Ethically Approved Research - Summary Report

This is a Summary Report provided by the researcher to Tusla, Child and Family Agency. The study pertaining to this report was approved by the National Research Office, Research Ethics Review Group. This report will be stored within the Tusla Research Register which will be accessed by National Research Office staff. Please indicate whether or not you give permission for your report to be made available to other staff of the Child and Family Agency and the wider public on the Research Register within the electronic Tusla Research Centre (on the Tusla Child and Family Agency website).

When completing this Summary Report, please adhere to the headings provided. Research studies vary in size; however the completion of this report should not exceed 3,000 words. Please complete, sign and return to recadmin@tusla.ie

Full Title of Research Study:	**Exploring Systems of Support in Foster Care: From a Socio-Ecological Systems Perspective**
Name of Researcher/Researchers:	
Surname:	Cahill
First Name:	Karen
Existing post-nominal Letters:	
Contact email address:	karen.cahill@ifca.ie

Student Research

If research was undertaken for an academic award please state:

Official title of the course:	Master of Arts in Family Support Studies; University of Galway.

Title: Exploring Systems of Support in Foster Care: From a Socio-Ecological Systems Perspective

Abstract:

This exploratory study explored the systems of support in Foster Care from the views of a sample of foster carers in Ireland in March 2023. The aim of the research was to explore systems of support in foster care from a socio-ecological perspective.
The study explored foster care support systems from a socio-ecological perspective using qualitative research and interpretivism. Foster carers' views were obtained through a demographic survey and a series of focus groups. Secondary research was also analysed to examine international research on foster carers in relation to support.
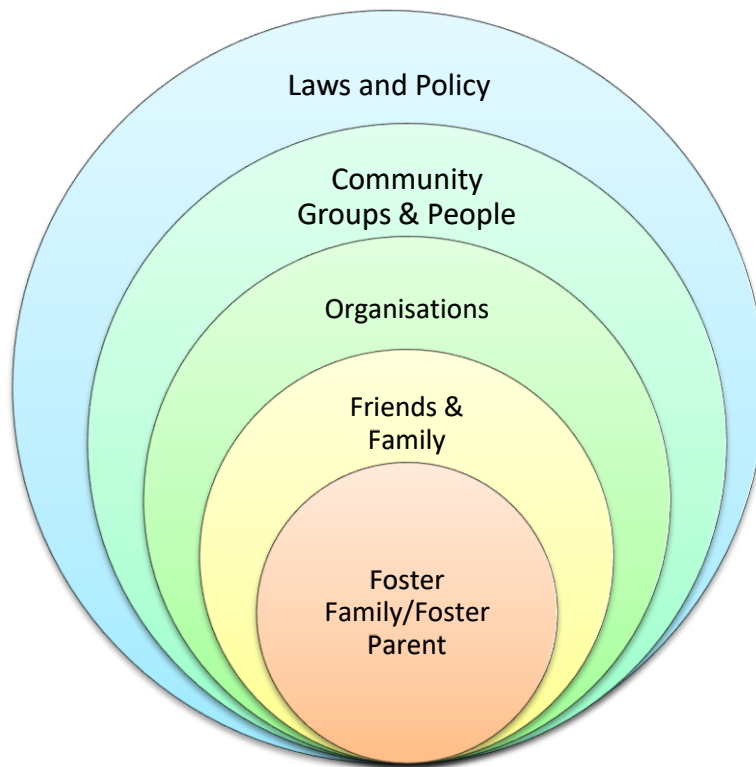
The main theoretical frameworks used in the study were the socio-ecological model & social ecology. Underpinning theories of resilience theory, and social support model were also used.

An adapted model of Ecological support systems such as the family, extended family/friends, organisations, community groups, policy, laws & policy were explored to gain a greater understanding of how families are supported and exploring the challenges and opportunities within this. (See fig. 1.1 below).

The study found that the interdependent systems of support surrounding the foster family play a vital role and can have a direct influence on family stability and wellbeing. Systems of support and positive relationships from the family, foster carer (peers), social workers to Government were found to all contribute to stability and positive outcomes for the foster family.

See Fig 1.1 below:

Adapted Social Ecological Model for Foster Care:

Laws and Policy

Community Groups & People

Organisations

Friends & Family

Foster Family/Foster Parent

(Adapted from Okoye 2016)

Social Ecological Model in relation to Foster Care: -

1. Individual: Foster Carer/Foster Family (includes knowledge, attitude, and skills)
2. Interpersonal: Friends and Family (social network)
3. Organisational: Organisations that are essential to Foster Care (includes environment and ethos)
4. Community: Community groups/people who support the Foster Care placement
5. Public/Policy: Laws and policies at a local, State and National level that relate to Foster Care, directly or indirectly.

