Evaluation of a short training programme for foster carers

Sinead Braiden

Abstract

This paper explores the current literature around foster care training in the UK in relation to a short training programme devised for foster carers from a small Scottish charity supporting looked after children in Scotland. The training package aimed to promote foster parent and child interaction and build positive and nurturing relationships through the use of art and play, within an attachment framework. The project was designed, delivered and evaluated as a work-based project and was not intended as a piece of research. Instead, it is offered as a case study to explore effective dimensions of related training, as well as inherent challenges and points of learning. Although the focus is on foster carers, it may be of interest generally to managers, academics, care workers or leavers, and those designing and delivering training packages to professionals and carers in health and social care. There were many challenges encountered in designing, project managing, delivering and evaluating the programme. The author discusses some of these differences with reference to previous work in this area, finding that the challenges encountered by others were broadly similar. Implications for future training programmes are considered.

Keywords

Attachment, creativity, foster carer training, life story work

Article history

Date received 06 August 2014
Date accepted 12 July 2016

Corresponding author:

Sinead Braiden, BDes (Hons), MSc, Currently enrolled on the Professional Doctorate programme at Queen Margaret University, Edinburgh

sinead.braiden@nhs.net

Acknowledgements

Allied Health Professions Fellowships Scotland

NHS Tayside Training & Endowment Fund

Introduction

How best to support foster carers in their sometimes difficult role can be contentious. Dorsey, Farmer, Barth, Greene, Reid and Landsverk (2008) note, that until fairly recently, foster carers were not necessarily viewed by professionals and society at large as responsible for 'addressing and ameliorating' (p. 1404) some of the social, emotional and behavioural difficulties that such young people can present with. The Fostering Network's 'Together for Change' campaign seeks to challenge this long-held view, championing the work of foster carers. Learning and development is seen as a means of professionalising foster care and a step in the right direction for further accountability and recognition of foster carers in the UK. There are clear parallels here with the recognition of the knowledge and skills necessary for the residential child care workforce.

Foster carers can serve as key attachment figures and role models for young people in care. They can provide positive and enriching home environments where young people receive the love and care that they need to grow. As such, foster carers are perfectly placed to carry out "life story work" with young people. Life story work aims to help young people reflect on and put into context some of their more difficult early experiences in an attempt to understand some of the things that might have happened, and perhaps why they came to be in care (Hanney & Kozlowska, 2002; Wrench & Naylor, 2012).

The training needs of foster carers are now beginning to be recognised as the profession grows and becomes more widely accepted as a profession in its own right (Kirton, 2007; Scottish Government, 2013). In Scotland, however, there are currently no core national standards, registers or mandatory training courses for foster carers. Contrary to this, residential care workers are currently required by the Scottish Social Services Council to hold or be working towards SVQ 2 and 3 or levels 4 to 7 SCQF (Scottish Credit Qualifications Framework, 2015), for continuing registration, with the minimum qualification raising to level 9 in the next few years (Scottish Government, 2015). Yet many of the same skills and knowledge is necessary for foster carers to meet the needs of the children and young people they care for.

The National Foster Care Review (Scottish Government, 2013) puts learning and development at the very heart of the foster care agenda, however. The review discusses an accredited training programme as one of its key recommendations, recognising that the provision of appropriate training and support for foster carers has until now been largely overlooked. Aligned with the Scottish Government's multidisciplinary and multi-agency approach, the review anticipates that a framework of training for foster carers should take into account the Getting it Right For Every Child (Scottish Executive, 2006) wellbeing indicators.

Vostanis (2007) describes some foster carers as having a professional identity, offering time-limited placements to young people. They may view themselves as being in a professional helping role and align themselves closely with social workers and other professionals. At the other end of the continuum are adoptive parents who, unpaid by the state, see themselves very much as parents. Adoptive parents may as a result sometimes view social workers and other professionals with suspicion. Allen and Vostanis (2005) found that as such, some adoptive parents may even find it offensive to be grouped during training events with foster carers for these reasons.

There are of course many carers who fall in between these opposing views and who perhaps see themselves as both professionals and as parents. The views of the course participants in this case study certainly seemed to reflect the findings of others who have attempted to provide training in this area, in that some saw themselves as a short-term resource, whilst others felt strongly that their role was one of parenting. This has implications for those designing training packages to deliver to this group, as the mark of a successful placement is often viewed as whether or not it has been long-term in nature (Christenson & McMurtry, 2009; Conradi, Agosti, Tullberg, Richardson, Langan, Ko & Wilson, 2011).

