

Planning and supporting permanence in long-term foster care

An investigation of the implementation in England of the first Regulations and Guidance for long-term foster care as a permanence option (DfE 2015)

Professor Gillian Schofield, Dr Birgit Larsson, Professor Beth Neil & Julie Young

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Long-term foster care has been one of the permanence options available for children in care since the 1980s, but it was not officially defined by Government until the Long-term Foster Care Regulations and Guidance (2015). The aim was to improve outcomes for children by requiring local authorities to establish procedures to assess, match and support children and long-term foster families, and to identify children in long-term foster placements in their SSDA903 submission to the Department for Education.

This study involves:

- An **analysis of the national data** on children in long-term foster care and their pathways using Children in Need and SSDA903 data.
- **Surveys for all local authorities** regarding their procedures and practices for long-term foster care, including those for ensuring that care plans for long-term foster care are being implemented as required by Regulations and Guidance.
- **Research interviews with managers** from a sample of around 30 local authorities who represent different profiles and procedural systems, to obtain more detailed insights and to identify good practice.

Local authority survey links:

The manager of looked after children team(s): <https://tinyurl.com/CLAservicemanager>

The manager of fostering team(s): <https://tinyurl.com/LTFC-fostering>

The manager of Independent Reviewing Officers: <https://tinyurl.com/LTFC-IRO>

A **stakeholder research advisory group** for the project includes representatives from local authorities, voluntary organisations, independent fostering agencies, academics and the Department for Education.

We hope that all local authorities will support this research by completing the surveys and being willing to participate in the interviews. Findings will inform policy makers and practice, and will be circulated to all local authorities.

It is essential that long-term foster care placements are well planned and supported and that local authorities and courts, as well as children and families, have confidence in this permanence option.

Contact for further information: Julie Young, Centre for Research on Children and Families, University of East Anglia, Norwich Research Park, Norwich NR4 7TJ
j.young@uea.ac.uk 01603 591689