Emma Fincham

So I think now just looking to our last question, which is just thinking about. So we've talked a bit about progressing well. We've talked quite a lot about that as we've been discussing, what what hopes do you have for the future of Foster?

00:27:53 Emma Fincham

Thing within the LGBTQ plus community and any other thoughts around kind of positive change in this in this space.

00:28:03 Matt Taylor Roberts

Yeah, of course. So, you know, as we keep moving forward, as we said, you know things are progressing and things are developing and changing which is great. But there is things that need to happen. So I've got some big hopes, you know, for the future of fostering within the LGBTQ plus community. First, First off, I hope to see more acceptance and support for LGBT plus individuals and couples who want to foster.

00:28:24 Matt Taylor Roberts

It's all about breaking down barriers and giving everyone a chance to provide a loving home for a child that's in need, and it's really important that we give that opportunity. And I also hope that we can see the resources and the greater uptake of training specifically geared towards the inclusion of LGBT plus foster carers. You know, if we have the training.

00:28:45 Matt Taylor Roberts

We have the understanding, then we can do the right things and have the extra input or knowledge that can make a huge difference to the the families.

00:28:55 Matt Taylor Roberts

Were seeing in front of us and to help them to thrive as well and be the best for the children that they're caring for and you're proud of parents, we offer a variety of training about the inclusion of LGBT plus individuals in whatever way that may be, is fostering adoption parenting.

00:29:15 Matt Taylor Roberts

In general, and you know what we get fed back is is that thing of what you don't know, you don't know, so you need.

00:29:22 Matt Taylor Roberts

To know it.

00:29:24 Matt Taylor Roberts

And many of us haven't had those types of LGBTQ plus training. So we haven't had a conversation around community language or terms.

00:29:32 Matt Taylor Roberts

Algy for a long, long time and and so it's that it's that opportunity to come together with the team to reflect, discuss.

00:29:42 Matt Taylor Roberts

Plan and move forward and that's it's really key and really beneficial to our families. I also hope for continued progress in terms of legal protection and anti scrimmage policies, we've come a long way, but there's still work to be done and sadly sometimes it feels like we're going back.

00:29:59 Matt Taylor Roberts

And and you know, we hope that that doesn't continue. We need to be moving forward to ensure that there's equitable policies that where everyone can be treated with respect moving forward.

00:30:13 Matt Taylor Roberts

And as As for how things can happen, you know it's going to take a lot of accuracy education.

00:30:20 Matt Taylor Roberts

And and you know, probably the cast. The biggest thing is allyship. You know, we need people to speak up. We need people to ensure that LGBTQ plus and conversations on the table that rights are being talked about, that people are challenging stereotypes and creating spaces.

00:30:40 Matt Taylor Roberts

Where people can be truly, you know, authentically themselves. And that's probably the one of the biggest things because.

00:30:47 Matt Taylor Roberts

When that can happen, then LGBT foster carers can do their best in terms of their caring and at the heart of it is our children that we're caring for. We're wanting to create safe, loving and affirming homes for them to thrive, grow and develop.

00:31:06 Emma Fincham

Fantastic and a really lovely note to end on, I think, yeah. Focusing it back centrally, centrally. The children we as we have throughout this conversation, but that's the key. If you've got foster carers that feel supported, understood, seen.

00:31:21 Emma Fincham

Acknowledged, respected, celebrated. Then they can be their best selves. That doesn't mean they have to be all day, every day because they are beautifully human. Thankfully, but they

they can be their best selves for the children that they're caring for. Right? And that allyship, I think, feels really important because as social work practitioners.

00:31:35

Definitely.

00:31:41 Emma Fincham

With people working across the sector, other foster carers, you know, various people working around a child.

00:31:49 Emma Fincham

You will. We will see things. We will hear things, and the allyship is just about it. It can be gentle. It can be kind of. It can be noticing something, checking in with someone afterwards. It doesn't have to be a kind of publicly calling out. That can be what allyship looks like, but it can also be the more subtle. Can't it just checking in? I noticed that did that language land for you?

00:32:03

Mm-hmm.

00:32:09 Emma Fincham

Like it did for me. How did that make you feel? What? What? Is there something we can do? Do those people need a bit of educating or a bit of awareness raising or bit training or what does?

00:32:18 Emma Fincham

You know it it.

00:32:20 Emma Fincham

As long as we're being active and not passive, as long as we're as long as we're not just noticing, but then doing in response.

00:32:27 Emma Fincham

Then we will keep moving. We won't just get kind of stuck of thinking this is all terrible, but it can't change because we can. Individuals can just do tiny changes like that, can't they? And yeah, really, really brilliant. Brilliant to have this conversation. Thank you, Matt. So much. Thank you for your time. Thank you for talking to us. And we look forward to having.

00:32:38 Matt Taylor Roberts

Definitely.

00:32:47 Emma Fincham

More conversations with you in the future?

00:32:50 Matt Taylor Roberts

Thank you for having me. We appreciate it. It's a great opportunity just to sit and chat about things that are really passionate about. So thank you for having us and yeah, hopefully we can have a conversation again.

00:32:58 Matt Taylor Roberts

About something else.

00:33:00 Emma Fincham

Absolutely and happy pride, Matt, to you and your partner and your family. Take care.

00:33:05 Matt Taylor Roberts

Thank you. Take care.

00:33:06 Matt Taylor Roberts

Bye bye.

00:33:07 Emma Fincham

Bye.