This particular piece of training for foster carers was devised as a work-based project. It was designed with the intention of being a piece of practice-based evaluation and not as a stand-alone research piece.

The organisation in which the training was delivered is a cluster of therapeutic residential units for young people aged five to eighteen in Scotland’s central belt. Local authorities pay for places for young people from across Scotland who have often exhausted local services. Most if not all young people referred, have experienced trauma, abuse or neglect. The main service comprises several small residential units housed within local communities, most often local properties adapted to house several young people of similar age. There is also an in-house fostering service which considers external and internal referrals, and a creative therapy service. Creative therapy, of which the course facilitator and doctoral student was employed as an art therapist on a part-time basis, offers one-to-one art and play therapy sessions to the organisation’s young people, usually on a long-term basis. The sessions offer young people a safe, confidential space in which to explore, through art and play media, past and present issues (BAAT, 2015).

Attachment theory, and the practices that grew from it, gained recognition in the late 20th Century due to their relevance to social work, psychotherapy and related fields. Bowlby’s theories were a refreshing break away from Freud, Jung and early psychoanalysis due to being based on ethological, anthropological and observational studies as opposed to more philosophically based theories (Cassidy & Shaver, 1999; Sykes, Wylie & Turner, 2012).

Bowlby's basic premise is that babies and infants need to be physically close to their mothers in order to survive and thrive in the first three years of life. Physical proximity is important not only in terms of keeping the infant safe from potential predators, but also profoundly affects brain development, particularly emotional regulation (Cassidy and Shaver, 1999). Such theory continues to be validated within the developmental psychology and neuroscience literature (Herman, 1992; Schore, 1994; Perry & Szalaviz, 2006; Kagan, 2004; Henley, 2005; Pearce & Pezzot-Pearce, 2007).

Positive attachments, usually (though not always) with mothers, provide strong foundations for and confidence within children (Bowlby, 1962; Cassidy & Shaver, 1999). Young people removed from their parents' care or who have been unable to form a close bond with their mother or father (perhaps due to domestic violence, drug and alcohol abuse or physical/mental illness) are predisposed to grow up feeling insecure and anxious as opposed to confident and secure about themselves (Hughes, 2006). Therapeutic practices that take attachment theory into account recognise the feelings of basic insecurity experienced by those who have suffered neglect and abuse. Such practices aim to promote positive attachments with parents who are struggling to develop a close bond, and also those who care for children and young people (i.e. kinship carers, foster carers and residential workers). Positive role models and nurturing relationships can have a significant impact on later life outcomes and, most importantly, create meaning and enrich the lives of young people in care. Formal psychotherapy can be helpful, however, studies have consistently found that supporting, developing and enriching the relationship between parent/carer and child is far more beneficial over the longer term (Sunderland, 2007).

This next part of this paper explores the short training package designed by the author and delivered to the employing organisation's fostering service in 2014. It examines the rationale for delivering such training, and the theoretical frames of reference and methods used (i.e. attachment theory, life story work, use of creativity, art and play etc.), with reference to current learning theories for adult learners. The difficulties encountered in delivering and evaluating the project are discussed with reference to the work of others who have attempted similar projects, with implications for future interventions and endeavours of this kind considered.

Rationale of course design

The facilitation of young people's "story" can be encouraged by foster carers, and the use of art and play methods means that this can be carried out in an age-appropriate, non-threatening way (Vygotsky, 1978; Ayling & Stringer, 2013).

Looked after children find it difficult to develop a coherent autobiographical narrative, or life history, due to early relational trauma and associated attachment difficulties (Siegel, 2001; Hanney & Kozlowska, 2002; Lacher, Nichols & May, 2005; Rose & Philpot, 2005; Ferrier, 2011). The primary trauma can be compounded by the experiences of the care system. Some young people may have experienced several placement breakdowns, thus further exacerbating their attachment and behavioural difficulties, while others may find themselves in residential units (Hughes, 2006; Grant, McFarlane & Crawford, 2009).

Making sense of one's own history is important in identity formation in late childhood, adolescence and beyond (Erikson, 1959; Bruner, 1990). Young people who have experienced trauma can often have difficulty in recalling and coherently narrating their life history (Bowlby, 1962; Siegel, 2001; Lacher et al., 2005; McLean & Pasupathi, 2010).

Life story work should offer opportunities for exploration of past trauma (Hannah & Kozowlowska, 2002). Although it should be managed carefully, this type of work does not necessarily have to be carried out by a mental health professional. A good understanding of attachment issues and support from relevant professionals is key for carers, however (Rose & Philpot, 2005; Wrench & Naylor, 2012).

