Head, heart, hands: social pedagogy in UK foster care

This item was submitted to Loughborough University's Institutional Repository by the/an author.


Additional Information:

- This is a conference presentation.

Metadata Record: https://dspace.lboro.ac.uk/2134/15965

Version: Published

Publisher: Centre for Child and Family Research, Loughborough University

Rights: This work is made available according to the conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives 4.0 International (CC BY-NC-ND 4.0) licence. Full details of this licence are available at: https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/

Please cite the published version.
Head, Heart, Hands: social pedagogy in UK foster care

Robert Tapsfield, Chief Executive, the Fostering Network
Sam McDermid, Senior Research Associate, Centre for Child and Family Research
Helen Trivedi, Research Associate, Centre for Child and Family Research
Programme aims

This programme will demonstrate the impact that introducing a social pedagogic approach can make to foster carers and the lives of the children they foster.

By doing so we will improve the outcomes for children in care and contribute to them being able to fulfil their potential.

*The long term aim is then to embed this approach across the UK and enable far more children in care to fulfil their potential.*
Programme aims

To develop professional, confident foster carers who can improve the lives of children in care

To provide a platform for transforming the role of foster carers

To implement cultural and systemic change to support this approach

To develop social pedagogic foster care
The programme partners

The Head, Heart, Hands programme is led by the Fostering Network with delivery partners Jacaranda Development, Professor Pat Petrie and ThemPra Social Pedagogy.

The Social Pedagogy Consortium

**Professor Pat Petrie**

Demonstration sites

- **Edinburgh**
- **Orkney Islands Council**
- **Surrey County Council**
- **Capstone foster care**
- **Staffordshire County Council**
- **Hackney**
- **Aberlour: Scotland’s Children’s Charity**

Evaluation partners

- **Loughborough University**
- **NCAS**
- **The Codello Centre**
Social pedagogy is well established across Europe... but looks different in every country... our job is to find out what it might look like in the UK.
A systemic approach to developing a social pedagogic approach to foster care

Developing Modern Social Pedagogy

Badry & Knapp, 2003
Children in foster care are the programme focus

Fostering Service

Other Services: health, education, housing, leisure etc

Third sector

Wider world

Foster carers

Social pedagogues

Family, friends, school etc

Learning & development, operational & strategic support

SS

CS W

Children and young people

Communications

Children in foster care are the programme focus
We are now in the develop phase of a four year programme.
# Achievements and challenges

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Achievements</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Passion, hard work and dedication across the programme.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning and development courses completed and positively received. Wider programme of activities to support learning and cultivate systemic change.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foster carers and social workers turning theory into practice:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Stronger relationships</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Confident advocates</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Theoretical underpinning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Meaningful peer support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Systemic changes starting to emerge:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Recruitment and training</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Reflective practice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Attitude to risk</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Shared language</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Addressing silos</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Making new links</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Achievements and challenges

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Challenges</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Embedding social pedagogic practice</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sites are feeling the strain! But programme has great energy. Resource demands of the programme (both financial and time) have been higher than sites originally anticipated.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nurturing systemic change. Facing a general culture of risk aversion and a continuing ‘tick-box’ approach with high levels of both real and perceived red tape.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Co-creation, reflection and dialogue perceived as challenging and time consuming.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The nature of the personalised journey</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sustainability and roll out in sites</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Measuring impact and demonstrating cost benefit</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Evaluating social pedagogy

- Social pedagogy is an ‘approach’ not a method
  - A way of thinking or a value base
  - Not a manualised programme with key features
- Difficult to define
  - ‘We’re doing it already’
  - Differentiating it from good quality fostering ‘as usual’
- Constructed through the context
  - ‘meaning making’
  - Individual’s relationship with the context is of primary importance
Overview of the evaluation

• Complimentary and overlapping modules
• Baseline and two follow up data collection points
  ▪ **Module 1: Impact on children and young people**
    ▪ Face to face interviews children and young people
    ▪ Analysis of management information systems data and additional case file information
  ▪ **Module 2: Impact on foster carers and on practice**
    ▪ On-line survey and telephone interviews with foster carers
    ▪ Chaired group discussions with practitioners
    ▪ Face-to-face interviews with social pedagogues
  ▪ **Module 3: Implementation process, outcomes and changes in the system**
    ▪ Interviews with programme managers
    ▪ On-line survey with practitioners
    ▪ Case studies (includes face-to-face and telephone interviews)
Foster carers’ reflections on social pedagogy as an approach

- An approach or a method?
  - Two discourses
  - The learning journey will these conceptualisations change over time?
- ‘Doing it already’
  - Both positive and negative
- Validating tacit knowledge
  - Confidence
  - Re-affirming of the role of foster carers
  - Does this validation have any impact in the longer term?
Foster carers’ reflections on social pedagogy within a context

- Assimilating social pedagogy into existing practices and language
  - What is the impact of a new way of thinking about certain practices?
- Social pedagogy as a way to change the wider system
  - System understood by foster carers as being bureaucratic and risk averse
- How ‘ready’ is the wider system for social pedagogy
  - The importance of the role and support of supervising social workers
  - The importance of a (perceived) commitment from the system
Interviews with children and young people

- Child led informal interviews
- Adaptable
- From support circles to the ‘lifemap’
  - ‘Lifemap’ rich data created and interpreted by the participating young person
Example 1: James, 6yrs, boy

City, 100 miles away
Foster grandparent
Social worker
Foster brother, now care leaver
City, 50 miles away
Ares School Holiday Club
Staff
Foster carers
Local, recreation activity
Local Landmark
Links to city, 100 miles away
Local shopping town
FC Birth child
Local public park/forest area
Head Teacher
Teacher
Birth mum
Mum's partner
Community member
Community member
Community member
Staff
Community member
FC Birth child
Example 2: Sophie, 9yrs, girl
Example 3: Katie, 16yrs, young lady
Summary findings

- Role of the foster carer
  - Children and young people’s lifemaps
  - Re-affirming the foster carer role

- Complexity
  - Children and young people’s ‘lifeworld’
  - Complexity of social pedagogy assimilation for foster carers

- Professional network
  - Role of professionals for children and young people
  - Relationship between foster carers and the system
Next steps

- Follow up with foster carers and children and young people
  - How the understanding of social pedagogy is developed and its impact of practice
- Views from social care personnel
  - Exploring their conceptualisation of social pedagogy and the Head, Heart, Hands programme
  - Role of the social worker and other social care personnel and the interplay with foster family and key decision making