



Biblical Counselling UK

Family Care Research

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TERMS OF REFERENCE

1. Background

Christians parents make up a significant part of the adoptive and fostering community. According to one survey, practising Christians are twice as likely as the general population to adopt¹. A third of adopters² and up to 60% of foster carers³ in the UK identify as Christians. Meanwhile, the charity Home for Good received nearly 2000 enquiries in 2021, and so far almost 400 individuals, couples and families have moved onto a fostering or adoption assessment⁴. Some studies have looked into the experience of Christian parents.⁵

Many children in care will have experienced a form of abuse or neglect – all will have experienced loss. This can have a material impact on family life leading many to need and seek support. More than 70% of adoptive families say they face a continual struggle for support⁶. Fostering Services stated that the most important change needed to retain more foster carers would be improving the support they offer⁷.

Despite this reality, little is known about the lived experience of Christian parents of care-experienced children post-placement. **Family Care Research would like to know what the experience of support has been for Christians parents and whether there is need to develop or adapt support specifically for Christian parents.**

2. Objectives

Family Care Research will launch a **Call for Evidence in March 2022**, seeking the views of Christian parents of care-experienced children. The call for evidence will have 3 components:

- 1) An online survey will ask parents about their experience of the three different categories of support recognised in academia: formal (such as therapeutic interventions), semi-formal (from community groups such as church) and informal (such as from personal relationships)⁸.
- 2) Some parents who volunteer and are selected from the online survey will be invited to a semi-structured interview picking up on themes that emerge from the survey.
- 3) Some case studies will be sought out to showcase examples of best practice.

Alongside the Call for Evidence, a **literary and theological review** will seek to develop a robustly biblical and researched framework for understanding meaningful support for Christian parents and where this is likely to come from. Knowledge will be gleaned from other countries (e.g. US) and disciplines (e.g. mission, SEN) in order to build a fuller picture of good quality support.

¹ [Barna Research US](#), 2014

² [Adoption Barometer](#), 2021

³ [State of the Nation Foster Carers Survey](#), 2022

⁴ Email to Home for Good Supporters, Jan 2022

⁵ See Bell, Z (2020) What motivates Christian Foster Carers, (Unpublished Masters Dissertation) Luther King House, UK

⁶ [Adoption Barometer](#), 2021

⁷ [State of the Nation's Foster Care](#), 2022

⁸ Quinton, D (2004) Supporting Parents: Messages from Research, London: Jessica Kingsley Publishers, p.28

Finally, a **report** published in Autumn 2022 will include implications and recommendations for the development or adaptation of support for Christian parents of care-experienced children as well as some initial ideas for modes of delivery of that support.

Dr Tim Davy, Head of Research and Consultancy at All Nations College, is serving as Research Advisor for this project.

3. Benefits

Family Care Research views Christian parents of care-experienced children as the main beneficiaries of this project. However, it has been said that 'investment in support for parents,..., is an investment in the young people themselves'⁹.

The perspectives and stories captured by Family Care Research will also benefit those who want to offer meaningful support. This could include statutory services who would like to better understand the role of faith in support, churches offering semi-formal support through their regular activities, or friends and family who offer informal support.

One survey suggests that improving support may benefit recruitment and retention.¹⁰

Biblical Counselling UK is sponsoring this project as part of its vision to equip the local church to care well for its members. The knowledge gained through this research will inform the development of resources and wise counsel.

4. Success Criteria

Family Care Research would consider this project successful if:

- ✓ The online survey gathered responses from 100-150 households and up to 20 households were invited to the semi-structured interviews.
- ✓ A range of Christian charities and churches would assist with promotion of the survey to ensure a diverse range of backgrounds, denominations and experiences.
- ✓ Findings were presented in an accessible format for all stakeholders.
- ✓ The conclusions drawn in the report would lead to tangible recommendations based on the evidence collected from the data, the literary survey, and biblical understanding.

5. Assumptions

Family Care Research assumes that there are no other recent or ongoing projects that are directly attempting to capture the lived experience of Christian parents post-placement.

It is expected that many Christian parents of care-experienced children need support and have tried to access this and that faith and faith communities play an important role in shaping the giving and receiving of support.

6. Constraints

Careful consideration is being given to the sensitive nature of this research and a carefully research ethics process will be followed. Families will be given guidance on the nature of the questions and a full consent

⁹ [Adoption Barometer](#), 2021, p.77

¹⁰ Adoption UK (2017) ASF user experience survey. Quoted in [Investing In Families Report](#).

process will be developed, allowing the participants to withdraw at any time. Family Care Research hopes that families will self-select and no expectations will be placed on a family encountering a crisis.

As there is only one lead researcher, we will cap the number of respondents for both the online survey and the interview to allocate time for analysis.