

All-Party Parliamentary Group on Adoption and Fostering

Co-Chairmen: Edward Timpson MP, Tom Harris MP

Secretary: Jessica Lee MP; Treasurer: Lisa Nandy

17th April 2012, 17.40 pm in the Grimond Room. Portcullis House.

In Attendance: N.B. Includes only those that signed the attendance sheet

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| Edward Timpson | MP |
| Chris Smith | CVAA |
| Christine Prickett | CVAA |
| Norman Goodwin | Adoption Matters NW |
| John Simmonds | BAAF |
| Dr Ala Sirriyeh | University of Bradford |
| Ravi KS Kohli | University of Bedfordshire |
| Jan Fishwick | PACT |
| Stephanie Bishop | Essex LA |
| Katie Law | London Borough of Richmond |
| Margaret Grant | BAAF |
| Elaine Dibben | BAAF |
| Marion Layberry | BAAF |
| Sue Lucas | Assist |
| Judy Packham | Time Out Fostering |
| Felicity Lacey | Excel Fostering |
| Michelle Cuffe | Excel Fostering |
| Alex Kirke | 4 Children |
| Harvey Gallagher | NAFP |
| Judy Walsh | The Fostering Network |
| Rachel Crozier | BAAF |
| Savita De Sousa | BAAF |
| Alexandra Conroy-Harris | BAAF |

Apologies:-

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| Meg Munn MP | |
| Julian Brazier MP | |
| Laura Sandys MP | |
| Annette Brooke MP | |
| Lisa Nandy MP | |
| Sharon Hodgson MP | |
| Kate Green MP | |
| Jeremy Cross | Time Out Fostering |
| Jeanne Kaniuk | Coram |
| Andy Stott | BAAF |
| Helen Oakwater | Independent |

Enquiries:

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CVAA UK (Consortium of Adoption Agencies)

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| 1 | The Chair, Edward Timpson (ET) MP, opened the meeting at 17.40 pm and welcomed those in attendance. |
| 2 | ET stated that the formalities of the AGM had been dealt with earlier. He added that some future meetings of the APPG would be held outside London to allow for the easier access and attendance of those who lived and worked further "North". |
| 3 | <p>ET introduced the speakers who were giving a presentation concerning "Delegated Authority to foster carers with unaccompanied asylum seeking young people" and highlighting the findings of recent research that had been undertaken:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • John Simmonds (JS) Director of Policy Research Development at BAAF. • Professor Ravi Kohli. (RK) Head of Applied Social Studies from the University of Bedfordshire • Dr Ala Sirriyeh. (AS) Lecturer in Sociology at the University of Bradford <p>Please also see the attached slides.</p> |
| 4 | <p>Slides 1 - 6</p> <p>JS introduced the presentation by explaining that the research work had begun two and a half years ago. The young people involved were encouraged to talk freely about their experiences of family life with foster parents as were the foster parents.</p> <p>JS explained that foster parent was the preferred term and was used instead of foster carer because it reflected the "delegated responsibility" they were endowed with. Also, parent better reflected the task and professionalism involved and examples were given. However, this term could, on occasion, be confusing for the child/young person.</p> <p>JS stated that both foster parents and child were constructing a family life in extraordinary circumstances.</p> |
| 5 | <p>Slides 7 – 10</p> <p>RK examined some of the statistics that pertained to the question of "what is the shape and pattern of arrival, stay and departure for unaccompanied young people in foster care?"</p> <p>He reported that in 2010 that 1,117 children/young people under 18 arrived in the UK without carers. Ultimately approximately 10% will get refugee status.</p> <p>He went on to show the themes around which the study was constructed and what the questions and answers were to what foster parents did to normalise the situation and achieve a predictable and family lifestyle.</p> <p>RK stated that slide 10 illustrated how this situation, despite its inherent difficulties, is generally a "good news story".</p> |
| 6 | <p>Slides 11 – 30</p> <p>AS went on to give more detail about the questions and in particular the responses.</p> <p>She highlighted how basic hospitality and a warm welcoming environment had a lasting impact on the success of the placement and that rule-giving, especially initially did not.</p> <p>AS stated that food and the activities surrounding it were often an important way of establishing a feeling of belonging as were photographs of activities the family had undertaken together.</p> |

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| | <p>Going beyond what was necessary was appreciated by the young people and seen as positive. Separation in whatever form, mealtimes and/or other activities was not.</p> |
| 7 | <p>Slides 31 – 32 JS summed-up by stating that “delegated authority” is a risky undertaking and activity. However this study showed that the vast majority of foster parents managed it creatively and successfully and they need recognition and appreciation for their efforts.</p> |
| 8 | <p>ET thanked the presenters for an extremely enlightening presentation and then took questions from the floor.</p> |
| 9 | <p>Elaine Dibbden BAAF: Did the foster children and parents feel it was safer to share their experiences with a social worker? RK stated that it was interesting how researchers respond to those in a study. In this instance we took the disclosures as openly as possible and even if a comment was a “minority” one they wanted to explore whether there was any minority pattern. JS added the circumstances by which these children arrive in the UK affects the way they construct their lives. They also have a pervading anxiety about the question, “if I make a fuss what will happen?”. RK said that young people in this situation wanted to fit in as much as possible to be entitled to stay here. Good foster parents allow them to be more fluid and flexible rather than stiff, anxious and self-contained.</p> |
| 10 | <p>From the Floor: I was appalled about the mention of some young people having to eat in separate rooms; what has happened to the assessment process? ET responded that this seemed to be very much the exception rather than the rule and research such as this could ensure it doesn’t happen again. JS stated structures were in place to avoid this occurring again and he was at a loss to explain why the foster parents had decided to cope in this way.</p> |
| 11 | <p>From the Floor: Did a better cultural match lead to a more successful placement? AS responded and said that most placements were cross-cultural and food was a way of sharing differences. JS added that there were degrees of difference and some of the young people were not even used to running water and electricity, having previously lived in a tent, and this had to be dealt with sensitively.</p> |
| 12 | <p>Harvey Gallagher NFP: Delegated authority is interpreted differently across the country. What was the expectation of the young people? RK thought that there were levels of flexibility but overwhelmingly the young people wanted to feel “comfortable” in a new country and the narratives, capture what was going on at “ground level”.</p> |
| 13 | <p>ET Young people in this group educationally out-perform their peers, why? RK said their presence in the UK is not accidental and for example a child from Afghanistan represents an investment from his family of £10-12K. These</p> |

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| | <p>young people are aware of this and they have been prepared to succeed and take advantage of the situation.</p> <p>ET asked if there was any research to show how well these young people seemed to overcome the language barrier to succeed.</p> <p>RK responded that this was an interesting hypothesis but it had not been tested. He added that this research was the first of its kind in Europe and English-speaking nations and he thought it will have an impact.</p> <p>ET stated that he thought it a good model for successful social work practise.</p> |
| 14 | <p>From the Floor:</p> <p>Is there any research to show what happens to these young people when they leave care? For example, young man from Kosovo gets Master's degree but doesn't know which country he belongs in anymore.</p> <p>RK replied that it was an important issue but currently there is no research available or tracking system operating.</p> |
| 15 | <p>ET thanked the presenters for their interesting and thought-provoking presentation and those there for their attendance. He looked forward to the publication of the findings.</p> |
| 16 | <p>ET informed the floor that the next meeting would if possible be in June/July and it would have an adoption focus.</p> |
| 17 | <p>The meeting closed at 19.15pm</p> |