Attachment theory is a useful frame of reference when working with looked after children, though not by any means the only one (Barth, Crea, John, Thoburn & Quinton, 2005). Up until the mid-2000's, parent, adoptive and fostering training programmes had typically been based around cognitive and behavioural theory, focusing on skills and heavily based on social learning theory (Allen & Vostanis, 2005).

Minnis and Devine (2001) were among the first to explore the value of training programmes for foster carers in the UK. The studies around this time took a behaviour management focus for foster carers, presumably because behavioural management strategies had been demonstrated as being relatively effective for birth parents and the general populous (Pallett, Scott, Blackeby, Yule & Weissman, 2002; Hill-Tout, Pithouse & Lowe 2002; Allen & Vostanis, 2005).

However, studies increasingly began to show that the looked after population is inherently more complex in its needs, and therefore training must be carefully thought about and designed accordingly if it is to be effective (Golding & Picken, 2004; Golding, 2007; Laybourne, Andersen & Sands, 2008; Bywater, Hutchings, Linck, Whitaker, Daley, Yeo & Edwards, 2010). From the mid 2000's onwards, perhaps as a response to the findings of initial studies or otherwise, a variety of different approaches were tried with the delivery of training to foster carers (Allen & Vostanis, 2005).

A review of the literature had indicated that the most up to date and possibly most effective theoretical frame for the delivery of the training to foster carers was currently, in fact, attachment theory (Minnis & Devine, 2001;Golding & Picken, 2004; Golding, 2007), although with almost no randomised controlled trials in the area and with the main study in attachment-informed practices for foster carers having been evaluated as a qualitative practice-based piece (Golding, 2007), this was by no means certain. However, since the course facilitator’s area of expertise was in attachment theory, it seemed a natural and appropriate choice in this instance.

The style and delivery of the training now needed to be considered, and it was acknowledged that a degree of learning would have to take place around the most current and appropriate learning methods for adult learners. To help prepare for this, the course facilitator attended a 5 day training course on adult learning. The course provided a mix of educational theory for adults as well as opportunities for active and social learning, and putting skills learned into practice. This model was to succinctly convey that within current educational thinking, a range of different methods needs to be employed in order to meet the varying and complex needs of all adult learners. The overall course design needed to take such varying learning needs into account if it was to be successful. In particular, critical reflection by course participants on course content can be used as a way of illuminating theory in practice for adult learners. Critical reflection is an important skill for professionals and carers in residential and foster care when things can and inevitably do go wrong with young people: it is about being able to think about relationships and incidents without becoming defensive, celebrating strengths but also continually reflecting on what could have been done more safely, effectively, sensitively etc. (Schön 1995; Moon, 1999; Knowles, Holton & Swanson, 2005; Mezirow & Associates, 1990; Mezirow 1991; 2009).

Most training for foster carers to date has been noted in the literature as having been heavily based on social learning theory (Minnis & Devine, 2001; Golding & Picken, 2004; Allen & Vostanis, 2005), with some training programmes focusing solely on cognitive behavioural formats (Pallett et al., 2002). Given that cognitive and behavioural models were deemed the least effective approaches with this client group, the course facilitator felt that it would be best to incorporate a degree of social learning with some skills-based training, with a much heavier focus on emotional support and reflection on and in practice.

This meant that the training programme would incorporate one day of formal training, followed by three “follow-up” sessions. The follow-up sessions were intended to provide a means of emotional and psychotherapeutic support to carers within a safe, confidential context. Secondly, the follow-up sessions would give foster carers opportunities to reflect on their current practice, and on techniques and skills gained on the one day training (Schön, 1995; Moon, 1999; Kember, 2001). These practices in delivering educational packages for adults are recognised as belonging to social and constructivist approaches to learning. Social learning is learning that occurs by being in communication with others and is facilitated by the sharing of ideas, mainly through group discussion. Constructivist theory holds that people construct their own unique knowledge of the world through experience and reflecting on such experience (Jarvis, Holford & Griffin, 2003). After the first day's training, a "homework" assignment was given to the foster carers in anticipation of the follow-up sessions. This is perhaps more in line with cognitivist approaches (French, Neville & Laing,1994; Jarvis et al., 2003; Illeris, 2009). The follow-up sessions were incorporated as a means of delivering a package that encourages social learning through groups (Minnis & Devine, 2001; Golding & Picken, 2004; Allen & Vostanis, 2005). This was deemed important in the literature on training for foster carers, as was the opportunity for low-intensity psychotherapeutic support (Golding & Picken, 2004; Laybourne et al., 2008). Follow-on groups would serve as a means of providing such support, whilst also consolidating previous learning (Knowles et al., 2005) and providing opportunities for critical reflection on foster carers' own practices (Mezirow & Associates, 1990; Schön, 1995) within a supportive learning environment.

