

# Exploring Foster Carers' Experiences of the Assessment and Feedback Processes of Children in Their Care.

Saul Hillman, Katharine Anderson, Christina Demetri and Richard Cross.

This research explores perspectives of foster carers within Five Rivers Child Care (FRCC). The two-fold study involved understanding foster carers' perceptions both of routine assessments and subsequent feedback procedures' activities which are mandatory to facilitate foster carers understanding of the wellbeing needs of the young people within their care.

## The two studies

### STUDY 1

Study 1 (n = 42) focused on foster carers feedback through the means of an online survey. The survey aimed to gauge independent foster carer's experiences of both completing and receiving feedback on the assessment measures used within Five Rivers.

### STUDY 2

Study 2 (n = 6) used semi-structured telephone interviews to obtain more detailed feedback from foster carers regarding the assessment procedure. The interview explored perceptions of assessments, knowledge of assessments/feedback framework, perception of feedback process and ideas about further development.

The rich and detailed feedback from those foster carers who participated provided a deeper level of understanding of their felt experience of the assessment and feedback process. Such comments were pivotal in fuelling change.

Maybe there should be, kind of, after supervision... them do what they need to, and then come back and feedback. It might make me slightly more excited about filling the forms in.

We fill a form in, somebody, wherever they go, shouldn't just get that form, they should tell us what that forms about, what you're gaining from it, what you're gonna do with it and how it's beneficial.

Somebody should just come round and say, can we go through this together... I think that would be better.

## Findings

The findings of both studies highlighted the need for enhanced relevance of assessments, active involvement in the assessment process, more knowledge of the process, greater support with assessments and further opportunity to self-reflect.

In response to the findings collected, the Assessment and Therapy (A&T) team worked to tailor and change the assessment process, with carers being far more involved and informed of the process, resulting in improved practice and enhanced learning about the looked-after population.

## What we did

- A&T developed two assessment pathways based around the young persons age (2-11 and 12-17). The introduction of new and further measures increased relevance of assessments.
- A detailed assessment booklet was created to allow for clearer knowledge of the process. This was made available in both print and online formats. Additionally, a brief training presentation was created to provide greater support with assessments. The training, delivered by qualified clinicians to the social work team, could then in turn, be cascaded to carers and key workers, ensuring everyone shares the same level of understanding.
- Emphasis has been given on the need to work in an integrated manner to ensure knowledge and understanding of the young person is unified. The importance of the Integrated Case Management Meetings (ICMM) as a place for involvement in the assessment process has been emphasised, ensuring the importance of collaboration, feedback, and further opportunity to self-reflect.

## Further afield

Furthermore, this study has wider implications beyond FRCC. The themes identified are likely to be highly pertinent and applicable across similar organisations and populations. It is hoped others can learn from the processes currently utilised within FRCC, to enhance understanding about the expectations and challenges that might emerge within this population.

## Future research

In the future, it would be prosperous for FRCC to continue to review and evaluate the assessment and feedback process to ensure that it can continue to be a supportive, helpful forum, for both the child and their caregivers. If the process is reviewed not to be, there is further opportunity for development and change! ■



Please email [aandt@five-rivers.org](mailto:aandt@five-rivers.org) for a copy of the full paper.

For more information about the Assessment and Therapy services at Five Rivers please contact [katharine.anderson@five-rivers.org](mailto:katharine.anderson@five-rivers.org)