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Part of the family: Planning for permanence in long-term family foster care

Gillian Schofield ^a   ... Emma Ward ^b 

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Abstract

There are concerns for the stability and outcomes for children in care amongst policy makers in England and many other countries. The goal of permanence for children separated from their birth families and in the care of the state has dominated child care policy and practice in the UK, the USA and Canada since the 1980s, but the meanings of permanence in terms of stability, emotional security and family membership into adulthood are complex and the placements and legal status thought best able to achieve permanence are contested.

This research was an investigation of planning for permanence in long-term foster family care in England, where it is accepted by policy makers that this is a legitimate permanence option. The aim was to consider the fit between the planning and reviewing systems designed to achieve permanence in foster care and the reality of planned permanent placements as experienced by foster children and foster carers.

Results suggested that although committed relationships within the foster family were helping children to feel a sense of permanence and to become part of the family, planning and reviewing procedures required by corporate parenting were often not adapted to the special nature of these foster placements. It was concluded that although planning and reviewing systems need to be rigorous, they also need to be more child and family sensitive in permanent placements.

Highlights

- ° Long-term foster family care can be a legitimate permanence option.
- ° Committed foster families enable children to feel fully part of the family.
- ° Planning and reviewing procedures need to adapt to permanent foster placements.
- ° Permanence procedures must be rigorous, but sensitive to the needs of each child.



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Keywords

Long-term foster care; Permanence; Care planning

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