The course content of day one of the training contained a mix of activities that aimed to help participants critically reflect on their practices and build on their current skills (Mezirow & Associates, 1990). A mix of experiential group and individual activity was factored in, with plenty of time for group discussion and debate. For example, there was a five minute YouTube clip on attachment theory and its relevance to foster care, of which the content was used to provoke debate and discussion in the area. This would have suited those learners with a visual and cognitive style, and who were perhaps used to putting across their views in debate, whilst the more active and experiential learners could perhaps take more from the creative activities i.e. the "Safe Space" activity which will be discussed further below.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6bul1meciGE

The You Tube clip was used to generate debate and discussion around attachment theory. It also gave the writer an opportunity to find out what (and how much) knowledge participants had on attachment theory, and if they viewed attachment theory a useful frame of reference in their day to day lives with the children.

It is worth noting that within current educational thinking, learners are no longer compartmentalised in to different types or styles as they used to be; adult learners are now recognised as having differing needs at different times and at different stages of their life and development (Honey & Mumford, 2000). So, when designing training packages for adults, it is important to take into account a broad range of learning styles that suit a range of learners and styles (Mezirow & Associates, 1990; Knowles et.al., 2005).

The purpose of the course was not to train the foster carers as art or psychological therapists, which requires in-depth specialist training (Scottish Government, 2011b; BAAT, 2015). Rather, it was to deepen carers' understanding of attachment theory within the context of life story work in order to help facilitate a young person in their care to literally 'tell their story'. This is viewed as inherently therapeutic in itself, allowing for creative expression and reflection in a safe environment for young people that helps them put their life history in context (Martin, 1998; Etherington, 2009; Pasopathi & Hoyt, 2009; Warne & McAndrew, 2010; Ayling & Stringer, 2013), and is clearly applicable to the work of residential child care as well.

Creativity and self-expression in order to promote attachment is not a new idea for art therapists (Hanney & Kozlowska, 2002; O'Brien, 2004; Henley, 2005), and, being almost second nature to the course facilitator, almost went unquestioned as to its value when working with young people. However, creativity and self-expression may not come naturally to others (Ayling & Stringer, 2013) who may unwittingly avoid promoting it in the young people they care for. With this in mind, the course facilitator and Art Therapist placed a heavy emphasis on supporting carers with such activities, as the example below illustrates. In this group, however, all of the activities were well received, with foster carers apparently relaxed and comfortable with creative activities and the sharing of experiences.

Safe Space Activity

The purpose of the "safe space" activity is to have the course participants think about and creatively express what a safe space means to them. As their artwork is passed around the group, and eventually returns to them, they are asked how they feel about their original piece of artwork and "safe space" being redefined, and perhaps even impinged upon or violated by others. Most people are unhappy with the end result, and this can be reflected on within a group context about the many moves in to kinship or foster care our young people must navigate, continually attempting to find for themselves or create a place of psychological safety that is often misinterpreted and at worst violated by others, often unwittingly. It is apparent through the artwork that "safe spaces" mean different things to different people, at different times in their lives.

Interestingly, the participants in this group did not seem unhappy with the end results of artwork, making explaining and exploring some of the key concepts behind the activity a little trickier than usual. This was probably due to the fact that they all knew and frequently called on each other for mutual support. There was much hilarity on this part of the training day and participants and facilitator enjoyed the activity. There was no inhibition in this group with creative expression!

Difficulties encountered during course delivery and evaluation

The group of foster carers recruited were taken from a pool of around 20 foster carers employed in-house by the host organisation. 12 were scheduled to participate in the programme, however, on the day only eight participants turned up. Problems with attendance to training by foster carers has long been highlighted as an issue (Minnis & Devine, 2001; Hill-Tout et al., 2002, Golding & Picken, 2004; Sinclair, Gibbs & Wilson, 2004; Vostanis, 2007), with the main reasons being cited as difficulties in accessing appropriate child care, lack of support from families, professionals and the wider community, and dealing with complex emotional and behavioural issues. Sinclair et al. (2004) note that attendance can be particularly challenging for young or lone foster carers, while the Minnis and Devine's (2001) study recorded that almost half of all carers recruited could not attend all of the sessions.

