

the parents of foster parents

their contribution to children's social capital

Roger Bullock

the social research







focus of talk

**I am going to consider the birth
parents of the foster or adoptive
parents**

**NOT the placement of children with
their birth grandparents, as in kinship
care.**

Why ?

many family structures

It is hard to generalise accurately, but there are some frequently occurring issues.

contexts differ

- **adoption**
- **short-term foster care**
- **long-term foster care**

potential contributions of grandparents

- **childcare**
- **occasional residence**
- **money**
- **material support**
- **guidance**
- **activities**
- **gifts**
- **support for the child's parents**

social capital

Grandparents are potentially part of the social capital available to a child in a complex system.

Social capital enhance life chances.

Children leaving foster care often lack social capital.

parents of foster carers

A potentially **positive influence**

They support the foster parents and give approval to their decision to foster or adopt children and endorse their parenting.

They help the foster family to see itself as 'normal'.

They can see situations objectively and can do so without being disruptive.

They give the child a sense of heritage and genealogy (even dead ones can do this!)

parents of foster carers

A potentially **negative influence**

May experience conflicting loyalties; may have other grandchildren, may have remarried with possibly new step-children.

Roles of grandmothers and grandfathers might differ, relationship between grandmother and her daughter is likely to be the strongest.

practice implications

When we talk of grandparents, we often mean grandmothers.

Explore the grandparents' views and expectations of the fostering or adoption.

Discuss their likely role in the care of the child.

Early in the process, we should make sure the foster/adoptive parents discuss with their parents their plans to care for a child.

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