Reference list :

Bronfenbrenner, U. (1974) 'Developmental Research, Public Policy, and the Ecology of Childhood', *Child development*, 45(1), pp. 1–5, available: https://doi.org/10.2307/1127743.

Bronfenbrenner, U. (1977) Toward an Experimental Ecology of Human Development. American Psychologist, 32(7), 513, available: https://psycnet.apa.org/doi/10.1037/0003-066X.32.7.513.

Canavan, C., Pinkerton, J. & Dolan, P. (2016) Understanding Family Support: Policy, Practice and Theory, pp. 21-22, 71-72. London; Philadelphia. Jessica Kingsley Publishers.

Child and Family Agency Act 2013, Dublin, Stationery Office, available: https://www.irishstatutebook.ie/eli/2013/act/40/enacted/en/html [accessed 23 February 2023].

Chipungu, S.S. & Bent-Goodley, T.B. (2004) 'Meeting the Challenges of Contemporary Foster Care', *The Future of Childre*n, 14(1), pp. 75–93, available: https://doi.org/10.2307/1602755.

Corbett M. (2023] *Child Law Project Urges Action on Lack of Specialised Services and Residential Placements for Vulnerable Children*, Irish Legal News, Dublin, available: https://www.irishlegal.com/articles/child-law-project-urges-action-on-lack-of-specialised-services-and-residential-placements-for-vulnerable-children [accessed 2 March 2023].

Costello, P. (2020). 'Opinion: Foster Care is in Trouble in Ireland and its Privatisation is Not the Answer'. *The Journal.ie.* 14 Sep, available: https://www.thejournal.ie/readme/fostering-coronavirus-5160844-Sep2020/ [accessed 10 November 2022].

Gibbons, M. & Connolly, N. (2020). 'Just shut up and let them talk': Participation, power, and the parent voice in the child protection system. Social Work and Sciences Review. 22(1):26-41. Available at: https://doi:10.1921/swssr.v22i1.1513 (Accessed 22nd February 2023)

Gilligan, R. (2019). 'The family foster care system in Ireland – Advantages and Disadvantages'. *Children and Youth Services Review.* Vol. 100, pp. 221-228, available: https://www-sciencedirect com.nuigalway.idm.oclc.org/science/article/pii/S0190740918309010?via%3Dihub [accessed 18 March 2023].

Hong, J.S., Algood, C. L., Chiu, Y-L., Lee, S. A-p. (2011) 'An Ecological Understanding of Kinship Foster Care in the United States', *Journal of Child and Family Studies*, 20(6), pp. 863–872, available: DOI:10.1007/s10826-011-9454-3.

Irish Foster Care Association (2023] *About the Irish Foster Care Association,* available: https://ifca.ie/ [accessed 28 February 2023].

Ko Hsiu-Chia, Wang Li-Ling & Xu Yi-Ting (2013) 'Understanding Different Types of Social Supports Offered by Audience to A-List Diary Like and Informative Bloggers', *Cyberpsychology Behaviour and Social Networking,* 16(3), pp. 194-199, available: DOI: 10.1089/cyber.2012.0297**.**

Masten, A. S., & Tellegen A. (2012). Resilience in Developmental Psychopathology: Contribuitions of the Project Competence Longitudinal Study, *Development and Psychopathology,* 24(2), pp. 345-361.

Miles, D. A. (2017), 'A Taxonomy of Research Gaps: Identifying and Defining the Seven Research Gaps', in *Doctoral Student Workshop: Finding Research Gaps – Research Methods and Strategies,* Dallas, Texas, pp. 1-15, available: https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Sanusi-Sani-Maimagani/post/What-is-a-research-gap-or-knowledge-gap-in-research-and-literature-Is-gap-explored-or-constructed-How-can-gap-in-research-be-identified/attachment/612e5570647f3906fc94fab2/AS%3A1062899850153985%401630426480747/download/Miles2017.pdf [accessed 28 March 2023].