Poor attendance, and the fact that foster carers knew each other very well, critically impacted on the follow-up sessions scheduled for after day one. At the end of day one, it transpired that the scheduled sessions clashed with another training session and also school holidays, making attendance for carers difficult. By mutual agreement, the first follow-up date was set around a month later, with consequent dates to be confirmed by mutual agreement at a later date. When the day for the follow-up session came, however, (later rearranged again to nearly two months on from the original day's training), only one carer could attend. The follow-up sessions as a result had to be abandoned. It also came to light during day one of the training that the foster carers who attended the training had all known each other for a number of years and regularly called on one another as a means of support as a tight knit group. This informal sharing of knowledge, skills and support possibly rendered the follow-up sessions as unnecessary or inappropriate in the eyes of the carers in question.

This meant that the overall course of one day's formal training and 3 follow-up sessions that would incorporate reflective and ongoing learning, would not be completed by any of the carers. Evaluation of the overall course was severely impacted, as formal and informal methods of gathering data were incorporated in to the three follow-up sessions. A formal feedback form was however filled out by all course participants on the completion of day one of training. This feedback form was a generic course evaluation form taken from the internet and adapted by the course facilitator to suit the needs of the course. The feedback was largely very positive, however, caution must be used in the interpretation of this as previous studies have noted positive feedback on training, with little impact on the short and longer term functioning of looked after children (Minnis & Devine, 2001; Hill-Tout et al., 2001).

During the design phase of the project, there was a failure to ask the foster carers themselves what sort of training they actually needed to support them in their role. This was a major omission which was to have a severe negative impact on the delivery and outcomes of the course. Although it seems obvious on hindsight, it had clearly not been apparent to the course facilitator during the design phase, and although participants were asked about this and similar issues during course delivery, this was effectively "too little, too late".

Discussion

This was most certainly a challenging piece of work for the course facilitator in question, from both a personal learning and professional development perspective. Firstly, it had not been fully appreciated during the design and development phase quite what an undertaking the project would be. It had seemed realistic and achievable at the outset, but as the project unfolded it became clear that facilitation of a course of this kind could benefit from at least one more course facilitator. This would have assisted with practical issues such as setting up equipment on the training days, for example, and for the sharing of ideas and critical reflection on the design, development, delivery and evaluation phases of the course. Facilitation of the one-day training as a lone worker in itself was problematic in managing the group dynamic and balancing both supportive and learning needs of course participants. This would no doubt have been problematic within the follow-up sessions also. However, this was a pilot project that took the facilitator away from clinical practice, and there was a cost to the organisation involved. At the time it did not seem feasible to ask the organisation to further support the project financially by taking another member of staff away from the Creative Therapy service, which was already under pressure with new referrals and ongoing caseloads. This reflects the ongoing tension between the ideal (or even good practice) and what is possible with limited resources, for training of foster carers and residential child care workers.

There was also not enough time set aside for critical reflection on the overall project, with the facilitator perhaps rushing to write up. A more measured and reflective approach to the project could instead have facilitated greater depth and critical analysis. Perhaps part of this rush to finish on behalf of the facilitator was due to a feeling that the project had somehow 'failed', since the foster carers did not return to the evaluative and reflective follow-up sessions scheduled. The time that has elapsed since delivering the training and writing this piece has, however, given the facilitator some distance from the project and perhaps more of an objective, reflective and reflexive stance, crucial in interpretation of the initial experience.

Most authors cited here agree that there is a stark need for training and support for foster carers in order to prevent breakdown of placements and further instability for young people (Whenan, Oxlad & Lushington, 2013). The main theoretical bases for training delivered to this group, cited and discussed previously in this paper, seem to be based around either behavioural management strategies, those with more of an attachment or relational focus, or a mixture of both. This case study used attachment theory as its main frame of reference as the course facilitator had knowledge and experience in the area. Attachment theory coupled with social learning methods was also deemed by the most recent literature to have been, if not effective, certainly more effective than the delivery of training in behavioural management strategies alone with looked-after children (Minnis & Devine, 2001; Golding & Picken, 2004; Golding, 2007). It would appear that attachment-informed approaches facilitate greater foster parent-child interaction, but it is unclear as to how much impact this has overall on foster carers' day-to-day practices and placement stability and longevity.

Golding and Picken (2004) note from their own study that, whilst provision of psychotherapeutic support is positive in terms of providing much needed support for foster carers, as a research and evaluation exercise it can throw up problems due to role ambiguity. The style of delivering this type of training appears to put course facilitators in rather an ambiguous position when it comes to their role, i.e. they must be both training facilitator and group psychotherapy facilitator (and often evaluator) within the same context. Managing this complexity with a varied group of participants requires a high level of skill, and may not necessarily produce desired outcomes. Again, this had perhaps not been fully appreciated in the design phase of the course.

