

The experiences of foster carers and facilitators of Fostering Connections: The Trauma-informed Foster Care Program: A process study.

Abstract

This process study explored the experiences of foster carers and facilitators who participated in *Fostering Connections: The Trauma-informed Foster Care Program* which was implemented in 2017 in the national child welfare agency in Ireland. This intervention was a psychoeducational program for foster carers, developed in response to a gap in training provision. Three focus groups were carried out with foster carers and facilitators that participated in the intervention. Thematic analysis revealed four overarching themes: 1. Facilitating the reflective process 2. Transformative learning, 3. The carer-child relationship and 4. Sustainability. Findings suggest that *Fostering Connections* is highly acceptable to Irish foster carers. They experienced a process of change during the programme that led to them providing children with trauma-informed care. This was associated with more positive child-carer interactions and reduced observed child difficulties. However, to successfully sustain the changes foster carers have made, this study suggests ongoing supports for foster carers, training for the wider stakeholders in foster care and supports for facilitators are needed.

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