

**LISTENING TO YOUNG PEOPLE:
FOSTER CARE THE WAY FORWARD**

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BACKGROUND

The Fostering Network has for many years worked towards improving standards in foster care. One way of achieving this has been to work in partnership with all of the stakeholders involved in fostering. This includes working with children's social workers, family placement workers, children's rights officers, sons and daughters of carers, foster carers and children in foster care. This work has traditionally relied heavily upon partnerships with local authority workers and foster carers. The development of the young people's project has been an attempt to ensure that consultation and working in partnership with young people was central to the organisations work.

This research centres on the work of the Fostering Network's Young People's Project. This project has been funded by the Community Fund to define high standards in foster care for all young people involved.

The aim of this study was to find out what foster care is like for all young people, and what they would like to change. This involved consultation with both young people in foster care and the children of foster carers.

This consultation has taken place at Young People's Advisory Groups, set up by the project. These are based in Glasgow, Edinburgh, Aberdeen and Inverness. It was at these advisory groups that the need to widen consultation was first identified. The method chosen was the development of two questionnaires.

The themes raised by young people attending the advisory groups formed the basis of the questionnaires. The first was for young people in foster care and the second was for the sons and daughters of foster carers. Both questionnaires were analysed by young people at the advisory groups. This helped to ensure that the questions reflected the discussion at the advisory groups and that they used language which was 'young people friendly'

Both questionnaires were sent to all foster homes who have the Fostering Network membership. Additional questionnaires were sent to various voluntary agencies (a full list can be obtained from the Fostering Network).

The length of time spent in foster care by the respondents ranged from three months to 15 years. Most young people had spent more than two years in foster care. The number of different homes stayed in ranged from one to 20 placements.