Semi-structured interviews could have formed part of the entire design and evaluative process, with either a sample of, or, in this case, all of the carers involved (in the end there were only eight course participants). The course facilitator learned from this experience that it is not enough to simply ask participants what they thought about the training after it had happened – a robust form of evaluation should have been integrated into the entire package from the outset, both to effectively meet the learning needs of participants and to evaluate whether or not the training had any impact on the participants' practice.

It appears from the research literature that longevity of placement is viewed as a marker of a successful placement (Sinclair et al., 2004; Dorsey et al, 2008; Christenson & McMurtry, 2009; Bywater et.al., 2011; Conradi et al., 2011). Perhaps it would have been useful to explore in more depth and through the evaluative process what participants thought about this (in this project, some viewed themselves as short term carers only). It would be helpful to find out more about whether the training package had any impact on the quality of the relationship between foster parent and child, and whether or not the placement has been maintained. Again, this did not happen due to the lack of attendance to follow-up sessions.

The various difficulties explored in participant attendance and resulting impact on evaluation make it difficult to draw any conclusions on the effectiveness of this project on the short, medium and long term practices of the foster carers in this case study. However, it appears from the literature around foster care training that these are issues that are frequently experienced by those attempting to deliver training in this area. We can perhaps conclude from the evaluation forms completed by all carers after day one of the training that it was well received and that this might impact on practices in the short term, but we have no way of knowing if the training provided impacted on the medium to longer term practices, and consequently on improved behaviours and outcomes for young people.

This was an ambitious project for a lone practitioner to undertake, and the complexities of delivering training to this group were perhaps not fully appreciated at the beginning of the project. The varying learning needs of foster carers, lack of clarity around what the most effective methods for delivery of training with this group are, role ambiguity of the therapist/training facilitator/researcher roles, and methodological difficulties in evaluation all became apparent as the project unfolded.

It is apparent that the needs of looked after children and young people are complex and diverse, and within day to day practice it is often not always clear as to how best to support each young person to fulfil their potential. What is clear is that outcomes for this vulnerable and disadvantaged group are consistently poor, and this has long been recognised as unacceptable (Meltzer & Lader, 2004; Scottish Government, 2011a; 2012). Training for practitioners working in the area can vary widely and sometimes offer conflicting advice on best practice (Barth et al., 2005; Vostanis, 2007). It is no surprise then that training for foster carers will be correspondingly complex and difficult to deliver, with a range of ethical, evaluative and methodological factors to be considered carefully. Implications for future endeavours of this kind should take into account the difficulties encountered not only in this case study but in the field in general.

About the Author

Sinead Braiden is an Art Therapist who has 10 years experience of working in residential child care and adult psychiatry. She is currently enrolled on the Professional Doctorate programme at Queen Margaret University, Edinburgh. Her main research interests include the mental health needs of looked after children.

References

Allen, J. and Vostanis P. (2005). The impact of abuse and trauma on the developing child: an evaluation of a training programme for foster carers and supervising social workers. *Adoption and Fostering*, 29 (3) 68-81.

Ayling, P. and Stringer, B. (2013). Supporting carer-child relationships through play: a model for teaching carers how to use play skills to strengthen attachment relationships. *Adoption & Fostering*, 37 (2) 130-143.

BAAT (British Association of Art Therapists) (2015). Retrieved from www.baat.org.uk [Accessed 20 March 2015].

Barth, R.P., Crea, T.M., John, K., Thoburn, J. and Quinton, D. (2005). Beyond attachment theory and therapy: towards sensitive and evidence-based interventions with foster and adoptive families in distress. *Child & Family Social Work*, 10 (4) 11 257-268.

Bowlby, J (1962). Attachment and loss, Volume1: Attachment. London: Pimlico.

Bruner, J. (1990). *Acts of Meaning*. Cambridge MA Harvard University Press

Bywater, T., Hutchings, J., Linck, P., Whitaker, C., Daley, D., Yeo, S.T. and Edwards, R.T. (2011). Incredible years parent training support for foster carers in Wales: a multi-centre feasibility study. *Child: Care, Health and Development*, 37 (2) 03 233-243.

Cassidy, J and Shaver, PR (1999). Handbook of attachment: theory, research and clinical applications. London: Guildford Press.

Christenson, B.L., and McMurtry, J. (2009). A longitudinal evaluation of the preservice training and retention of kinship and nonkinship foster/adoptive families one and a half years after training. *Child welfare*, 88 (4) 07, 5-22.