Moreau, E. (2022) 'Fostering Allowance Becoming Insufficient Amid Cost of Living Crisis, Say Carers', *The Journal,* May 7, available: https://www.thejournal.ie/foster-care-allowance-increase-5832874-Aug2022/ [accessed 23 March 2023].
Okoye, Peter. (2016) 'Improving the Safety Performance of Nigeria Construction Workers: A Social Ecological Approach', *Universal Journal of Engineering Science*, 4, pp. 22-37, DOI:10.13189/ujes.2016.040202.

Piel, M.H., McGieger Julien-Chinn, F. J, & Lietz, C. A. (2017) 'An Ecological Systems Approach to Understanding Social Support in Foster Family Resilience', *Child & Family Social Work*, 22(2), pp. 1034–1043, available: doi:10.1111/cfs.12323.

Pinkerton, J. and Dolan, P. (2007) 'Family support, social capital, resilience and adolescent coping', *Child & Family Social Work*, 12(3), pp. 219–228, available: https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1365-2206.2007.00497.x.

Tusla: Child and Family Agency (2022] *Prevention Partnership and Family Support Programme*, available: https://www.tusla.ie/uploads/content/PPFS_Low_Prevention_Services_Brochure.pdf [accessed 22 February 2023].

Tusla: Child and Family Agency. (2022] *Strategic Plan for Foster Care Services for Children and Young People 2022-2025, available:*

https://www.tusla.ie/uploads/content/Strategic_Plan_for_Fostercare_Services-2022-2025.pdf [accessed 2 November 2022].

Tusla: Child and Family Agency (2022]   *Tusla Fostering, a*vailable: https://www.tusla.ie/services/alternative-care/foster-care/ [accessed 2 November 2022].

Tusla: Child and Family Agency (2023) *About Us,* available: https://www.tusla.ie/about/ [accessed 23 March 2023].

Tusla: Child and Family Agency (2023) *Public and Patient Involvement (PPI) in Research and the National Research Office (NRO),* available: https://www.tusla.ie/research/tusla-research-office/public-and-patient-involvement/#:~:text=How%20Tusla%20defines%20PPI%20in,of%20children%20and%20young%20people, [accessed 2 February 2022].

Tusla: Child and Family Agency (2023) *Support and Allowances,* available: https://www.tusla.ie/services/alternative-care/foster-care-old-page/becoming-a-foster-carer/support-and-allowances/#:~:text=We%20provide%20foster%20carers%20with,children%20aged%2012yrs%20%2B%20%E2%82%AC352.00 [accessed 28 March 2023].

Ungar, M. (Ed.). (2012) *THE SOCIAL ECOLOGY OF RESILIENCE: A HANDBOOK OF THEORY AND PRACTICE,* Springer Science & Business Media, available: https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-4614-0586-3.
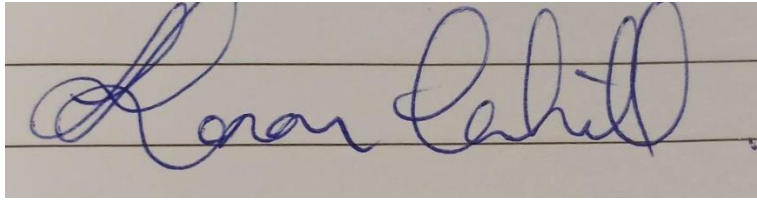
York, W. and Jones, J (2017) 'Addressing the mental health needs of looked after children in foster care: the experiences of foster carers'. *Journal of Psychiatric and Mental Health Nursing*, Vol. 24 (2-3): 143-153. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1111/jpm.12363.

Permission Box

I give permission for this report to be made available on the Tusla Electronic Research Centre website; it may be viewed by those internal and/or external to Tusla.

Yes/ No (please circle)
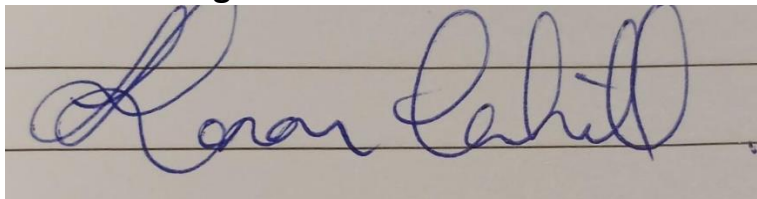
Researcher Signature:

Date: 13th January 2025

I give permission for my personal details including name, email address and title of qualification to be made available on the Tusla Electronic Research Centre website; it may be viewed by those internal and/or external to Tusla.

Yes /No (please circle)

Researcher Signature:

Date: 13th January 2025