Conradi, L., Agosti, J., Tullberg, E., Richardson, L., Langan, H., Ko, S. and Wilson, C. (2011). Promising practices and strategies for using trauma-informed child welfare practice to improve foster care placement stability: a breakthrough series collaborative. *Child welfare*, 90 (6) 207-225.

Dorsey, S., Elizabeth M.Z. Farmer, Barth, R.P., Greene, K.M., Reid, J. & Landsverk, J. (2008). Current status and evidence base of training for foster and treatment foster parents. *Children and Youth Services Review*, 30 1403-1416.

Etherington, K. (2009). Life story research: a relevant methodology for counsellors and psychotherapists. *Counselling and Psychotherapy Research*, 9 (4) 225-233.

Erikson, E.H. (1959). *Identity and the Life Cycle*. New York Norton & Company

Ferrier, M. (2011). Life Story work in the Context of Attachment-Led Care Planning. *Scottish Journal of Residential Child Care*, 10 (1). Retrieved from: http://www.celcis.org/resources/scottish_journal.

French, S., Neville, S., and Laing, J. (1994). Teaching & learning: a guide for therapists. Oxford: Butterworth-Heinemann.

Golding, K., and Picken, W. (2004). Group work for foster carers caring for children with complex problems. *Adoption and Fostering*, 28 (1) 25-37.

Golding K. (2007). Developing group-based parent training for foster and adoptive parents. *Adoption and Fostering*, 31 (3) 39-48.

Grant, E., McFarlane, M., and Crawford, R. (2009). Lizzy: Understanding attachment and loss in young people with complex needs. *Scottish Journal of Residential Child Care*, 8 (1). Retrieved from: http://www.celcis.org/resources/scottish_journal

Hanney, L., and Kozlowska, K. (2002). Healing traumatized children: creating illustrated storybooks in family therapy. *Family Process*, 41 (1) 37-65.

Henley, D. (2005). Attachment disorders in post-institutionalized adopted children: Art therapy approaches to reactivity and detachment. *The Arts in Psychotherapy*, 32(1): 29-46 [Accessed online 10 November2012].

Hermann, J.L. (1992). Trauma and recovery. London: Basic Books.

Hill-Tout, J., Pithouse, A., and Lowe, K. (2003). Training foster carers in a preventative approach to children who challenge: mixed messages from research. *Adoption and Fostering*, 27 (1) 47-56.

Honey, P., and Mumford, A. (2000). The learning styles questionnaire. Maidenhead: Peter Honey Publications.

Hanney, L. and Kozlowska, K. (2002). Healing traumatized children: creating illustrated storybooks in family therapy. *Family Process*, 41 (1).

Hughes, D.A. (2006). Building the bonds of attachment: awakening love in deeply troubled children. Oxford: Jason Aronson.

Illeris, K. (2009). Contemporary theories of learning. London: Routledge.

Jarvis, P., Holford, J., and Griffin, C. (2003). The theory and practice of learning. UK: Taylor & Francis.

Kagan, R. (2004). Rebuilding attachments with traumatized children. New York: Hawarth Press.

Kember, D. (2001). Reflective teaching & learning in the health professions. London: Blackwell.

Kirton, D. (2007). Step forward? step back? The professionalisation of fostering. *Social Work and Social Sciences Review*, 13 (1) 6-24.

Knowles, M., Holton, E., and Swanson, R. (2005). The adult learner. London: Elsevier.

Lacher, D.B., Nichols, T. and May, J.C. (2005). Connecting with kids through stories: using narratives to facilitate attachment in adopted children. London: Jessica Kingsley.

Laybourne, G., Andersen, J., and Sands, J. (2008). Fostering attachments in looked after children: further insight into the group-based programme for foster carers. *Adoption & Fostering*, (4) 64-70.

Life Story Network (UK) http://www.lifestorynetwork.org.uk/

Martin, F.E. (1998). Tales of transition: self-narrative and direct scribing in exploring care leaving. *Child and Family Social Work*, 14 (1) 147-155.

McLean, K. and Pasupathi, M. (2010). Narrative development in adolescence: creating the storied self. Springer Science online book [Accessed 20 October 2012].

Meltzer, H., and Lader, D. (2004). The mental health of young people looked after by local authorities in Scotland. Retrieved from: http://www.celcis.org/media/resources/publications/mental_health_of_young_peoplev3no2.pdf [Accessed 11 October 2013].

Mezirow, J. and Associates (1990). Fostering critical reflection in adulthood: a guide to transformative and emancipatory learning. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Mezirow, J. (1991). Transformative dimensions of adult learning. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Mezirow, J. (2009). An overview of transformative learning. In P. Illeris Contemporary theories of learning. (p.105-137). London: Routledge.

Minnis, H., and Devine, C. (2001). The effect of foster care training on the emotional and behavioural functioning of looked after children. *Adoption and Fostering Quarterly Journal*, 25 (1) 44-54.

Moon, J.A. (1999). Reflection in learning & professional development. London: Kogan Page Ltd.

O'Brien, F. (2004). The making of mess in art therapy: attachment, trauma and the brain. *Inscape*, 9 (1) 2-13.

Pallet, C., Scott, S., Blackeby, K., Yule, W., and Weissman, R. (2002). Fostering changes: a cognitive behavioural approach to help foster carers manage their children. *Adoption and Fostering*, 26 (1) 39-48.

Pasopathi, M., and Hoyt, T. (2009). The development of narrative identity in late adolescence and emergent adulthood: the continued importance of listeners. *Developmental Psychology*, 45 (2) 558-574.

Pearce and Pezzot-Pearce. (2007). Psychotherapy of abused and neglected children. New York: Guildford Press.

Perry, B. (2006). Applying principles of neurodevelopment to clinical work with maltreated and traumatized children: the neurosequential model of therapeutics. In Webb, N.B., Working with traumatized youth in child welfare. New York: Guildford.

Perry, B. and Szalavitz (2006). The boy who was raised as a dog and other stories from a child psychiatrist's notebook. New York: Basic Books.

Rose, R. and Philpot, T. (2005). The child's own story: life story work with traumatized children. London: Jessica Kingsley.

Schön, D. A. (1995). The reflective practitioner: how professionals think in action. London: Arena.

Schore, A. (1994). Affect regulation and the origin of the self: the neurobiology of emotional development. New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum.

Scottish Credit Qualifications Framework (2015). Retrieved from: http://scqf.org.uk/the-framework/ [Accessed 7 April 2015].

Siegel, D. (2001). Toward an interpersonal neurobiology of the developing mind: attachment relationships, "Mindsight" and neural integration. *Infant Mental Health Journal*, 22 (1-2) 67-99 [Accessed online 10 December 2012].

Sinclair, I., Gibbs, I., and Wilson, K. (2004). Foster carers: why they stay and why they leave. London: Jessica Kingsley.

Sunderland, M. (2007). What every parent needs to know: the incredible effects of love, nurture and play on your child's development. London: Dorling Kindersley.

Sykes Wylie, M. and Turner, L. (2012). The attuned therapist: does attachment theory really matter? Retrieved from: www.psychotherapynetworker.org/magazine/recent issues/1261-the-attuned-therapist [Accessed 10 December 2012].

The Fostering Network (2009). The skills to foster record & resource book, 2nd ed. Retrieved from: http://www.fosteringresources.co.uk/?pid=344.

The Scottish Executive (2006). Getting it right for every child. Edinburgh: Stationery Office.

The Scottish Government (2011a). Mental health strategy for Scotland: 2012 – 2015. Edinburgh: Stationery Office.

The Scottish Government (2011b). Guide to delivering evidence based psychological therapies in Scotland: the matrix. Edinburgh: Stationery Office.

The Scottish Government (2012). National parenting strategy: making a positive difference to children and young people through parenting. Edinburgh: Stationery Office.

The Scottish Government (2013). National foster care review final report December 2013. Looked After Children Strategic Implementation Group. Edinburgh: Stationery Office.

The Scottish Government (2015). Better outcomes for looked after children and young people: what are we trying to achieve? Edinburgh: Scottish Government. Retrieved from: http://www.gov.scot/Publications/2015/11/2344/3.

Warne, T., and McAndrew, S. (2010). Re-searching for therapy: the ethics of using what we are skilled in. *Journal of Psychiatric and Mental health Nursing*, (17) 503-509.

Whenan, R., Oxlad, M., and Lushington, K. (2013). Factors associated with foster carer well-being, satisfaction and intention to continue providing out-of-home care. *Children and Youth Services Review*, 31 pp.752-760.

Wrench, K. and Naylor, L. (2012). Life story work with children who are fostered or adopted. London: Jessica Kingsley.

Vostanis, P. (2007). Mental health interventions and services for vulnerable children and young people. London: Jessica Kingsley.

Vygotsky, L.S. (1978). Mind in society: the development of higher psychological processes. Harvard: Harvard University Press.